

Responding to Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Parents



Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D.
Cyberbullying Research Center

- 1. Make sure your child feels (and is) safe and secure**, and convey unconditional support. Parents must demonstrate to their children through words and actions that they both desire the same end result: that the cyberbullying stop and that life does not become even more difficult.
- 2. Thoroughly investigate** the situation so that you fully understand what happened, who was involved, and how it all started. Getting to the root cause of the behavior will help you develop an appropriate response – whether your child was the target or the bully.
- 3. Refrain from immediately banning access** to instant messaging, e-mail, social networking Web sites, a cell phone, or the Internet in general. This strategy neither addresses the underlying interpersonal conflict, nor eliminates current or future instances of victimization. It will also likely close off a candid line of communication and promote overt defiance of the ban among children accustomed to frequent online access.
- 4.** When deemed appropriate, **contact the parents of the cyberbully**, or schedule a meeting with school administrators (or a trusted teacher) to discuss the matter.
- 5.** When necessary, **contact and work with the Internet Service Provider**, Cell Phone Service Provider, or Content Provider (MySpace or Facebook, for example) to investigate the issue or remove the offending material.
- 6.** When appropriate, **contact the police**. For example, law enforcement should be contacted when physical threats are involved or a crime has possibly been committed (such as capturing, sending, or posting sexually-explicit images of minors).
- 7. Talk to other parents** through school and community organizations to raise awareness and determine the extent to which cyberbullying is occurring among other kids in the area (chances are, it is). Alert other parents if your child is being cyberbullied, as this might prompt them to inquire about the online experiences of their own kids.
- 8. Apply firm consequences** if your child engages in cyberbullying behaviors, and escalate punishment if the behaviors repeat or are particularly serious, so that your child realizes the unacceptability of harassing others online.
- 9. Work with your child's school.** They are trained to deal with these kinds of problems. If you feel like you aren't getting anywhere, consult with educators from other schools.
- 10. Talk to your child about the problem** in detail, and make sure you fully understand the roles of both parties, the motivations, and how technology was misused. Work together with the child to arrive at a mutually-agreeable course of action, including soliciting their input for resolving the situation (what would *they* like to see happen?).

Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at Florida Atlantic University and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Together, they lecture across the United States on the causes and consequences of cyberbullying and offer comprehensive workshops for parents, teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, law enforcement, youth and others concerned with addressing and preventing online aggression.

The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. For more information, visit <http://www.cyberbullying.us>. © 2009 Cyberbullying Research Center - Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin