Cyberbullying Unplugged

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Cyberbullying is the use of Internet technologies to tease, humiliate, and harass someone. It might be mean text messages sent at all hours of the day, or degrading comments about someone posted to a website. Cyberbullying can have devastating effects on children, so learn about the issue and how to help your child deal with it.

Spot it

A child who is being cyberbullied may:

- ▶ Avoid using computers, and other technological devices
- ▶ Appear stressed when receiving an e-mail, instant message or text.
- ▶ Withdraw from family and friends
- ▶ Act reluctant to attend school and social events
- ▶ Avoid conversations about computer use
- ▶ Exhibit signs of low self-esteem including depression and / or fear
- ▶ Have declining grades
- ▶ Stop eating or sleeping
- ▶ In serious cases, consider suicide

Deal with it

If your child is cyberbullied, teach them to

- ▶ Not respond
- ▶ Save the evidence
- ▶ Report it to the website and /or internet service provider

Also you should

- ▶ Meet with school administrators to discuss a plan of action and their bullying / cyberbullying policy
- ▶ Talk about the situation with the bully's parents

Talk about it

Ask your child

- ▶ Has anyone ever been mean with you online? How did you respond?
- ▶ Have you ever been mean to anyone online? Why?
- ▶ Is it OK to forward a text message making fun of someone? Why or why not?
- ▶ Do you know you school's policy on bullying?
- ▶ Which teacher would you talk to if you were being bullied?

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Did you know?

Cyberbullying involves more than just the bully and the victim; bystanders also have a role to play.

Standing By: Mike's Story

Text and video message go around Mike's highschool all time. He's just received one showing a classmate being tripped in the cafeteria. "Forward me" the message says, but Mike thinks that forwarding it would be mean. The student featured in the video message is already being teased and taunted in the hallways. Every time a new person gets the video, there is someone else laughing at him. Mike doesn't know what to do. If he tells a teacher about the video, maybe someone will stop the teasing. On the other hand, he doesn't want to become the cyberbullies' next target.

Encourage your children to speak up and tell a trusted adult if they know that a peer is being cyberbullied. If children show that they are unwilling to support cyberbullying or let it go under the radar, the bullies are more likely to back off.