

Cyberbullying

By Bright Tomorrows Staff from Netsmartz.org

Cyberbullying is just what it sounds like – bullying through Internet applications and technologies such as Instant Messaging (IM), social networking sites, and cell phones. It can start easily—with a rumor, a photo, or a forwarded message—and just as easily spiral out of control. An embarrassing video posted to a social networking site by someone in Kansas tonight may be watched by someone in Japan tomorrow. Cyberbullying victims may be targeted anywhere, at any time.

Common forms of cyberbullying:

- **Flaming and Trolling** – sending or posting hostile messages intended to “inflare” the emotions of others
- **Happy-Slapping** – recording someone being harassed or bullied in a way that usually involves physical abuse, then posting the video online for public viewing
- **Identity Theft/Impersonation** – stealing someone’s password and/or hijacking their online accounts to send or post incriminating or humiliating picture, videos, or information
- **Photoshopping** – doctoring digital images so that the main subject is placed in a compromising or embarrassing situation
- **Physical Threats** – sending messages that involve threats to a person’s physical safety
- **Rumor Spreading** – spreading gossip through e-mail, text messaging, or social networking sites

Signs your child may be a victim of cyberbullying:

- Avoids the computer, cell phone, and other technological devices or appears stressed when receiving an e-mail, instant message, or chat.
- Withdraws from family and friends or acts reluctant to attend school and social events
- Avoids conversations about computer use
- Exhibits signs of low self-esteem including depression and/or fear
- Has declining grades
- Has poor eating or sleeping habits

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