Digital Dagger

Facts & Stats

Cyberbullying occurs when a person is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated or embarrassed by another person using the internet. More than one-third of U.S. teens surveyed said that they had been cyberbullied or knew someone that had been cyberbullied. Cell phones, email connections, and internet social networking sites have given bullies more means and opportunity to target others.

The effects of cyberbullying can lead to low self-esteem and other negative emotional responses. Victims of cyberbullying may feel scared, frustrated, humiliated, angry, and even depressed. There have been many reported cases in which cyberbullying has led to suicide. Victims may become isolated, withdrawn, become jumpy or nervous when receiving text or instant messages, or stop going to school.

Victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying are twice as likely to be girls, and over half of all cyberbullying is not ever reported to an adult. Perpetrators may have multiple on-line accounts with different screen names or hack into accounts that aren't theirs.

Digital Access:
- 97.5% of teens have been online in the previous 30 days.
- 63% have a cell phone.
- 45% are on Facebook.
- 42% are on Instagram.

Is It Worth Jail Time?

Texas received an A++ from www.bullypolice.org for the strength of its anti-bullying laws. Designed to address harassment, stalking, dating violence, sexting, and other concerning behaviors, penalties for such crimes can range from a Class A Misdemeanor to a 3rd degree felony. In Texas, the penalties for a person convicted of a misdemeanor violation is likely to include fines and perhaps community service, while a person convicted of a 3rd degree felony for cyberbullying or internet harassment can receive 2 to 10 years in prison.

Why Does Cyberbullying Occur?

According to StopCyberBullying.org, most cyberbullying is motivated by anger, revenge, or frustration. Teens often do it to remind others of their social standing. Some people do it to purposely torture others, while some people do it out of fear of being bullied themselves. Others that are not able to defend themselves in person may take to the internet to do it. Once someone starts cyberbullying, it is easy to have a false sense of control. And yet, these people are actually out of control in their real life.

To read stories of students who have been victims or to share your own story, go to:
    www.cyberbullying.us/shareyourstory.php

How to Prevent Cyberbullying

The following are things you can do to make sure you and your friends are safe:
1. Educate yourself about the definitions of bullying, harassment, stalking, and cyberbullying.
2. Protect your password. Never give out your password to anyone, except a trusted parent.
3. Keep photos "PG." Before posting a sexy picture of yourself, consider what would happen if your parents, teachers, religious leaders, etc. see the photo.
4. Never open unidentified or unsolicited messages and links. These could also be dangerous viruses.
5. Log out of online accounts. If you leave your web browser open for convenience, someone could access your account and cause lots of problems.
6. Pause before you post. Whether you are defending yourself or attacking others, what you post online will impact your reputation.
7. Raise awareness about cyberbullying by talking about it with your friends or participating in a school campaign.
8. Setup privacy controls so that your social network profiles are only visible to approved "friends."
9. "Google" yourself regularly to check if any undesired pictures or information has been posted by others.
10. Don't be a cyberbully yourself. Treat others as you would want to be treated.

Standing Up For Yourself & Others

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." If you know someone who is being cyberbullied, report it. If you are afraid, anonymously report it at 713-222-TIPS. What to do if you or others are being cyberbullied:
1. Tell an adult that you trust, like a parent, teacher, therapist, or doctor.
2. Leave the chat room, news group, gaming area, instant message, etc. "Walk" away.
3. Block the sender's messages.
4. Never reply to the harassing messages.
5. Save and/or screenshot any harassing messages and forward them to your Internet Service Provider.
6. If the bullying includes physical threats, tell the police.

Questions to Consider

For Students
- How does it feel when another student is saying negative things about you?
- Who will you tell if you are bullied? How will you tell them?
- What is your own code of ethics regarding how you talk to people over text messages or the Internet? Does this code fit with your religious/moral beliefs?
- How do you keep yourself safe from cyberbullying?
- What can you do if you suspect a friend is being cyberbullied?
- What would you do if someone threatened you over a text message?

Parents
- What are your family's rules regarding your child's communication via the internet or cell phone?
- How would you know if your child is being bullied on the computer?
- What is the best way you have found to monitor your child's text messages and social media pages?
- Do you know personal stories of people who were being bullied and how they overcame the situation?