

## Top Ten Tips to Prevent and Deal with Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is when a person or group makes use of electronic communication devices, particularly mobile phones and the Internet to deliberately harass, intimidate or humiliate another individual.

Cyber-bullying can consist of threats, insulting embarrassing and humiliating messages, pictures or video clips, defamation and impersonation. Insults can be prejudice based, expressing racist, sexist, and homophobic and other forms of discrimination.

In Ireland, almost one in five children and teens are involved in cyber-bullying either as victims or bullies or both. Over 57% of incidents originate by mobile phones, with text messaging being the most common form of cyber-bullying both in and out of school.

- 1. Inform yourself about mobile phone and Internet use and safety.** Carefully read your child's mobile phone manual and take note of how to contact the phone's service provider should it be necessary to make a complaint.
- 2. Make sure your child or teen understands the importance of Internet and mobile safety.** Don't take it for granted that your child or teen knows how to avoid the pitfalls of electronic communication. Warn them of the dangers of putting photos of themselves on the Internet or to share indiscriminately their name, address, phone number and other personal information online. Ask them are they happy to put the same information in a shop window as they pass around amongst their peers.
- 3. Inform yourself about blocking devices, which will help to block un-wanted and abusive calls.** The vMad Bully Stop application allows your child and teenager to control who calls or sends them texts. It also enables you and your child to view the content of any blocked text.
- 4. Encourage open and non-judgmental communication with your child and teenager.** Talk to your child about their online friends and activities in the same way as you would their traditional friendships and activities. Ask if they have seen abusive and hurtful texts or post-ings. Ask them what they do if they did. If there is anything you do not understand about their mobile phone or Internet activities, ask them to show you.
- 5. Key advice for your child or teenager if targeted.** 1) Don't feel ashamed. The shame lies with the perpetrator. 2) Don't reply to abusive or hurtful messages. 3) Save the message. 4) Report the threatening or offensive behaviour to parent or teacher and/or contact the service provider (through its Customer Care or Report Abuse facility.) 5) If the cyber-bullying is very threatening and serious, contact your local Gardai. 6) Block the sender.
- 6. Share evident of cyber-bullying with the school.** Most often, the boys and girls who cyber-bully also engage in traditional face to face bullying so it is important that the school gets to know about it so that they can apprehend the perpetrators. With cyber-bullying, you will have the advantage of being able to show copies of the offensive messages, pictures or video clips used to humiliate or embarrass your child or teen.
- 7. Make sure your child and teenager understands that you disapprove of cyber-bullying.** It is important that children and teens learn to respect each other and therefore they should be told to avoid engaging in cyber-bullying for whatever reason that may tempt them to be abusive and hurtful to others. Should you as a parent be informed of their inappropriate behaviour impress upon them that one should not do onto others what one would not like done to oneself. It is vital also that you try to find out the reasons for their cyber-bullying behaviour. In that way, you can help them overcome it.
- 8. Administer consequences for breaking the rules of cyber-safety.** If necessary apply "the yellow car, red car" philosophy and as a corrective measure reduce their allowance for mobile phone credit or the time spent on the computer.
- 9. Have your child or teen understand that cyber-bullying can lead to a criminal offence.** Any text-message or Internet communication that is grossly threatening, offensive or harasses another person could be investigated by the Gardai and result in prosecution.
- 10. Keep up to-date with the advances in electronic communication.** Don't be afraid to show your ignorance. Remember we are all ignorant but about different things. Listen and learn from your child and teenager and together, you can log onto websites to learn about the positive uses of electronic communication as well as the most effective strategies to prevent and tackle bullying and cyber-bullying.

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