
Cyberbullying Resources for Youth and Their Families

Jennifer P. D'Auria, PhD, RN, CPNP |
J Pediatr Health Care. 2014;28(2):e19-e22.

Introduction

Cyberbullying is a global public health challenge with the potential to disrupt or destroy the lives of children, adolescents, and their families. It may have negative consequences, especially for the victim, ranging from school absences to depression to suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) recommends that health professionals provide education and counseling for parents and youth regarding bullying, including strategies for how to deal with it. This article will focus on informational and educational resources about cyberbullying available on the Web for parents, youth, educators, and health professionals. Mobile applications (apps) to combat cyberbullying will also be addressed.

It's Personal

Although no universal definition of cyberbullying exists, it generally refers to the deliberate and repeated use of information technology by an individual to harm or embarrass another person or group. Common forms of cyberbullying among minors may include "flaming," denigration, impersonation, exposure, trickery, outing, and exclusion (Li, 2007). Cyberstalking and cyberharassment are generally adult forms of cyber crimes that may also affect the pediatric population (McAfee, 2013).

Malicious material may be transmitted through a variety of media, including e-mail and text messages, personal Web sites, and social networking sites. New technologies allow a cyberbully to transmit harmful information anonymously through the use of a pseudonym or fake e-mail address. The speed and widespread nature of the Internet allow the bully to disseminate information almost instantaneously to the victim's digital environment, or worse, to thousands of bystanders in cyberspace. The vast number of invisible bystanders on the electronic media may join in by viewing or forwarding the harmful information to others. This information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and thus the victim is unable to escape the abuse at home or school. Thus, although the cyberbullying act may occur only once, the victim may experience the effects of the embarrassing or harmful attack in cyberspace repeatedly over time (Baas, de Jong, & Drossaert, 2013).

The Face of Cyberbullying

Researchers have recently begun to examine the epidemiologic features of cyberbullying. Patchin and Hinduja (2012) argue that great variation exists in research findings about the actual extent of cyberbullying because of the lack of a uniform definition for it among researchers. According to their findings, between 2004 and 2013, about 24% of adolescents (ages 10 to 18 years) in the southern United States reported being a victim of cyberbullying and 16% reported that they cyberbullied others (Patchin, 2013). Characteristics of youth that place them at risk for being a target of cyberbullying (as well as traditional bullying) include disability, poverty, being a member of a minority ethnic group, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender status (Cross, Piggan, Douglas, & Vonkaenel-Flatt, 2012).

The technology used by adolescents may influence the form of cyberbullying they experience. Hinduja and Patchin (2010b) asked adolescents to report the technologies they used most commonly on a weekly basis. The participants reported that they used cell phones 83% of the time, the Internet for schoolwork 50.8% of the time, and Facebook 50.1% of the time. Female adolescents were more likely than male adolescents to be a victim of cyberbullying and to report it. The primary form of cyberbullying reported by female adolescents was the spreading of rumors, whereas male adolescents reported the posting online of harmful pictures or videos.

Research findings continue to indicate that youth are hesitant to report a cyberbullying incident to parents and other trusted adults. Common reasons youth report for not telling a parent (or adult) about being a victim of cyberbullying include parental overreaction to a situation and losing or having their online privileges limited (Baas et al., 2013, Hinduja and Patchin, 2013, Šleglova and Cerna, 2011).

In the Spotlight

Antibullying initiatives have been in the spotlight for the past few years both online and offline. The Stopbullying.gov (<http://www.stopbullying.gov>) Web site, which was revitalized in 2012, provides informational and educational resources for parents, educators, children, teens, and the community about how to stop and prevent bullying, including cyberbullying. This site is managed by the United States Department of Health & Human Services in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Justice. All materials are in the public domain and are free to copy, distribute, or transmit.

Several national grassroots campaigns have increased the visibility of bullying as an issue and ways to speak out against it. The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights group established a National Bullying Prevention Week in October 2006. This event has grown to include the entire month of October with groups, agencies, and organizations from across the world sponsoring events to highlight bullying prevention. The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights National Bullying Prevent Center has many excellent digital resources for parents, educators, and youth. BullyBust (<http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust>) was launched in 2009 by the National School Climate Center in collaboration with the Broadway musical *Wicked* to help students and adults learn to stand up to bullying and take action to combat it. In 2010, the Cartoon Network launched the Stop Bullying: Speak Up campaign (<http://www.cartoonnetwork.com/promos/stopbullying>). They partnered with celebrities, parents, adults, schools, and other organizations to encourage kids to prevent bullying at school and online. The It Gets Better Project (<http://www.itgetsbetter.org>) was also launched in 2010 to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who were bullied or harassed at school. The DoSomething.org (<http://www.dosomething.org>) campaign is focused on encouraging

13- to 25-year-olds to get involved and take action to change the negative impact of social issues such as bullying and school violence.

For parents, teachers, law enforcement officers, and educators (as well as older youth), the Cyberbully Research Center (<http://cyberbullying.us>) provides up-to-date evidence about cyberbullying. This site includes some excellent evidence-based brochures that may be downloaded, copied, and distributed. Commonsense Media is a nonprofit organization focused on providing reliable information about the electronic media for administrators, parents, and youth. They developed an excellent Cyberbullying Toolkit for educators entitled "Standing up, not standing by" (<http://www.common sense media.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit>). The materials can be downloaded by registering for a free membership with Commonsense Media. Two other high-quality sites include Media Smarts (<http://mediasmarts.ca/cyberbullying>), a center for media and digital literacy, and the long-standing Wired Safety (<https://www.wiredsafety.org>) site.

