Cyberbullying & Online Safety 101

What Is Bullying?
Bullying is an act of repeated aggressive behavior intended to hurt another person, physically or mentally. Bullying is characterized by an individual behaving in a certain way to gain power over another person.

Why Do Kids Bully?
Bullies don't need a reason to hurt others. When asked, some replied:
- Because it makes me feel stronger, smarter, or better than the person I'm bullying
- Because I'm bullied at school or home
- Because I see others doing it
- Because I'm jealous of the other person
- Because it's one of the best ways to keep others from bullying me.

What Is Cyberbullying?
Cyberbullying is when a child, tween or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, stalked, or otherwise targeted by another child, tween or teen through email, texts, Instant Messages, websites, blogs, apps, videos or gaming. It is done deliberately and repeatedly. Cyberbullies might send mean comments, post embarrassing photos, or share private information about someone to humiliate or mock them online. Cyberbullying can happen with any type of technology including but not limited to computers, cell phones, tablets (iPad), or gaming systems (Xbox Live, Playstation Network, etc.).

Cyberbullying vs. Bullying
Cyberbullying:
- Can be anonymous.
- Can occur in your own home.
- Can happen 24/7.
- May seem inescapable.
- Difficult for parents and teachers to monitor.
- Can be viewed by an entire class, friendship group or community instantly.

Examples Of Cyberbullying
- Starting rumors through instant messaging
- Name calling in chat rooms (Ex. Video games)
- Forwarding private messages to others
- Insults through social media websites
- Posting demeaning pictures of someone else
- Making fake profiles on websites such as Instagram, SnapChat, Facebook

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Did You Know…
Teens spend an average of 26.8 hours a week online
43% of teens have experienced some form of cyberbullying

The Impact of Bullying & Cyberbullying

Youth who are bullied:

- Have higher risk of depression and anxiety including these symptoms that may persist into adulthood:
    - Increased feelings of sadness and loneliness.
    - Changes in sleep and eating patterns.
    - Loss of interest in activities.
- May have increased thoughts about suicide.
- Are more likely to have health complaints.
- Are more likely to retaliate through extreme violent measures.

Recognizing the Signs of a Cyberbullying or Bullying Victim

- Quickly switches screens or closes programs when someone walks by.
- Uses the computer or phone until all hours of the night.
- Gets unusually upset if she/he/they cannot use the computer or phone or after using the computer.
- Suddenly stops and avoids using the internet.
- Appears nervous, stressed or jumpy when a message appears or after looking at their computer or cell phone.
- Avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer.
- Becomes withdrawn from friends and family.
- Change in appetite.
- Increased signs of low self-esteem (depression, anxiety).
- Resists attending school or social events.

> **The biggest red flag that a child is being cyberbullied is a withdrawal from technology. If you notice a sudden change in computer or phone usage, talk to the child. They may be a victim of cyberbullying**

What To Do If Your Child Has Been Cyberbullied

- Do not respond to cyberbully.
- Save the evidence (print out or take a screenshot).
- Block or delete bully.
- Report it to website or app.
- Meet with school and administrators to discuss a plan of action.
- If your child has been threatened online, report to police.

Cyber Safety Tips

- You need to explain that it's your job to keep them safe and be clear about your goals and expectations.
- Set limitations and boundaries upfront.
    - Create a contract! For example, no phones overnight, no downloading apps without approval, etc.
    - What are the consequences if they break the rules? Have them in writing!

- Talk about cyber-safety and ask questions on what they use the internet for and how.
- Research apps before allowing a child to download one, and adjust privacy settings within apps accordingly.
- Password protect phones, tablets, etc.
- Look into safety apps (OurPact, Bark, Net Nanny).
- Teach your children what is and is not okay online, and what to do if something happens.
- Monitoring is mandatory - keep tabs on what they do and have conversations on their activities.
- Lead by example:
  - Talk to them about how you use the internet/social media.
  - Give your teen your full attention.
  - Designate phone-free times and increase family activities that don't involve social media (board games, card games, reading together, going for walks, watching a movie, etc.).

Additional Resources
https://joetorre.org/resources/

www.Safekids.org

www.commonsensemedia.org

www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/parent-guide/parent-guide

www.cybercitisenship.org

www.safeteens.com