STOP cyberbullying

The internet offers an exciting world of experiences for children and the whole family. It can be entertaining, educational and rewarding—and provides countless opportunities to create, connect and communicate. However, just as in the real world, these rapidly developing technologies also have risks and challenges.

As a parent, you can play an important role in helping your children have safe and positive experiences online. By becoming aware of how children and young people use the internet, what they use it for, the risks in being online and some of the strategies to manage these risks, you can help guide them in the online world .

These days bullying doesn't just happen in the playground. Cyberbullying – or bullying via technology – is now very common, and it can also be harder to spot and more difficult to deal with.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying occurs when someone is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS.

Examples of cyberbullying behaviour are:

- Sending harassing messages
- Impersonating another person and gaining trust
- Posting someone else's personal information
- Posting false or unsavoury information about another person
- Posting private or doctored pictures about another person
- Using the Internet to encourage others to bully the victim

- 32% have been bullied or harassed online
- 15% of teens have had conversations made public
- 13% of teens have had rumors spread about them online
- 13% of teens have received abusive messages online

The same rules apply online as in the 'real world' about how to treat other people. Unfortunately, people don't always treat each other well online, and you may find that your child is the target of cyberbullying. No-one has the right to bully another person. At its most serious, cyberbullying is illegal and can be investigated by the police.

What can I do if my child is being cyber bullied?

- Do not be angry with your child - remember that they are the victim and it is someone else doing the wrong thing.
- Praise them for coming to you - this is a big step as most children are frightened to tell a parent about cyberbullying.
- Save and store the emails, chat logs or SMS's in case of Police investigation.
- Help your child to block and delete the bully from all contact lists.
- Do not respond to nasty emails, chats, SMS or comments - this is what the bully wants so ignore them. (They will need your help to do this)
- Use the 'report abuse' button which all websites/applications have. Tell them the problems you are having and they are obligated to investigate.
- Have some 'down time' without computer or mobile (do not do this as punishment, rather as some peaceful time where they are not being bothered).
- If unwanted contact continues, consider deleting email, msn, hotmail etc and start a new account. Only give your new details to a small list of trusted friends.
- Get a new phone number if being harassed on your phone. Report the problem to your phone company and insist on a new number for free.
- Inform your child's school. It is important that they know what is going on so that they can monitor any issues at school.
- If ongoing report to Police. Each state has laws that prohibit online bullying and stalking.

Marion Barnes
Welfare Officer

An excellent Cyberbullying information website is :-

Cybersmart : www.**cyber**smart.gov.au

Cybersmart provides activities, resources and practical advice to help
young children, teens and parents safely enjoy the online world.