

CYBERBULLYING TIPSHEET FOR TEENS



We spend a lot of our daily life online. Digital technology allows us to constantly communicate, connect and share information with others. However, the physical distance and sense of anonymity provided by the digital world make it a place where bullying is especially likely to happen. A recent Canadian study¹ found that 42% of youth had been cyberbullied in the previous month, and 60% had witnessed it.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?²

Cyberbullying is the use of technology (cellphones, computers, etc.) to intentionally target, embarrass, harass or threaten another person. Some examples include:

- Sending mean or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Ridiculing someone online about their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation
- Spreading rumours, gossip or secrets about someone online
- Pretending to be someone else online to post something embarrassing, play tricks or hurt another person's reputation
- Taking or posting embarrassing photos of someone and sharing with others

WHY DOES CYBERBULLYING MATTER?

Cyberbullying can have serious effects. In one Canadian study³ 30% of youth who were cyberbullied reported that it caused problems for them. People who are cyberbullied are likely to feel isolated, lonely, scared and anxious. This can lead to problems with friends, family or trouble learning in school.⁴ **In fact**, there are criminal laws in Canada to protect people against some forms of cyberbullying.⁵



WHO SHOULD YOU TELL IF YOU ARE CYBERBULLIED?⁶

- Tell someone that you trust, like a parent, teacher, school counsellor, coach, sibling, or friend, or call Kids Help Phone.⁷ Social support helps teens cope emotionally with the effects of cyberbullying, and is also one of the best predictors of successfully stopping it. If you are concerned about friends and family making the situation worse, explain to them how you would like them to help you.
- Stop and think about how you are feeling.

- You may have the urge to say or post something back, but cyberbullying back (or getting revenge) most often makes the situation worse. Try asking yourself, “Will this make things worse or better?”
- If it is an isolated incident, ignore the cyberbullying.
- If you feel comfortable and safe to do it, calmly and firmly tell the person to stop sending messages or to remove the offending material. Let them know that their actions are not ok and are hurtful. Do so privately, so you don’t escalate the situation.
- Keep a copy of offending material so you can report what’s happening. Screen shot the text, blog, post, website or other hurtful material.
- Use settings and features available on your applications and devices to protect your privacy and remove material that is being used to cyberbully you untag pictures, block mean or threatening messages and request removal of posts.
- Report offensive cyberbullying images, blogs or posts to the social media site(s) where they are posted and to your service provider. Report your age, because if you are under 18, your complaint will be made a priority.
- Tell the person you will report the cyberbullying if it continues and who you will report it to (e.g., school principal, coach, police). Then follow through and report it.



WHAT IS AN ONLINE BYSTANDER?

- We are all bystanders on and offline if we are viewing, reading, visiting, liking, taking screenshots or sharing information with others that has the potential to be hurtful or damaging to someone’s feelings or reputation.
- 85% of Canadian youth say they would intervene if they were bystanders to cyberbullying that was extremely hurtful, unfair or morally wrong, especially if it was being done to a family member or friend. When cyberbullying seems to be just joking around or drama, they are less likely to help.⁸

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU WITNESS CYBERBULLYING HAPPEN?⁹



- Take a minute to think about how you would feel if it was happening to you. What would you want people to do or say for you?
- If you feel safe and comfortable to do it, calmly and firmly tell the person who is doing the cyberbullying to stop.
- Stop and think before you click. Posts that hurt others emotionally or damage reputations do not deserve your likes, resends, reposts or retweets.

- Reach out! Support the people who are cyberbullied, online or in person. Even if you are not good friends, let them know that no one deserves to be cyberbullied or should go through cyberbullying alone.

STOP AND THINK BEFORE YOU SEND A MESSAGE THAT MIGHT HURT SOMEONE

Because so much online behaviour is impulsive and spontaneous, we don't always think before we send. A 15-year old Google Science Fair finalist found that more than 93% of young people would not send a message if they were reminded that it could hurt someone.¹⁰ She has designed Rethink, an app that picks up on messages that might be mean or inappropriate, and asks if you really want to press send.¹¹



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1. Li, J., & Craig, W. (2015). Young Canadians' experiences with electronic bullying. Kingston, ON: PREVNet.
 2. For more information related to cyberbullying visit: <http://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/cyber-bullying>
 3. Steeves, V. (2014). Young Canadians in a wired world, Phase III. Cyberbullying,: Dealing with online meanness, cruelty and threats. Ottawa: Media Smarts.
 4. Beran, T., Mishna, F., McInroy, L. B. & Shariff, S. (2015). Children's experiences of cyberbullying: A Canadian national study. *Children and Schools*, 37(4), 207-214.
 5. For more information related to legislation visit: <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbullying/cyberbullying-law> .
 6. Jacobs, N.C..L., Völlink, T., Dehue, F., & Lechner, L. (2014). Online Pestkoppenstoppen: Systematic and theory-based development of web-based tailored intervention for adolescent cyberbullying victims to combat and prevent cyberbullying. *BMC Public Health*, 14:396. doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-14-396.
 7. Confidential help is available for teens online or by phone, free, at <https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/Home.aspx>
 8. See Li & Craig, above.
 9. For more information on better bystander reactions to cyberbullying, see <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbullying/react-cyberbullying-campaign>
 10. Prabhu, T. (2014). Rethink: An effective way to prevent cyberbullying. Finalist presentation at Google Science Fair 2014. https://www.google-science-fair.com/projects/en/2014/f4_b320cc1cedf92035dab51903bdd95a846ae7de6869ac40c909525efe7c79db
 11. You can download this app for free at <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/rethink-stop-cyberbullying/id1035161775?mt=8>