**Cyber-Bullying**

**What is Cyber-Bullying?**

“Cyber-bullying is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet, cell phones or any other interactive technology, including Skype, etc. It has to have been started by a minor, against another minor. Cyber-bullying is not usually a one-time thing; it tends to be something ongoing between the minors, and can include one or many bullies. Kids usually know cyber-bullying when they see it, while parents may be more worried about the inappropriate language used by the bullies than the hurtful effect of the posts.

**How do I talk to my children about cyber-bullying? And what should I do if my child is being bullied in this way?**

1. **Maintain an open door policy**. Kids are often too scared to report bullying incidents. They may feel embarrassed, [frightened](http://blog.safetyweb.com/cyber-bullying-new-study-suggests-teens-fear-online-harassment/), and even guilty that they did something wrong. Some kids are simply too scared to tell their parents for fear of their cell phone and Internet privileges being taken away.

2. **Don’t overreact**. Try to evaluate the situation and be supportive of your child without immediately calling the school, but…

3. **Ask questions.** [Cyber-bullying is not a joke](http://blog.safetyweb.com/cyber-bullying-not-a-joke/). Find out if your child believes he/she is in actual physical danger. If a real threat has been made or there was already an assault, contact the school district and your local authorities immediately.

4. **Be** [**understanding**](http://blog.safetyweb.com/cyberbullying-starting-the-conversation-about-cyberbullying/). Remember that words *do* hurt. Cyber-bullying can be extremely cruel and [more traumatizing](http://www.safetyweb.com/stop-cyber-bullying#Similarities) than in-person bullying because it might be anonymous and it occurs 24/7. Your child may be truly suffering emotionally. Tell them that they are not alone.

5. **Never retaliate.** Responding to a cyber-bully is not recommended, as it can sometimes create more problems for your child and increase the harassing incidents. Encourage your child to avoid retaliation whenever possible as well.

6. **Save the evidence.** If things do escalate, you will need digital or hard copy records of the harassment to present to the police.

7.**Know your school’s policies.** Most schools are mandated by the state to have [policies](http://blog.safetyweb.com/cyberbullying-parents-and-schools-must-respond-to-cyberbullying/) on bullying, harassment and violence. Find out what your school’s policies are and hold them accountable for enforcing the rules.

8.  **Monitor communications**. Learn who your child is communicating with both online and via [cell phone](http://www.safetyweb.com/teens-and-mobile-phones). The easiest way of doing this is by using an [Internet monitoring service](http://www.safetyweb.com/) (like [SafetyWeb](http://www.safetyweb.com/)). Watch closely for signs that cyber-bullying is continuing or becoming more frequent.

9. **File a complaint.** If the harassment takes place via cell phone, trace the number and contact the cell phone carrier. If the bullying occurs online, you can contact the site’s administrator or Internet service provider.

10. **Get the** [**“Find Help” Facebook app**](http://apps.facebook.com/findhelp/)**.** SafetyWeb has launched a helpful new tool for users to easily report inappropriate behavior or content online. Kids can bookmark the app and then click “Find Help” to be directed to useful phone numbers and links for reporting incidents.

11. **Consider counseling.** If your child is exhibiting signs of [depression](http://www.safetyweb.com/teens-and-depression#Signs) or anger, consult with your family physician or a behavioral health professional for advice on further treatment.