

Tackle Cyberbullying

Parenting tipsheet



Most kids really are kind to each other online, but there is a minority using digital technology to harass and intimidate others.



Bullying thrives on digital media because it can be done remotely and often anonymously – giving bullies a reduced sense of the harm they're causing. Cyberbullying can also be harder to avoid than traditional bullying, with no relief offered by the school bell.

No single response will stop bullying but knowing how to support your child can assist.

1. Talk to your children about their digital lives

The more you are aware of their online lives, the more likely they will be to talk to you, especially when something makes them feel uncomfortable. Make sure your children know they will be supported if they report something to you. Alternatively, make sure they have another trusted adult in their lives they can talk to.

2. Do unto others

Encourage children to treat others the same way they'd like to be treated online. Discuss what it means to be respectful to and respected by others online. Be zero-tolerant to mean or rude behaviour. Make clear that mean behaviour is not okay at any time – online or off.

3. Think before you click

Encourage children to think about content and the consequences of posting it or forwarding something that might upset someone else. This also applies to not making hurtful or derogatory comments on someone else's material.

4. Promote positive bystander behaviour

Encourage children to support victims of bullying. Work together with your child ahead of time to come up with safe ways to stand up to online abuse if they see it happen.

If your child is the victim of cyberbullying:

5. Talk to them

If they've been cyberbullied, encourage children to stay calm and positive. It's important for victims of cyberbullying to know that they're not responsible for what's happened. A reaction is often just what a bully wants to see. Not responding or retaliating can sometimes stop the cycle.

6. Take concrete steps

Help your child block the troublemaker responsible by removing them from your children's online contact lists; show them how they can keep evidence by taking screenshots and saving them, or printing the evidence; report abusive behaviour on the digital platforms your child visits; talk to your child's school; get to know your legal rights by visiting lawstuff.org.au; and, of course, if the bullying extends to threats of violence, inform the police without delay.

7. Do not respond on your child's behalf

Responding on your child's behalf, like emailing the bully directly, or calling their parents, may further inflame the situation.

8. Consider support services

There are free, confidential counselling services for young people such as headspace.org.au (for 12–25 year-olds) and reachout.com (for 14–25 year-olds).

Schools often provide support and guidance too.