

Standing Up to Cyberbullying

Parent Outreach Kit

Give parents the tools and confidence they need to talk to their kids about cyberbullying.

This kit has what you need. In it, you'll find:



A High-Impact PowerPoint Presentation

These eight slides — including a detailed script — are designed to make it easy to host a parent engagement night around cyberbullying. Use it as the centerpiece of an in-person event specifically about cyberbullying, or incorporate 20 minutes on cyberbullying into another back-to-school parent engagement event. We recommend modifying the presentation to meet your school's needs by adding in specific details and examples from your school community.



An Engaging Parent Education Video

Showing this video is a great way to kick off your cyberbullying parent engagement event. You can also share this link with parents to help them find the video and related tips on our site:

www.commonsense.org/advice-for-parents/5-things-you-need-know-about-cyberbullying



A Useful Discussion Guide

Our discussion guide is a facilitator's best friend. Use it for guidance on leading a group discussion about cyberbullying with parents. It has questions and vignettes that will get parents thinking and talking about this tricky and sometimes sensitive subject.



Relevant Parent Tip Sheets

Distribute these tip sheets in person, or send them home with other school mailings. You may also choose to post the PDFs to your website or copy and paste some portion of the tips into your email newsletter to parents.



Helpful Communication Templates

Let your whole community know about your efforts to help students stand up to cyberbullying. We've included a newsletter template, a flyer to put up in your school, and the template for a press release that you can use to encourage your local paper to cover this important topic.

Common Sense on Cyberbullying For Elementary School Students

What's the issue?

Spreading rumors and bullying is nothing new. Kids have always found ways to be cruel to one another. But computers, cell phones, and digital technologies make bullying easier and more widespread. Kids now use their cell phones and computers to hurt, humiliate, and harass each other, and it's starting at younger ages. Cyberbullying is defined as repeatedly sending or posting harmful or mean messages, images, or videos about someone else using the Internet, cell phones, or other digital technologies. Kids may call each other names, say nasty things about one another, threaten each other, or make others feel uncomfortable or scared.

Children's increased access to digital technology has created more pathways to communicate — for both good and for bad. Although cyberbullying is typically associated with tweens and teens, more cases are now being reported with younger children. Cyberbullying is especially disturbing because it is constant, inescapable, and very public. It can happen anytime — at school or at home — and can involve large groups of kids. The combination of the boldness created by being

anonymous and the desire to be seen as “cool” can cause a kid who normally wouldn't say anything mean face to face to show off to other kids by cyberbullying someone. Younger kids may bully to get attention, because they think it will make them popular, or because they want to look tough and make others afraid of them. And because it happens online, it can easily go undetected by parents and teachers.

Why it matters

Cyberbullying is a growing problem among younger kids. Younger kids are starting to use online communication and at the same time they are exploring ways to test other people's reactions. For instance, kids who send a mean message might not fully understand how another person might react to that message. What's more, hurtful information posted on the Internet is extremely difficult to prevent or remove, and anyone can see it. Imagine being publically humiliated in front of everyone you know. Such behavior usually happens when adults aren't around. So parents and teachers often see only the anxiety or depression that results from their kids being hurt or bullied. Parents can help by becoming aware of the issue, learning to identify the warning signs of bullying, and helping kids to understand how to be respectful to others online.

Some facts

20 percent of students ages 10 to 18 report experiencing cyberbullying (Cyberbullying Research Center, Hinduja and Patchin, 2010)

Perpetrators of cyberbullying are usually the same age as their target (Wolak, 2007)

Mean or hurtful comments (14 percent) and rumors (13 percent) are the most common forms of cyberbullying (Cyberbullying Research Center, Hinduja and Patchin, 2010)

Nearly half of social workers at elementary, middle, and high schools report they do not feel equipped to deal with cyberbullying at their schools (Children & Schools, Slovak and Singer, 2011)

Common Sense says

- » **Limit online socializing.** Because there is more risk for bullying on sites where kids can openly communicate, avoid open and free chat sites and look for those that offer prescribed or prescreened chat options, like Webkinz or Club Penguin.
- » **Explain the basics of good behavior online.** Remind your kids that being mean, lying, or telling secrets hurts — both online and offline. And remember to praise your child when you see good behavior.
- » Remind your kids not to share passwords with their friends. A common form of cyberbullying is when kids share passwords, log on to another child's account, and pretend to be that person. Kids can protect themselves by learning that passwords are strictly private, and they should be shared only with their parents.
- » **Make sure they talk to someone (even if it's not you).** A child should tell a parent, teacher, or trusted adult if he or she is being bullied online. Tell your child that this isn't tattling, it's standing up for him- or herself.
- » **Advise them on how to handle cyberbullying.** Even though they might be tempted to, your child should never retaliate against a cyberbully. They can stop the cycle by not responding to the bully. Also remind them to save the evidence rather than delete it.
- » **Establish consequences for bullying behavior.** If your child is mean to or humiliates another child, consider taking phone and computer privileges away and discuss what it means to be respectful to others.

