



Cyberbullying and misuse of technology

Cyberbullying is bullying – where Internet, a mobile phone digital cameras to hurt somebody, harass or embarrass them. **1 in 5** New Zealand high school students reported being cyberbullied. This is a 24/7 problem, which effects school, home and the wider community.

A cyber bully is particularly dangerous because an embarrassing or hurtful message can be sent and forwarded to a **huge number of people** in a matter of seconds. Far-reaching and irreversible.

Anonymity can make this even more dangerous, because people are much more likely to do things that they know are wrong if they believe that there is no way that they will be caught.

Ways to identify cyberbullying and misuse

Signs of abuse:

1. Changes in mood, sleep, appetite or behavior
2. Withdrawal from friends and activities
3. School work slipping
4. Bouts of anger or mood swings
5. Avoidance of social gatherings
6. Emotional distress prior to or after using the Internet
7. Avoiding answering questions about what he or she is doing on the computer or cell phone
8. Frequent episodes of not feeling well – headaches or stomach aches



Signs of abuser:

- Frequent computer use especially at night
- Excessive laughing during computer or cell phone use
- Avoiding answering questions about what he or she is doing on the computer or cell phone
- Multiple online accounts or use of accounts not in their own name
- Quickly closing or clicking out of a programme when someone walks by
- Agitation when denied computer or cell phone access



Ways to address cyberbullying and misuse

For parents:

1. If a child tells you they've been cyberbullied, **reassure them that they've done the right thing telling you.**
2. **Reassure your child that you will not remove their technology .**
3. Make sure your **kids standup for themselves**, have supportive friends, but **don't retaliate.**
4. **Discuss cyberbullying** and see if they understand the issues – it's important that young people who witness others being bullied offer support to the victim or report it.
5. If you think the person bullying your child is at your child's school, **tell the Principal or Deputy Principal** as soon as possible.
6. **Save evidence** of all bullying messages and images (messages stored on a phone or print outs of screenshots). These may be used to report the bullying to **school, communications providers** or the **police.**
7. If there are threats and you fear for the immediate safety of your child, **contact the police.**

For young people:

1. **Ignore the person** and **walk away from the situation**.
2. **Get off the Internet**. It's impossible for them to harass you when you aren't there!
3. If you are upset, **talk to someone you love and trust**.
Block or **delete** offenders.
4. **Don't send messages on to anyone else**. This will only make the problem worse. Save these as evidence.
5. If you see anyone else being bullied, report it. There is strength in numbers.
6. If someone has hacked into your online profile (Facebook), or created a fake one as an imposter, see below for more details.



Safe set up and appropriate use

Facebook:

Facebook has terms and conditions (Code of conduct), which **prohibits bullying and other abusive behaviours** including; harassment, impersonation, identity theft, being locked out of your account, being tagged in photos you don't want to be, abusive messages on your page or about you on someone else's page.

Ways to combat this is to be **proactive about how you set up and manage your Facebook account** and privacy settings. Follow some simple rules for how to protect your identity and reputation

For everyone:

1. **Control Your Default Privacy** to "Friends only" not friends of friends or set it to "**Private**".
2. Protect your Albums, wall, choose "**Custom**" for each option to restrict who sees what on your Facebook page.
3. Don't friend **randoms**.
4. Keep private **information private** - remove surnames, phone numbers or addresses.
5. Remove flirty photos or flirty nicknames, **avoid embarrassing Wall Posts**
6. **Restrict access to your information** so personal data doesn't end up in the hands of marketers.
7. Make sure you uncheck the **public search results box**, so people can't find your Facebook page through a Google search.
8. When you have finished in Facebook, **always log out** and clear your browsers privacy settings to remove all cookies set by Facebook.
9. Report any abuse (guidelines), by clicking on '**Report/Block this person**' link (located on the bottom left column of the page). Steps will be taken against the offender within 72 hours.
10. **Block or delete an offender or imposter**.
11. If you have been hacked or your Facebook identity stolen, contact the service provider -change your password, possibly your e-mail and username too.
12. Take screenshots of any bullying messages sent and **save them as evidence** to show parents, school, Facebook, Netsafe, Police
13. **Have a great password** - at least eight characters, one or more numbers, and at least one special character or capital.
 - Don't use it for ALL your accounts.
 - Don't share it with friends.
 - Change it regularly.



Cellphone:

Most young people have access to cellphones, it's best they informed about some basic safety skills, so that they are safe and responsible 24/7.

For parents:

1. **Carefully evaluate whether or not your kids need texting on their cellphones.** Just because other kids in their class have it doesn't mean your child needs it.
2. **If your kids do text, get an unlimited texting plan.** Charges can mount swiftly.
3. **Make rules around when and where.** No texting during meals, during class, on family outings. No cellphone after 8pm in the bedroom.
4. Check their phone **to filter out age-inappropriate content**, restrict downloads, in-app purchases.
5. Encourage them to **be careful** who they give their mobile number to and not to pass on friends' numbers without asking them first.
6. Remind children not to respond to texts from **people they don't know**.
7. If your child is exposed to bullying or inappropriate messages, don't retaliate, **save at least three copies**, contact your phone company and ask them to take action.
8. Talk with your child about how images can get sent on to others and be **used to bully or embarrass them**.
9. **If you suspect your kids aren't texting appropriately, you can always look at their messages.** You're not snooping, it's our job as parents to ensure our kids use technologies safely and responsibly.
10. **Establish consequences for misuse.** Cheating, inappropriate messages, sexual content: take the phone away for a week.
11. **Watch your own behavior.** Be the role model.



For young people:

1. **Be respectful when texting** - both to the people you're texting with and those around you.
2. **Be careful.** Assume that even "private" texts can become public.
3. **Verify the caller or texter.** Don't respond to numbers you don't know.
4. **Answer the phone when it's Mum or Dad.**
5. **Posting - Be selective** about what is posted from your cell phone. What would granny say if she saw it?
6. **Ask permission to use cameras.** Before you take someone's picture or video, or forward something, ask if it's OK.
7. **Don't publicly embarrass people.** Don't post someone's photo, especially unflattering ones from your cell phone without permission.
8. **Apps and downloads** – know how to manage money when downloading apps, games, and music.
9. **Be safe** – turn off **location** services.
10. **Ignore any abuser** – don't reply but **save the evidence** and **report the abuse** (parents, phone company, school, Netsafe, police)