



Cyberbullying

Fact Sheet



kids help line 1800 55 1800
lifeline 131 114

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying is a form of bullying, which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS.

Examples of cyber bullying behaviour are:

- Teasing and being made fun of;
- Spreading of rumours online;
- Sending unwanted messages; and
- Defamation.

Cyber bullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

It's really important to learn how to protect yourself online and to learn how to respond if you or a friend is being cyber bullied. Read on for more info.

How common is cyber bullying?

The number of reports of cyber bullying to the NetAlert Helpline has been increasing, particularly since 2006.

An online safety survey conducted by NetAlert and ninemsn in February 2007 found that:

- 16% of young people said they had been bullied online, while 14% were bullied through their mobile, with boys and girls experiencing similar levels.
- 56% thought it was easy to get bullied online

Under certain circumstances (such as harassment and making threats) cyber bullying is a criminal activity and is illegal. If you feel your safety is at risk, contact '000' or your local police. Police around Australia work together to reduce this type of crime and there are serious consequences if people participate in such activities.

How you might be feeling if you are being cyber bullied

Just like bullying in real life, there can be terrible effects on those who experience cyber bullying.

Being bullied can lower your self-esteem and you may feel alone, sad, angry and scared. If you are being bullied it is not your fault and there is nothing wrong with you. Don't be afraid to let someone know that you are being bullied as they may be able to help you.

Check out the fact sheet on **bullying** for more info.

How to stop cyber bullies

If you are being cyber bullied it is possible that you're feeling powerless and isolated.

But, there are options and you can do things to stop the problem.

1. **Keep a record** (including time and date). This may help you (or the police) to find out who is sending the messages.
2. **Tell someone.** Talk to someone you trust, a parent, friend, school counsellor or teacher. Check out this fact sheet for more info.
3. **Contact your phone or Internet service provider and report what is happening.** They can help you block messages or calls from certain senders.
4. **If messages are threatening or serious get in touch with the police.** Cyber-bullying, if it's threatening, is illegal. You don't need to put up with that!
5. **Don't reply to bullying messages.** It'll only get worse if you do. By replying the bully gets what he or she wants. Often if you don't reply the bully will leave you alone.
6. **Change your contact details.** Get a new user name for the Internet, a new e-mail account, a new mobile phone number and only give them out to your closest friends.
7. **Keep your username and passwords secret.** Keep your personal information private so it doesn't fall into the hands of someone who'll mis-use it.

Let us know what you think

Have you experienced cyber bullying, or do you know someone who has? What happened, and how were you able to respond to the situation? Do you have any tips for other people about how to prevent or respond to cyber bullying? You can let us know your thoughts by sending us feedback through the feedback form at the bottom of the page or by joining the discussion on the forums in the feedback section.

Acknowledgement: This fact sheet was reviewed by NetAlert.

Last reviewed: 2 July 2008