

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when one person or a group of people try to threaten or embarrass someone else using a mobile phone or the internet. Cyberbullying is just as harmful as bullying in the real world. If you see it happening, report it. Don't ignore it.



Are you a part of it?

Those who take part in online bullying often use a group of friends to target their victims. They can ask others to add a comment to a photo on a blog, or forward something embarrassing onto another group of friends. Sometimes, these people don't even realise they're actually bullying someone.

What forms can it take?

There are lots of different types of cyberbullying. These are the main ones:

Email

Sending emails that can be threatening or upsetting. Emails can be sent directly to a single target, or to a group of people to encourage them to become part of the bullying. These messages or 'hate mails' can include examples of racism, sexism and other types of prejudice. If someone sends you a message and you forward or laugh at it, you're actually adding to the problem.

Instant messenger and chatrooms

Sending instant messenger and chatroom messages to friends or direct to a victim. Others can be invited into the bullying conversation, who then become part of it by laughing.

Social networking sites

Setting up profiles on social networking sites to make fun of someone. By visiting these pages or contributing to them, you become part of the problem and add to the feelings of unhappiness felt by the victim.

Mobile phone

Sending humiliating and abusive text or video messages, as well as photo messages and phone calls over a mobile phone. This includes anonymous text messages over short distances using Bluetooth technology and sharing videos of physical attacks on individuals (happy slapping).

Interactive gaming

Games consoles allow players to chat online with anyone they find themselves matched with in a multi-player game. Sometimes cyber bullies abuse other players and use threats. They can also lock victims out of games, spread false rumours about someone or hack into someone's account.

Sending viruses

Some people send viruses or hacking programs to another person that can destroy their computers or delete personal information from their hard drive.

Abusing personal information

Many victims of cyberbullying have complained that they have seen personal photos, emails or blog postings posted where others could see them without their permission.

Social networking sites make it a lot easier for web users to get hold of personal information and photos of people. They can also get hold of someone else's messaging accounts and chat to people pretending to be the victim.

The effects of cyberbullying

Even though cyberbullying cannot physically hurt you, it can still leave you feeling mentally vulnerable and very upset. You can also feel scared, lonely and stressed and that there's no way out. Escaping cyberbullying can be very difficult. Because anyone can get access to a mobile phone or the internet almost anywhere, it can be tough for those on the receiving end to avoid it, even in the safety of their own home.

Why do cyberbullies do it?

There's no simple answer for why some people choose to cause pain to others by bullying them. There are lots of possible reasons, but here are some common ones:

- it can be simply a case of someone being in the wrong place at the wrong time and allowing themselves to be easily intimidated
- some people who cyberbully think that they won't get caught if they do it on a mobile phone or on the internet
- the people who cyberbully are jealous, angry or want to have revenge on someone, often for no reason at all
- cyberbullies often think that getting their group of friends to laugh at someone makes them look cool or more popular
- some people also bully others as a form of entertainment or because they are bored and have too much time on their hands
- many do it for laughs or just to get a reaction