Families can talk about it

- » **Make a list together of how talking online is different than talking face to face.** Get kids to think about how it might be easier to say things online you wouldn't say in person, and how this may be good sometimes and a problem at other times.
- » **Practice writing a text or chat message to a friend.** Model for your child how to compliment people and how to avoid mean words or behaviors.
- » **Point out that it's important to stick up for others, online as well as in the real world.** Discuss ways they can support friends who are bullied and report bad behavior they see online.

Cyberbullying

This discussion guide will help you facilitate a conversation with parents about cyberbullying. Use the following questions and stories to get parents thinking and talking about this issue. You may also want to show the Cyberbullying parent tip video and hand out the Cyberbullying parent tip sheet to help spark the discussion.

What's going on with your kids?

Questions to encourage parents to share experiences, concerns, and solutions

1. Why do you think kids use the Internet or their cell phones to bully others?
2. What are all the different ways that kids can use technology to bully or humiliate others?
3. What makes cyberbullying and its potential impact different from other forms of bullying?
4. If you discovered that your child had sent a hateful or an inappropriate Instant, Text, or Picture Message to another child, what would you do?
5. If you suspect (but aren't sure) that your child is being cyberbullied, what could you do?
6. What might you include in your list of things to teach kids about being good "digital citizens"? What do you think your child would include?

Elementary school child

Seven-year-old Kelly Jones and her friends regularly go on a Web site where they design cartoon dolls, name them, and post them up for ratings by other viewers. She showed her mom that someone she didn't know kept posting dolls named Smelly Kelly Jones. "It makes me sad 'cause... are they talking about... me?" Her mom asked her to take a break from the computer and help in the backyard. Could it be that one of her friends was posting these dolls under this username as a way to make fun of her?

- » What can Kelly's mom do?
- » What can she say to Kelly to make her feel better?

Middle school preteen or teen

Kim receives a call from the school principal about her twelve-year-old son. The principal says that her son — who's never had any trouble in school — faces suspension because he sent some threatening text messages to another student in class. The texts said, "14 days until you die — the power of Zircon will prevail." Four other boys in the class are involved and one of their text messages warns, "Disaster will come if you step into our circle of fire!" Her son is being held in after-school detention, and Kim has been asked to come in immediately.

- » What would you do if you received this call? What questions would you have?
- » Who are all the people affected in this situation? What might their views be?
- » What do you think the consequences should be for the kids involved?
- » How can parents monitor their kids' cell phone messages, pictures, and texts?

Middle school / high school teen

Jennifer's tenth-grade daughter Mia has just broken up with her boyfriend Ryan. It was a hard break-up and Ryan is still steaming, but he has started to date a girl on Mia's volleyball team. All the kids in Mia's class are on Facebook — they use it to plan parties, post pictures, share the latest news about their favorite bands, and just hang out. Jennifer and the other parents complain that Facebook is a waste of time, but they've pretty much accepted that it is part of their kids' lives.

While cooking breakfast one day, Jennifer hears her daughter scream and then rush down the stairs. "Mom, my friends just texted to tell me that someone posted a video of me naked in the locker room on YouTube! And all over his Facebook page there are old photos of Ryan and me kissing and private emails that I sent to him. I tried to get on to his profile page to see them, but he's blocked me as a friend. Mia collapses at the table sobbing, "I'm sooo pissed and so embarrassed. My friends are going to hate me!"

- » What would you do and say if this happened to your child?
- » What role do you think the school should play in addressing this situation, as opposed to the parents or the kids themselves?
- » What are some different ways that kids can use technology to bully others?
- » How can playing pranks, even relatively innocent ones, have hugely damaging consequences when video technology and the Internet are involved?
- » How can we teach our kids to self-reflect before they self-reveal? Treat one another kindly online? Respect their own privacy and the privacy of others?

High school teen

Nima senses something is bothering her teenage son. He's been quiet and withdrawn lately. She suspects it has something to do with his being online, because sometimes he appears frustrated and walks away from the computer abruptly. The family uses an Internet monitoring software, so Nima decides to check the web history to see where her son has been online. He was on MySpace a lot. One MySpace page was a profile that showed a picture of her son's head morphed onto a dog's body with some other degrading content. After her initial shock, she was confused about how someone could have done this. She knew what MySpace was but had never really visited the site before.

