



CYBER BULLYING **HURTS** EVERYONE

What parents need to know about cyberbullying



WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION



**BULLYING HURTS
AND HAS LASTING
CONSEQUENCES
FOR BOTH THE BULLY
AND THE VICTIM.**

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying involves harassing, humiliating, intimidating, and/or threatening others through electronic mediums, including the Internet, cell phones, and other communication devices.

Young people can try really hard to make cyberbullying stop but they can't do it on their own. They need their parents to help them.

Forms of cyberbullying:

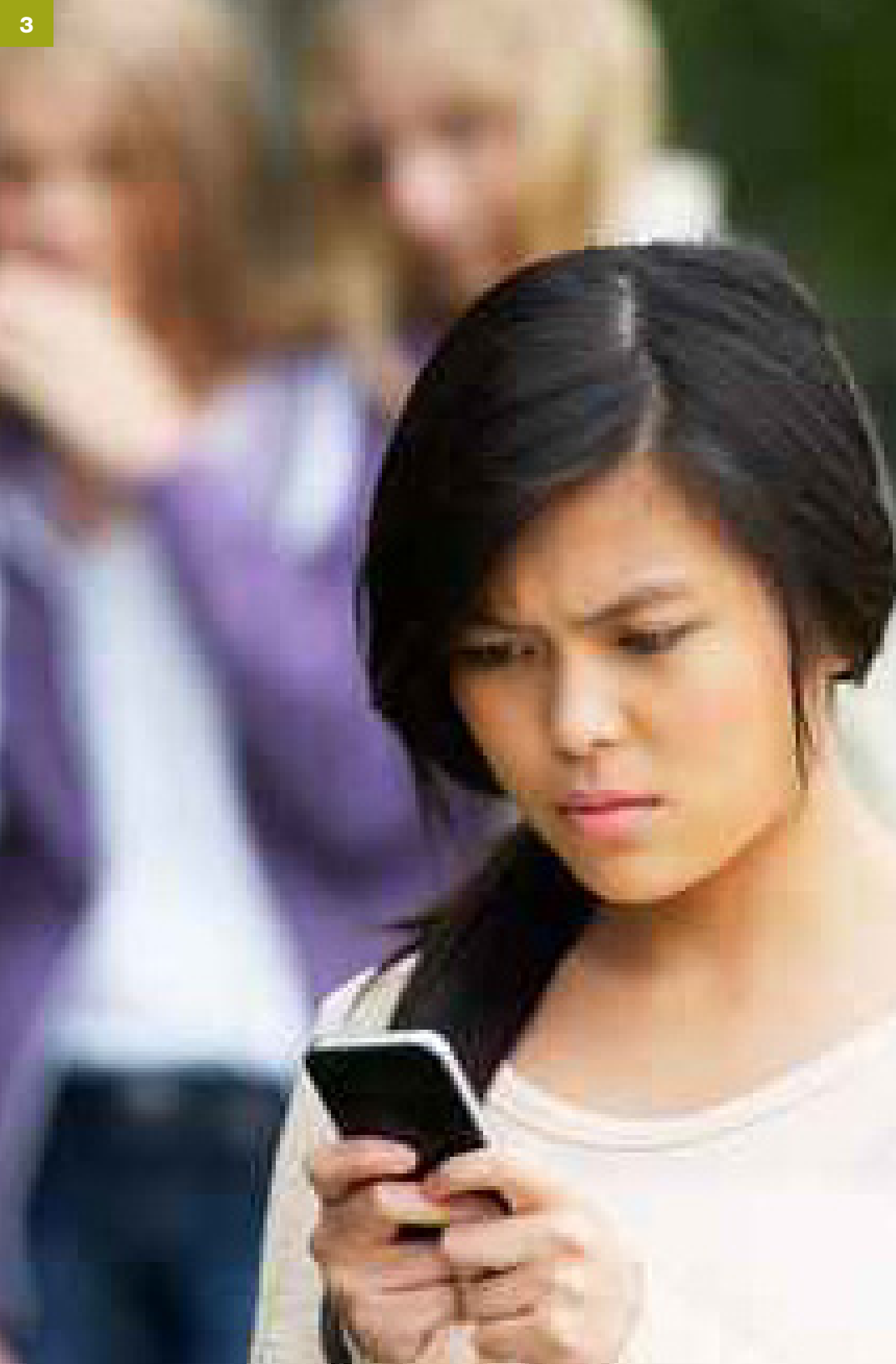
- Sending mean and sometimes threatening emails or text messages
- Breaking into an email account and sending hurtful materials to others under an assumed identity
- Creating blogs or websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures or jokes ridiculing others
- Creating polling websites where visitors are asked to rate individual's attributes in a negative manner
- Taking an embarrassing photo of someone and emailing it to others
- Tricking someone into revealing personal information, and then forwarding that information to others
- Using another's password in order to change his/her profile to reflect sexual, racist, homophobic or other content that may offend others
- Posting false or hurtful messages online
- Deliberately excluding others from instant messaging and email contact lists

The challenge of cyberbullying:

- Children who bully are able to remain anonymous, so it's difficult for adults to identify them and offer the necessary support to help stop them
- Anonymity makes it easier for children to engage in bullying behaviour they might not otherwise inflict on a child face-to-face
- Children who cyberbully are not able to see the hurt they inflict and are less likely to feel remorse or empathy for the individual being victimized.
- Children who are cyberbullied never feel safe. As long as a computer or cell phone is nearby, they are vulnerable to being bullied
- Incidents of cyberbullying can be visible to thousands of people within seconds...all with the click of a mouse

Is your child being cyberbullied?