Cyberbullying Resources for Youth

Many of the aforementioned antibullying campaigns have developed outstanding Web sites and resources tailored to the developmental level and interests of young children through young adults. Most sites use a variety of technologies to advance the understanding of youth about bullying, including interactive modules, games, discussion forums, blogs, and celebrity testimonials. Several sites also include trained peer mentors to serve as positive role models to help bullied youth.

provides the sponsoring organization and links to selected resources for youth about bullying and/or online safety. Readers are encouraged to set aside some time to review these sites and materials to increase their own understanding about the digital resources available for children, adolescents, and young adults. Most of these sponsoring organizations also provide information and educational resources for parents and educators.

Table 1. Sponsoring organization(s) and selected resources for youth about bullying prevention and/or online safety

Sponsoring organization(s)	Resources	Uniformed resource locator
Childnet International, Charity in the United Kingdom	Digizen	http://www.digizen.org
	KidSMART	http://www.kidsmart.org.uk
	Know IT All	http://www.childnet.com/resources/kia
	How to Keep Safe while Chatting Online	http://www.chatdanger.com
Cybersmart, Commonwealth of Australia	Young Kids (0–7 years)	http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/youngkids.aspx
	Kids (8–12 years)	http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Kids.aspx
	Teens (13–18 years)	http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Teens.aspx
Futures Without Violence; Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, Advertising Council	That's Not Cool	http://www.thatnotcool.com
Kidshealth, Nemours	Dealing with Bullies	http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/bullies.html
	Cyberbullying	http://kidshealth.org/teen/homework/problems/cyberbullying.html
MTV, Viacom International Inc.	A Thin Line	http://www.athinline.org
Netsmartz Workshop, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children	NS Teens	http://www.nsteens.org
	NetSmartz Kids	http://www.netsmartzkids.org
Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights, National Bullying Prevention Center	All About Bullies...Big and Small	http://allaboutbulliesbigandsmall.com
	Kids Against Bullying	http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/#/home
	Teens Against Bullying	http://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/#/home
	WE WILL Generation	http://www.pacer.org/bullying/wewillgen
PBS Kids Go! Public Broadcasting Service	Webonauts Internet Academy	http://pbskids.org/webonauts
Child Exploitation and Online Protection, United Kingdom	Think U Know	http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk (Sections for children ages 5–7, 8–10, and 11–16 years)

WiredSafety.org	Stop Cyberbullying	http://stopcyberbullying.org/kids/index.html (Sections for children ages 7–10, 11–13, and 14–17 years)
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Cyberbullying Apps

Parents simply may not know enough about technology to help a child or adolescent who is bullied online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b). In an effort to help parents and protect youth, cyberbullying apps for parents and children have entered the marketplace. provides a selected list of apps available to help cyberbullied victims and their parents monitor, analyze, and block inappropriate words or messages received on a digital device. Several mobile apps provide an even wider array of features, including the ability to block or filter categories of Web sites (e.g., social networking, gambling, and YouTube) by the child's age, set time limits, and receive reports of their child's Internet activity.

Table 2. Selected features of applications to combat cyberbullying

Name of application	Selected features
Crazy Text Manager http://iconosys.com	Monitor and record incoming texts
	Block text spam
	Keep texts hidden
	Stop texts
GoGoStat Parental Guidance http://www.gogostat.com/pg	Filter and sort archived information
	Panic button to report emergencies to police
	Parent alert to inappropriate messaging on Facebook
Professor Garfield Cyberbullying http://learninglab.org	Help user identify bullying behavior
	Suggests strategies to combat bullying
Mobicip http://www.mobicip.com	Blacklist (blocked) and Whitelist (access) of Web sites
	Category blocking of Web sites
	E-mail and activity reports
	Monitoring or filtering by use or device
	Time limits for Internet Access
	Web-based controls for parents
	YouTube filtering
Safety Web http://www.safetyweb.com	Analyze child's online activity; automated parent alerts: Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, mobile phones
	Find online IDs
	Parent monitoring of child's cell phone calls, texts
Web Safety http://www.websafety.com	Disable cell phone for text, e-mail or Web when driving
	Notify parents of explicit texting, suspicious online behavior
Word Bully http://iconosys.com	Customized list of words to monitor
	Global positioning system physical locator
	Monitor incoming and outgoing texts for threatening, profane words or phrases
	Parent-controlled password
	Whitelist cell phone numbers

It is also important for parents and youth be aware of new technologies, particularly those that may invite cyberbullying. Some popular apps to check out include Instagram (an online photo sharing and social network platform), Snapchat (a photo messaging app for children older than 13 years), Snapkidz (a photo app for children younger than 13 years), Kik Messenger (a free texting app), Keek (a social media site), and Ask.fm (social networking; option of anonymity). Parents and youth should always be educated about the importance of reading the safety and privacy policies on a social media site, as well as finding out exactly what information from an online profile will be available publicly. Parents who are not tech savvy should be encouraged to research popular apps among youth and ask their children to show them how the ones they use work.

Speaking Out

The bottom line is that it is important to help youth learn how to speak out against bullying. The Great American NO BULL Challenge and Campaign organization (<http://nobullgreatamerican.votigo.com/nobullgreatamerican>) promotes digital citizenship among youth (13 to 18 years old) by encouraging them to use film to promote social change. It is helpful to view some of the "Winning Films" from the NO BULL Teen Video Awards; a good place to start is with the 2013 winning documentary about

cyberbullying, "Numbskull."

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Conflicts of interest

None to report.

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J Pediatr Health Care. 2014;28(2):e19-e22. © 2014 Mosby, Inc.