- » How did Nima know something was wrong?
- » What steps should she take in this situation?
- » What can be done to help her son, who has been hurt and ridiculed publicly?
- » Who can her son turn to if he can't approach his mom?

Common Sense Media, an independent nonprofit, is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology.

Raise Media Smart Kids

Webkinz. Facebook. Cell Phones. Video Gaming – it’s hard to keep up with everything your kids are playing, posting and texting. But you can help them be safe and responsible.



5 things parents can do:

1. Set limits.

On time and place, and choose age-appropriate TV, movies, music and games.

2. Make rules.

Cell phones belong outside the classroom and away from the dinner table. If your kids wouldn’t say something to someone’s face, they shouldn’t text it either. And IM? Not during homework.

3. Discuss safety.

Tell them what kind of photos, videos and information are okay to post online.

4. Be a media critic.

Teach your kids not to believe everything they see or hear. Online, in the movies or on TV. Talk to them about media messages, what you agree with and what you don’t.

5. Join the fun.

Watch, listen and play with your kids. Ask their opinions and embrace their world!

For Internet safety tips and helpful guides to finding the best media for your kids based on their age and what they like, visit www.common sense media.org

Newsletter Template

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology like cell phones or email to deliberately and repeatedly harm or embarrass someone else. Research shows that about one third of 10-18 year-olds have experienced some form of cyberbullying.

Join our school community in helping our students avoid this pitfall of our digital culture.

INSERT:

- *Information about a parent event you are hosting*
- *A description of your school's cyberbullying policy*
- *Tips from Common Sense Media's parent tip sheet*

Together, we can stop kids from adopting bullying behavior, support kids who might be targeted, and help all kids learn to stand up – not stand by – when they see cyberbullying happening.

To learn more about cyberbullying or for more information on how you can help stop it, visit www.commonsense.org/cyberbullying.

Sample Press Release

School Principal or Coordinator Letterhead

For Immediate Release

DATE

SCHOOL NAME and Common Sense Media Team Up to Address Cyberbullying and How to Prevent It

SCHOOL NAME joins campaign to help kids “Stand Up, Not Stand By” to cyberbullying

CITY, STATE – **SCHOOL NAME** has partnered with Common Sense Media, the national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a digital world, to tackle the issue of cyberbullying head on with a new education campaign. The campaign, called “Stand Up, Don’t Stand By,” provides parents and educators with the tools and information they need to teach kids about the role they might play in cyberbullying, and how they can stop it.

“Unfortunately, cyberbullying is an issue in schools everywhere,” said **SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR NAME, TITLE**. “At **SCHOOL NAME**, we believe it’s best to address cyberbullying and the way our kids treat each other online proactively. We know we have a responsibility to help parents and teachers gain the understanding, skills, and confidence they need to help our kids grow and thrive in this new media world. That’s why we’ve partnered with Common Sense Media on this campaign – to ensure that we are teaching and empowering our kids not only to stand up to cyberbullying, but also to practice safe, smart, and respectful digital behavior every day.”

Research shows that as many as one third of kids are cyberbullied. “Stand Up, Don’t Stand By” focuses on what the other two thirds can do to help. Through articles, videos, and interactive components, the campaign will help parents and teachers start a critical conversation with their kids: When kids see bullying happening, how can they learn to stand up to it?

“We’re pleased to partner with **SCHOOL NAME** on this campaign,” said James Steyer, CEO and founder, Common Sense Media. “It’s great to see **SCHOOL NAME** and schools across the country taking a leadership role in the fight against cyberbullying. By starting the conversation about this sensitive issue with the school community, **SCHOOL NAME** has a real opportunity to make change. Online cruelty can be devastating, but parents and teachers can stem the tide by helping their kids build a culture of respect online.”

Over the course of the campaign, **SCHOOL NAME** will provide free information and tips from Common Sense Media about cyberbullying and respectful online behavior. Parents and teachers also can participate in the campaign at www.commonsense.org/ by “making a promise” to start the conversation about cyberbullying with their kids and students. *[Note: Feel free to add other details and events you’re planning at your school: assemblies, parent nights, etc.]*

For more information about **SCHOOL NAME**, go to **URL**. To learn more about the “Stand Up, Don’t Stand By” national campaign, visit www.common sense.org.

About SCHOOL NAME

School boiler plate

About Common Sense Media

Common Sense Media is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology. We exist because our kids are growing up in a culture that profoundly impacts their physical, social, and emotional well-being. We provide families with the advice and media reviews they need in order to make the best choices for their children. Through our education programs and policy efforts, Common Sense Media empowers parents, educators, and young people to become knowledgeable and responsible digital citizens. For more information, go to: www.common sense.org.

Press contacts

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