



CYBERBULLYING

E-mail, Web sites, instant messaging, chat rooms and text messaging are the latest blow in humiliation. This issue of Crime Prevention and Safety Tips deals with Cyberbullying and brings excerpts from the "National Teen Summit on Internet and Wireless Safety" and from the National Crime Prevention Council .

The Internet created a whole new world of communications and increasingly kids are using these tools to antagonize and intimidate others. Better known as cyberbullying, this type of online communication makes kids feel free to do online what they would never do in person. An increasing number of kids are being bullied by text messages. Unlike a computer placed in a public area of a home, school or library, mobile phones are private and always accessible, meaning bullies can harass victims even in their own rooms. They send e-mails or instant messages containing insults, threats and spread hateful comments about a person. Cyberbullying can be anonymous, and if a person can't be identified, fear of punishment is diminished.

Jesse Logan, a young Ohio girl, went on a Cincinnati television station to tell her story, "I just want to make sure no one else will have to go through this again." She sent nude pictures of herself to a boyfriend. When they broke up, he sent them to other high school girls. She was harassed, miserable, depressed, afraid even to go to school. The interview was in May 2008. Two months later, Jessica Logan hanged herself in her bedroom.

Survey on Cyber-Safety

Cox Communications - www.cox.com/takecharge

Key results from the survey among a sampling of U.S. teens between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years include:

Technology enabled:

- 91% have an email address
- 60% have an instant messenger screen name
- 73% have a cell phone and
- 59% have a digital camera.

Acceptance of Social Networking:

- 72% have online profiles on social networking sites where many have posted photos of themselves and their friends, along with personal information.

Conflicted over Safety:

- 59% say having personal information/photos on a public site is unsafe,
- 26% know someone who had something happen to them because of this. Still,
- 62% post photos of themselves on sites, and
- More than 40 % name their school or the city

Prevalent Cyberbullying:

- 1/3 have been, have perpetrated or know of friends who have experienced cyberbullying
- 68% think it is a serious problem.
- 81% think online bullying is easier to get away with or to hide from their parents than bullying in person.

Engaging in Sexting: Nineteen percent of teens surveyed have engaged in sexting (sending or receiving sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos through text message or email.)

- 60% of teens who sent sexts say they send photos to their boyfriend/girlfriend, but
- 11% sent sexts to someone they don't even know.
- 81% of teen sexters are under 18.

Bullying Prevention Tips

National Crime Prevention Council include - www.ncpc.org

- Help children learn the social skills he or she needs to make friends. A confident, resourceful child who has friends is less likely to be bullied or to bully others.
- Praise children's kindness towards others.
- Regularly go over children's instant messenger "buddy list" with them. Ask who each person is and find out how your children know the buddy
- Print this list of commonly used acronyms in instant messenger and chat rooms from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The list is available at by clicking on the "Online Lingo" tab at the top of the page at www.missingkids.com/adCouncil
- Discuss cyberbullying with your children and ask if they have ever experienced it or seen it happen to someone.
- Tell your children that you won't blame them if they are cyberbullied. Emphasize that you won't take away their computer privileges - this is the main reason kids don't tell adults when they are cyberbullied.
- Recognize that bullies may be acting out feelings of insecurity, anger, or loneliness. If your child is a bully, help to get to the root of the problem. Seek out specific strategies you can use from a teacher, school counselor or child psychologist.