



Cyberbullying

Information for Parents



How can I tell if my child is being cyberbullied?

It can be hard for parents to know whether a child is being bullied, especially if they don't want to tell anyone. You can't always see the signs, and nothing indicates for certain that a child is being bullied. But things to look out for include:

- Becoming upset, withdrawn, or has a change in behaviour – especially after looking at their phone, computer or device
- Being afraid to go to school or skipping school
- Suddenly stops using their phone or computer

What is bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour that makes someone feel upset, uncomfortable and unsafe. This is usually deliberate and repetitive and can take many forms such as Verbal, Indirect and Physical.

There are more signs and symptoms to look out for on the NSPCC website – check out the link at the bottom of this page.

What should I do if I think my child might be being cyberbullied?

1. Make sure they know they can talk to you and reassure them that you won't overreact or do anything that might make it worse.
2. Find out other sources of help that you can share with your child. If your child is being bullied they might be scared to ask you directly for help, so their school is a good place to start for other sources of support. Let your child know that if you are not available to talk to, they can always talk to a teacher, another trusted adult, or ChildLine (0800 1111).
3. Help them relax and take time out – give your child opportunities to build their confidence. Help them find things to do that make them feel good such as going swimming, walking the dog, baking cakes, making pizza, or going for a bike ride.
4. Talk to them about how they can stay safe online using technology. Sit down together and look at how they can block people or report posts. There are more tips to help keep your child safe online in the list below

5. Talk to your child's school or club.
Arrange to meet with a teacher or club leader, talk to them about your concerns and ask what action they can take
6. Talk about bullying – explain what bullying is, and ask your child if this is happening to them (see the box 'What is bullying' for help). Keep calm and remember that it's normal for a child to feel embarrassed or worried if they're being bullied.

What should I do if my child has told me they're being bullied?

1. If your child tells you they are being bullied, thank them for coming to talk to you. It takes a lot of courage to tell someone you are being bullied but it's the first step to sorting out the problem. Try not to get upset (it may be hard!) Remain calm and assure them that you will help them sort things out. Talk to them about the definition of bullying as a repeated action rather than a one-off but don't be dismissive if the incident has only happened once. It has obviously had an impact for your child to report it.
2. Listen to your child. Ask them to tell you in detail about what has been going on, what the bullying has involved and how it has made them feel.
3. Ask your child what steps they would like to take next. It's hard not to take over, but try to avoid this: talk through solutions through with your child. What would they feel comfortable with?
4. If the bullying is happening at school ask to see a teacher. This may involve having a phone conversation initially. You may be tempted to talk to the bully's parents but this can have negative repercussions for your child. A teacher may help to encourage others to keep an eye on your child at school during the day and could also help set up a system (with your child's approval and support) to report any instances of bullying. All schools are required by law to have an Anti-Bullying Policy which outlines how bullying is reported and dealt with in school.
5. Talk to your child about whom they can talk to and where they can go if they are being bullied during the day. There may be clubs at break times where they could go to feel less vulnerable.
6. Encourage them to not retaliate or react to the bullying, as this often fuels bullying behaviour. Get them to practise being assertive and having strong body language and facial expressions. Tell them to remove themselves from the situation as quickly as they can and to report any instances of bullying to an adult.

7. Monitor your child. Ask them how school has gone and check in regularly with a teacher to see how they are getting on during the day. If you don't get a detailed response ask questions. Stay positive.
8. Bullying can hugely reduce a child's confidence and self-esteem. When your child is at home try to highlight their strengths and do activities which they enjoy and which help relieve stress.
9. Keep a log/record of your child's bullying incidents so you have evidence should you need to take the matter higher up in the school.
10. Don't let the problem get you down. It's understandable to be worried but try to remain positive and not to worry - that's the best route to developing an action plan.
11. Give the school chance to work with your child to try and reduce the bullying. If you feel the school is not doing enough to address the bullying, you may want to take the matter to the School Governors.

What can I do to help keep my child safe online?

The internet and social media are constantly evolving with new websites and apps for smartphones being launched daily. As new sites and apps develop, so does the number of young people using them. Talk openly with your child about what is available to them, what they use and why there are age restrictions in place with certain sites.



Get to know the sites your child uses and then find out what they can do. This way you can understand the virtual world and talk about it more easily with your child



Educate your child to never give out identifying information about any family member or themselves. This includes: names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, passwords or bank card numbers



Encourage your child to tell you if anyone is pressing for personal information



For more advice, see the links below

Conversation Starters

It can be tough to get a teenager to talk to you about something that is worrying them. We've pulled together some ideas that might help:

- 'What is lunchtime like at your school? Who do you sit/play/hang around with?'
- 'What's it like to ride the bus/train to school?'
- 'Is anyone ever left out of activities?'
- 'What do you think needs to happen at school to stop bullying?'
- 'What should parents do to help stop bullying in schools?'
- 'If you had a magic wand or one wish what would you change and why?'
- 'What are some good qualities about yourself?' (Talk about why it's good to feel good about yourself)
- 'What's your biggest goal or ambition this year?'
- 'Do you think your friends talk to their parents about how they are?'
- 'What's the best thing about our family?'
- 'What do you think makes a good parent? What qualities should we have?'
- 'What traits do you most admire about other people?'

More information

www.antibullyingpro.com/how-to-stay-safe-online

www.parentinfo.org/

www.vodafone.com/content/parents.html

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying/signs-symptoms-effects/

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying/keeping-children-safe/

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