

Cyberbullying Resources for Youth and Their Families

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Cyberbully, web, applications, resources

Cyberbullying is a global public health challenge with the potential to disrupt or destroy the lives of children, adolescents, and their families. It may have negative consequences, especially for the victim, ranging from school absences to depression to suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) recommends that health professionals provide education and counseling for parents and youth regarding bullying, including strategies for how to deal with it. This article will focus on informational and educational resources about cyberbullying available on the Web for parents, youth, educators, and health professionals. Mobile applications (apps) to combat cyberbullying will also be addressed.

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IT'S PERSONAL

Although no universal definition of cyberbullying exists, it generally refers to the deliberate and repeated use of information technology by an individual to harm or embarrass another person or group. Common forms of cyberbullying among minors may include "flaming," denigration, impersonation, exposure, trickery, outing, and exclusion (Li, 2007). Cyberstalking and cyberharassment are generally adult forms of cyber crimes that may also affect the pediatric population (McAfee, 2013).

Malicious material may be transmitted through a variety of media, including e-mail and text messages, personal Web sites, and social networking sites. New technologies allow a cyberbully to transmit harmful information anonymously through the use of a pseudonym or fake e-mail address. The speed and widespread nature of the Internet allow the bully to disseminate information almost instantaneously to the victim's digital environment, or worse, to thousands of bystanders in cyberspace. The vast number of invisible bystanders on the electronic media may join in by viewing or forwarding the harmful information to others. This information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and thus the victim is unable to escape the abuse at home or school. Thus, although the cyberbullying act may occur only once, the victim may experience the effects of the embarrassing or harmful attack in cyberspace repeatedly over time (Baas, de Jong, & Drossaert, 2013).

THE FACE OF CYBERBULLYING

Researchers have recently begun to examine the epidemiologic features of cyberbullying. Patchin and Hinduja (2012) argue that great variation exists in research findings about the actual extent of cyberbullying because of the lack of a uniform definition for it among researchers. According to their findings, between 2004 and 2013, about 24% of adolescents (ages 10 to 18 years) in the southern United States reported being a victim of cyberbullying and 16% reported that they cyberbullied others (Patchin, 2013). Characteristics of youth that place them at risk for being

a target of cyberbullying (as well as traditional bullying) include disability, poverty, being a member of a minority ethnic group, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender status (Cross, Pigglin, Douglas, & Vonkaenel-Flatt, 2012).

The technology used by adolescents may influence the form of cyberbullying they experience. Hinduja and Patchin (2010b) asked adolescents to report the technologies they used most commonly on a weekly basis. The participants reported that they used cell phones 83% of the time, the Internet for schoolwork 50.8% of the time, and Facebook 50.1% of the time. Female adolescents were more likely than male adolescents to be a victim of cyberbullying and to report it. The primary form of cyberbullying reported by female adolescents was the spreading of rumors, whereas male adolescents reported the posting online of harmful pictures or videos.

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Research findings continue to indicate that youth are hesitant to report a cyberbullying incident to parents and other trusted adults. Common reasons youth report for not telling a parent (or adult) about being a victim of cyberbullying include parental overreaction to a situation and losing or having their online privileges limited (Baas et al., 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Sleglova & Cerna, 2011).

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Antibullying initiatives have been in the spotlight for the past few years both online and offline. The [Stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) (<http://www.stopbullying.gov>) Web site, which was revitalized in 2012, provides informational and educational resources for parents, educators, children, teens, and the community about how to stop and prevent bullying, including cyberbullying. This site is managed by the United States Department of Health & Human Services in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Justice. All materials are in the public domain and are free to copy, distribute, or transmit.

Several national grassroots campaigns have increased the visibility of bullying as an issue and ways to speak out against it. The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights group established a National Bullying Prevention Week in October 2006. This event has grown to include the entire month of October with groups, agencies, and organizations from across the world sponsoring events to highlight

bullying prevention. The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights National Bullying Prevention Center has many excellent digital resources for parents, educators, and youth. BullyBust (<http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust>) was launched in 2009 by the National School Climate Center in collaboration with the Broadway musical *Wicked* to help students and adults learn to stand up to bullying and take action to combat it. In 2010, the Cartoon Network launched the Stop Bullying: Speak Up campaign (<http://www.cartoonnetwork.com/promos/stopbullying>). They partnered with celebrities, parents, adults, schools, and other organizations to encourage kids to prevent bullying at school and online. The It Gets Better Project (<http://www.itgetsbetter.org>) was also launched in 2010 to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who were bullied or harassed at school. The DoSomething.org (<http://www.dosomething.org>) campaign is focused on encouraging 13- to 25-year-olds to get involved and take action to change the negative impact of social issues such as bullying and school violence.

For parents, teachers, law enforcement officers, and educators (as well as older youth), the Cyberbully Research Center (<http://cyberbullying.us>) provides up-to-date evidence about cyberbullying. This site includes some excellent evidence-based brochures that may be downloaded, copied, and distributed. Commonsense Media is a nonprofit organization focused on providing reliable information about the electronic media for administrators, parents, and youth. They developed an excellent Cyberbullying Toolkit for educators entitled “Standing up, not standing by” (<http://www.common sense media.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit>). The materials can be downloaded by registering for a free membership with Commonsense Media. Two other high-quality sites include Media Smarts (<http://mediasmarts.ca/cyberbullying>), a center for media and digital literacy, and the long-standing Wired Safety (<https://www.wiredsafety.org>) site.

Several sites...include trained peer mentors to serve as positive role models to help bullied youth.

CYBERBULLYING RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

Many of the aforementioned antibullying campaigns have developed outstanding Web sites and resources tailored to the developmental level and interests of young children through young adults. Most sites use a variety of technologies to advance the understanding of youth about bullying, including interactive modules, games, discussion forums, blogs, and celebrity testimonials. Several sites also include trained

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