



## **Cyberbullying: What it is and What to do**

### **Current Statistics:**

- About 50% of teens have been victim of cyberbullying and have engaged in cyberbullying (I-Safe Foundation)
- About 33% have been victim of cyberthreats
- About 25% of teens have been bullied repeatedly through cell phones or online
- Only 10% tell a parent if they have been bullied online (Harford County Examiner)
- Fewer than 20% of cyberbullying incidents are reported to authorities
- Girls are more likely than boys to be involved in cyberbullying
- Cyberbullying victims are more likely to have low self-esteem and to consider suicide

### **How are kids cyber bullied?**

- Sending mean messages or threats to a person's e-mail account or cell phone
- Spreading rumors online or through text
- Posting hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or webpages
- Stealing a person's account information and sending damaging messages
- Pretending to be someone else online to hurt another person
- Spreading unflattering or embarrassing pictures on cell phones or on the Internet
- Sexting or circulating sexually suggestive pictures or messages about a person

### **When asked why kids cyber bully ...**

- 81% say that the bully thinks "It's funny"; 80% say, "the bully thinks it's not a big deal"
- 90% say the bully does not think about the consequences
- More than 50% say that cyber bullies are encouraged by friends
- 80% say that bullies think they won't get caught

### **How do victims react?**

- Positive reactions:
  - Block communication with the cyberbully
  - Delete messages without reading the item
  - talk to a friend about the bullying
  - report the problem to an Internet service provider or website monitor
- Negative reactions:
  - seek revenge on the bully
  - avoid friends and activities
  - Cyber bully back

### **How can teens prevent cyber bullying?**

- Refuse to pass along cyber bullying messages
- tell friends to stop cyber bullying
- block communication with the person sending messages
- report the messages to a trusted adult
- speak with other students & teachers to develop school rules against bullying
- raise awareness of the bullying problem in your community by holding an assembly and creating flyers to give to kids and parents
- never post or share your personal information online; never share anything that you would not want made public
- never share your Internet passwords with anyone, except parents
- ever meet anyone face-to-face whom you only know online
- talk to parents about what you do online

### **How can adults prevent cyber bullying?**

- Talk to teens about bullying, explaining that it is wrong and can have serious consequences. Schools should make a public statement that students may not send mean or damaging messages. Parents should make a rule that if their child sends any damaging messages, they will lose cell phone and computer privileges
- set up family times when everyone must turn off technology, such as at family meals or after a certain time at night
- keep computers in a shared space like the family room

### **Effective intervention must involve the entire school community**

- Students, parents, teachers, and administrators must non-defensively assess the extent of the problem.
- The school should make the elimination of bullying a priority and classes and assemblies must stress the fundamental values of respect, safety, and tolerance.
- Teachers and clinicians can develop small-group role plays on ways to deal with bullies (e.g., Circle of Friends)
- Must have immediate intervention to address the bully and the victim
- Must increase adult supervision during free time

### **Good resources:**

- [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org) provides information about stopping cyber bullying before it starts
- [www.Cyberbullying.us](http://www.Cyberbullying.us) provides research, stories, cases, downloads, fact sheets, tips and strategies, and a blog on this public service website
- [www.wiredsafety.com](http://www.wiredsafety.com) provides information about what to do if you are cyberbullied
- [www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com) has information about what you can do to stop bullying
- ***The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander. Barbara Coloroso (2008).***
- ***The Anti-bullying Handbook. Keith Sullivan (2000).***