



What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the deliberate and persistent harassment of an individual or a group of individuals using one or more Internet-based communication methods. Teenagers and pre-teens are the typical targets of cyberbullies, with the initiators often being peers. Cyberbullying can cause severe self esteem problems for their victims, sometimes leading to tragic results.

Cyberbullying can consist of spreading lies and rumors about a person, insulting and targeting a student's sexuality, physical appearance, deceiving students into revealing personal information and then publishing it, and/or posting personally identifiable information or photos without the victim's consent.

Cyberbullies employ a number of methods to threaten, and disparage their targets. They include:

- Email messages: While this is the most common form of electronic communication, the use of this method for cyber bullying is less pervasive since most e-mail programs allow the use of filters to block offending e-mails.
- Instant Messaging: Cyberbullies can and do use IM on computers and cell phones to send harassing and threatening messages to their targets.
- Chat rooms: Chat rooms allow cyberbullies to anonymously enter and write anything they want, mocking and insulting their victims in a forum that potentially has a large audience.
- Web sites: Cyberbullies create web sites or use social networking sites or blogs to mock, torment and harass the intended victims.
- Voting / Polling booths: Some web sites offer users the opportunity to create online polling/voting booths. Cyberbullies use these to vote online for some insulting topics (e.g.: "The Ugliest , Fattest, Dumbest etc. Boy/Girl at ***** School).

By whatever means bullying is accomplished, even when purely online, it has long term effects on both victims and bullies, as well as bystanders. These effects can include emotional and academic problems, and the bullies themselves are also at increased risk of delinquency, crime and alcohol or drug abuse.