- Talk to someone you trust, like a parent or teacher they can offer support and develop a plan to end the harassment
- Only open emails and messages from people you know
- Give your contact information only to people you know and trust
- Don't reply to hurtful messages—make them think you just don't care
- Don't give out personal information in social media sites or IM conversations
- Save copies of hurtful and abusive messages for proof of the incident
- If you are being bullied, leave the area or stop the message activity (e.g., chat room, IM)
- Avoid putting information online that you wouldn't want other classmates to read, even in an email



How do parents know if their child is involved in cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a secret behaviour that is usually hidden from adults.

Look for the following clues:

- Appears anxious or fearful
- Lower self-esteem and makes negative comments about self
- Complains of feeling unwell
- Lowered interest in activities and performance
- Avoids discussions about his/her online activities
- Appears unhappy, irritable, particularly after using the computer
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares
- Threatens to hurt self or others
- May appear isolated from the peer group
- Appears distressed when online
- Changes his/her pattern of computer usage



**TO STOP BULLYING,
WE ALL NEED TO
WORK TOGETHER
TO PROMOTE
HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS AND
ELIMINATE VIOLENCE.**

10 things parents can do to address cyberbullying...

1. Be a role model online & offline:

Model the use of positive power by respecting and supporting others. Avoid the use of negative power, such as bullying, yelling and manipulating. Parents set the tone for family relationships and youth learn relationship skills by watching their parents' behaviour. These skills will also transfer to online relationships. Show them how to resolve conflicts and settle disputes in productive ways.

2. Learn about online activities:

Many adults lack the knowledge and computer proficiency to accurately monitor and supervise online activities. Parents need to familiarize themselves with the websites, blogs, social media sites, email accounts and IM programs their children use. Parents will be better able to identify and support youth involved in cyberbullying if they know frequently used online terminology and abbreviations.

3. Think prevention: Keep the computer in a common area so you can monitor activities and reactions to online communication. Set up email, chat accounts and blogs with your children so you know the type of information they are posting online. Ask to see their email and IM contact lists so you can verify who each person is and how your child knows them. Checking in with your child will alert you of activities that may place him/her at risk for involvement in cyberbullying.

4. Start talking about cyberbullying:

Youth may be reluctant to come forward to tell you about their cyberbullying experiences, likely due to fears that their online activities will be restricted. Talk to your child about the importance of healthy relationships, both on and offline. Offer your own experiences with bullying as a starting point. These conversations let your child know that you care about what they're going through and that you're a source of support for them.

5. Encourage empathy: Talk with your child about what is considered acceptable behaviour both on- and offline. Encourage them to think about how they might feel if they were the target of online bullying. Help them understand that what may seem like fun to them is causing harm to another individual. If your child bullies others online, ensure the consequences help them understand the hurt they've caused.

6. Encourage your child to unplug:

Online communication among teens has become a central part of their social world. Despite the importance of this form of peer interaction, parents should encourage their teens to limit their time online, to "unplug," and participate in relationships offline as well. Fostering a wide range of friendships will not only help to reduce the risk of cyberbullying but will provide a source of support.

**ENCOURAGE YOUR
TEEN TO TALK TO YOU
OR ANOTHER ADULT
THEY TRUST.**



7. Problem-solve with your child:

Let your child come up with solutions to their cyberbullying problem and help them to evaluate whether various solutions will make the problem bigger or smaller. Help youth who are cyberbullied to experience positive relationships offline. Children who bully need help with learning alternative ways to solve conflicts, manage frustration and resist peer pressure to bully online.

8. Build on your child's strengths:

Children and youth who are cyberbullied may experience low self-esteem. Encourage them to participate in offline activities they enjoy so they can start to feel good about themselves. For teens who cyberbully, provide opportunities for them to use their power and natural leadership skills in a positive way (e.g. teaching siblings and younger children a new sport or skill).

9. Be ready to listen: If your child reports being bullied online, be ready to listen right away. Don't put it off. Thank your child for being brave enough to come forward and explain that it is his/her right to feel safe, both online and off. Ask for details about the incident and convey your concern. Be willing to respond to all reports, even the seemingly trivial ones such as name-calling. Consistency matters!

10. Be your child's advocate: Once your child has come forward, it's your turn to take action. This may involve setting up new email, cell phone and social media accounts for your child. Try to save copies of harassing emails and print screenshots of offensive websites/IM conversations. Contact your Internet service provider about their policies regarding harassment online and what can be done. You may wish to contact your child's school and discuss the problem with the principal/vice principal or guidance counsellor. Also, encourage your child to talk to you about continuing problems with cyberbullying.



PREVNet

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For more information about PREVNet: www.prevnet.ca

Winnipeg School Division
1577 Wall Street East
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 2X5

Phone: (204) 775-0231
Fax: (204) 772-6464
www.winnipeg.sd.ca



WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION