Cyberbullying - A Guide for Parents

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What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying / online bullying / cyber-harassment - aggressive intentional act directed by an individual or group against another individual or group using electronic means :

— Threats
— Insults
— Embarrassing or humiliating messages
— Pictures
— Video Clips
— Defamation
— Impersonation

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Defining Cyberbullying

Ireland is experiencing a heightened focus on bullying & online safety issues.

❏ Rate of children in primary schools who are bullied is 26%

❏ 14% of children in primary schools experience cyberbullying

❏ Children are accessing social media & a variety of apps at a much earlier age

❏ Digital age of consent is now 16 years of age

(Foody, Samsara & O'Higgins Norma 2017)

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Defining Cyberbullying

- ❏ Power imbalance

- ❏ Constitutes repetition - inclusion of **one-time** act is relevant

- ❏ Deliberate - intent to cause harm

- ❏ Affords the perpetrator anonymity

- ❏ Victims emotional reactions are not visible to the perpetrator - "disinhibition effect"

- ❏ Potential to reach a wider audience

- ❏ Affords aggressor access to the victim anytime & anywhere

- ❏ Causes emotional & social harm

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Forms of Cyberbullying

There is a distinction between the method used to share abusive behaviour (email, texts etc) & the **forms** such behaviour takes as follows:

1.Social Exclusion - the act of leaving someone out deliberately / sending a hurtful message to the target letting them know they are not welcome to participate in social activities - directly targets a child's need to belong to a group & feel accepted

2. Flaming (roasting) - posting insults on the internet about a target or directly sending insults to the target often including offensive language - occurs in chat rooms, discussion boards, groups for peer bystanders to witness - intent is to assert power & establish dominance over a victim. Flaming is similar to trolling, but will usually be a more direct attack on a victim to incite them into online fights.

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Forms of Cyberbullying

3. Exposure - Engages a public display whereby the cyberbully posts or sends personal communications, videos or images to the victim - intensified if the personal material is sexual in nature

4. Intimidation - Infuses fear in the victim by issuing threats often physical that not only informs the victim but others also

5. Cyber-harassment - Sending hurtful / negative messages to the victim worded harshly in a persistent or pervasive manner

6. Phishing - Manipulating (tricking or persuading) the victim into revealing personal &/or financial information about themselves or their loved ones - information is then used to purchase items in the name of the victim or their parents

7. Impersonation - "Imping" means to impersonate the victim so that comments sent to peers on social media networking sites, forums, message boards & chat room appear as if they have come from the victim. Similarly, the cyberbully can set up websites to manipulate the victim's profile damaging their reputation

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Forms of Cyberbullying

08. Denigration - "Dissing" refers to sending, posting or publishing hurtful gossip & false statements about the victim with intent to hurt and humiliate the victim and damage their reputation or friendships

09. Non-consensual Image & Video Dissemination - Images & videos of the victim are emailed to peers or published on video sites like YouTube or shared via mobile devices available to download or view with the intent to humiliate the target

10. Interactive Gaming Harassment - Online gaming devices allow children to interact with each other enabling the cyberbully to verbally abuse the victim, lock them out of the game & pass on false information to others or hack into the victim's account

11. Pornography & Marketing Lists - Signing up the target to pornography &/or junk marketing / advertising emailing sites with intent of causing embarrassment & frustration and unfair punishment and false accusations

12. Cyberstalking - Threats of harm, intimidation, offensive comments via communication channels making the victim feel that the threats are real & could transpire into offline stalking. Cyberstalking is regarded as the most dangerous form of cyberbullying & requires immediate adult attention

13. Griefing - Manipulating the playing experience of players in a multiplayer online game with the intent of ruining the playing experience of the participants - can include bad language, cheating

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Forms of Cyberbullying

14. Webpage Manipulation - Cyberbully creates & posts websites that insult the victim & their peers or groups who may share similar characteristics such as race, religion & sexual orientation

15. Voting & Polling Booth Degradation - Cyberbully uses websites that offer polling / voting features free of charge & create webpages for others to vote on the victim's physical appearance or personality

16. Bash Boards - Cyberbully posts hateful, belittling comments about the victim on online bulletin boards for all to read and share onwards

17. Hoodwinking / Trickery (similar to Phishing) - Cyberbully tricks the victim into divulging secrets & private information about themselves with intent of publishing it online - the bully will befriend the target & lull them into a false sense of security - once the bully has gained their trust, they will share the victim's sensitive information to a third party or multiple third parties

18. Happy Slapping - Involves the cyberbully taking pictures or videos of the victim being physically assaulted & posting the images online for public consumption with intent of causing the victim hurt and embarrassment.

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Forms of Cyberbullying

19. Text attacks - Cyberbully & a group of accomplices gang up on a victim by bombarding them with hundreds of emails or text messages causing the victim distress & resulting in escalating phone charges for parents

20. Screen Name Mirroring - Cyberbully creates user names almost identical to the victims own name to send messages whereby the recipient thinks they were sent by the target

21. Cyber Drama - Involves tiffs & disputes between friends & acquaintances online or via text

22. Sexting - Refers to text messages or images of a sexually explicit nature designed to embarrass the victim when distributed & which are shared online

23. Pseudonym Stealth - Cyberbully creates a nickname unknown to the victim to keep their identity secret as they taunt, tease & humiliate their target.

24. Instant Messaging Attacks - Online conflicts to harass, taunt & threaten the victim which can extend to face to face bullying

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Forms of Cyberbullying

25. Cyberbullying by Proxy - Cyberbully encourages others to be accomplices in harassing the victim

26. Social Media Cyberbullying - Cyberbully persuades the victim to include them on "friends" list - the bully then proceeds to spread malicious information about the victim

27. Digital Piracy Inclusion - Cyberbully entices the victim to engage in illegal reproduction & distribution of copyrighted material on the internet & then reports the victim for digital piracy

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Forms of Cyberbullying

28. Slut-shaming - Cyberbully publishes sexually provocative images of female victim obtained without her consent

29. Trolling - Intentionally antagonizes others to inflame emotions and provoke conflict by posting inflammatory comments online. Trolling may not always be a form of cyberbullying, but it can be used as a tool to cyberbully when done in a malicious or harmful manner - trolls tend to be detached from their victims and do not have a personal relationship with them.

30. Sextortion - Cyberbully extorts images from the victim in exchange for not making sensitive material public

31. Masquerading - when a bully creates a fake profile or identify online with the sole purpose of cyberbullying.. This could involve creating a fake email account, fake social media profile and selecting a new identity & photos to fool the victim. The bully tends to be someone known to the victim

32. **Password Theft** - Stealing the victims password & then chats to others impersonating the victim in a provocative & argumentative manner causing the victim's friends or strangers offence. The cyberbully will lock the victim out of their own account so they cannot defend themselves

33. M**alicious Code** - Allows cyberbullies to send spyware viruses & hacking programmes to a victim

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Forms of Cyberbullying

34. Warning Wars - making false allegations to an internet service provider that the victim is posting inappropriate or abusive information resulting in their account being suspended

35. Twitter Pooping - Humiliating & ridiculing the target on Twitter.

36. Micro Visual Cyberbullying - Using snapchat to send menacing messages

37. Grooming - predatory practice where children & teens fall victim to adults who try to develop relationships with them without revealing their true identities to gain sexual favours

38. Harassment - is a broad category encompassing many types of cyberbullying - it generally refers to a sustained & constant pattern of hurtful or threatening online messages sent with the intention of doing harm

39. Outing/Doxing - refers to the act of openly revealing sensitive or personal information about someone without their consent for the purpose of embarrassing or humiliating them - it is to do with lack of consent from the victim.

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Forms of Cyberbullying

40. Fraping - when a bully uses a child's social networking account to post inappropriate content with their name. While it can be harmless when friends write amusing posts on each other's profiles, it has the potential however to be very harmful as a bully posting a racial/homphobic slur through someone else's profile can ruin their reputation.

41. Dissing - refers to the act of a bully spreading cruel information about their target through public posts or private messages to either ruin their reputation or relationships with other people. The bully tends to have a personal relationship with the target, whether as an acquaintance or as a friend.

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Noteworthy Statistics - Online Data

❏ 93% of children aged 8-12 years own smart devices
❏ 84% are signed up to social media & messaging apps
➢ Most popular apps (8-12 years) : YouTube, TikTok, Whatsapp & Snapchat
➢ Most popular app (13 years >) : Instagram

❏ 28% had friends or followers they didn't know offline
❏ 17% reported playing over-18s games
➢ with boys (29%) more likely to do so than girls (7%)

❏ 36% game online with people they don't know offline
➢ 41% of boys vs 31% of girls
➢ 20% increase on last year

Source: CyberSafe Kids Annual Report 2020

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Noteworthy Statistics - Online Data

❑ 61% reported that they were contacted by a stranger in an online game
➢ "Lots of times" 18%
➢ "A few times" 43%

❑ 25% have seen or experienced something online in the last year that upset them
➢ 30% of children kept it to themselves rather than report it to parents or someone else

❑ 29% of children have experienced bullying online:
➢ 15% reported being excluded from messaging groups
➢ 14% sent hurtful messages online
➢ 29% did not tell anyone / kept it to themselves

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National Advisory Council for Online Safety

❏ 2019 - Three national surveys commissioned to provide a robust baseline re online safety in Ireland - one for parents, adults and **children** respectively.

Children were first asked if anyone in the past year had ever treated them in a hurtful or nasty way

➢ 17% of children 9-17 years reported experiencing some form of bullying either online or offline

➢ 11% of all children say they have experienced cyberbullying in the past 12 months

➢ 13-14 year olds report the highest levels of being cyberbullied - 18% reported being bullied online

➢ Girls report being the victims of bullying online somewhat more than boys (12% VS.. 10%)

➢ 60% of children reported being bullied offline or online "Once / or a few times"

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Forms of Cyberbullying

➢ 32% reported experiencing cyberbullying via social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter

➢ 30% reported experiencing cyberbullying via text message / mobile phone

➢ 31% of boys & 7% girls experienced cyberbullying via online game platforms

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Methods of Cyberbullying

❏ Sending nasty or hurtful message - 59% - most common form of cyberbullying

❏ More girls report this than boys 62% vs 56%

❏ Receiving nasty messages is influenced by age - almost 75% of 13-17 years olds

❏ 24% reported the nasty or hurtful messages were passed around / shared

❏ Exclusion - 28% - second most common form of cyberbullying

❏ More girls & older age groups report this

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Impact of Cyberbullying

❏ 43% reported being "fairly or very upset" by what happened

❏ Most girls reported being affected by what happened - 51% vs 30% of boys reported being "fairly upset or very upset"

❏ Most of the younger age groups of 9-10 & 11-12 year olds say they were "fairly or very upset" (50% and 54% respectively)

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Duration of Impact of Cyberbullying

❏ 53% of children reported feeling the impact of cyberbullying for a couple of days (61% girls vs 36% boys)

❏ 20% experienced long lasting impact - weeks and months

❏ Equal numbers of boys and girls reported long-lasting impact

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Sources of Social Support - Cyberbullying

❏ 67% of those who experienced cyberbullying turned to parents

❏ 41% overall sought support from peers or friends their own age

❏ 25% overall sought support from siblings

❏ 13% of girls turned to teachers

❏ 9% of girls advised speaking to another trusted adult

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Abusive Behaviour towards others - Cyberbullying

❏ 5% of children aged 9-17 years reported treating someone in a hurtful or nasty manner

❏ Bullying others is more common among 9-10 year olds (6%)

❏ Slightly more girls than boys reported behaving in this way (5% vs 4%)

❏ 44% said they had "once or a few times" bullied someone via mobile phone or other device

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Cyberbullying - Characteristics

- Boredom
- Misplaced anger
- Unthinking
- False Fun
- Hurt the feelings of other people
- Dominant
- Difficulty adhering to rules
- Moral disengagement
- Low empathy
- Do not readily take responsibility

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Cyberbullying Motives

❑ Bullying is seen as "normal behaviour"
❑ Boredom
❑ Tensions & conflict in class
❑ Friendship break-down
❑ Personal information being passed onward
❑ Revenge
❑ Meanness
❑ Looking Cool
❑ Anger

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Effects of Cyberbullying

❑ Damage to emotional well-being of target
❑ Powerlessness & fear
❑ A change in habit in the use of technology / phone
❑ Distress /sadness/tearfulness
❑ Social anxiety ➡ Panic attacks
❑ Self-blame
❑ Lack of confidence
❑ Loneliness
❑ Poor concentration ➡ reduced academic achievements

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Coping Strategies

❏ Respond - Don't react - Assess the situation - Be safe

❏ Don't reply to messages that harass or annoy

❏ Don't feel ashamed - the shame lies with the perpetrator

❏ Take screenshots / do not delete the offensive message(s)

❏ Do not ignore the cyberbullying - tell a trusted adult

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Coping Strategies

❑ Seek support from friends, family & teacher

❑ Targets should never attempt to deal with cyberbullying on their own

❑ Targets should not exaggerate or lie about what happened / cast doubt on the incident

❑ Targets should not retaliate as this could escalate the issue

❑ Try to cease continuously checking posts

❑ Report & Block

❑ Encourage self-affirming statements that involve "I"

Most effective method :
Seek help of teacher or parent, investigate & provide victim support

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Cyberbullying - Advice for Parents

❏ Encourage your child to talk to you - build trust & open dialogue

❏ Praise your child for speaking to you about their experience

❏ Listen supportively

❏ Don't over react or interrogate

❏ Don't ban internet / mobile phone use

❏ Contact school or organisation / Gardai / professional counsellor

❏ Become familiar with school Anti-Bullying Policy

❏ Build confidence and self-esteem

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Cyberbullying - Advice for Parents

➢ Ask children for information - strengthen their sense of self-worth

➢ Gain understanding of their level of internet safety skills

➢ Install filtering software / block / allow access to selected sites

➢ Talk to the children about safe use - Digital Citizenship

➢ Have a code of conduct / set of rules around screen-time & internet use

➢ Lead by example

➢ Become familiar with Chat Language / acronyms & emoticons

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Cyberbullying - Advice for Parents

❏ Online games can expose children to risks associated with meeting people they do not know on the internet

❏ Warn children not to give out personal details to other players

❏ Warn children not to meet other players offline

❏ Withdraw your child from the game or change your child's online ID if anything evolves that makes you feel uncomfortable

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Cyberbullying - Parent to Child Advice

❏ **Never reply to messages that annoy or harass**
➢ The bully wants to upset & annoy their target - do not respond or feed the problem - it can make matters worse

❏ **Keep the bullying messages**
➢ Provide record / evidence of bullying - dates & times for school or Garda investigation

❏ **Block the sender**
➢ Use the technology block in messaging apps/social networking/

❏ **Report problem**
➢ Report cyberbullying to websites, apps or service providers

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Cyberbullying - Parent to Child Advice

❏ Do not accept "friend invites" from strangers
❏ Set privacy settings so only friends can view your personal information
❏ Default setting is usually set to "public"
❏ Exercise care in creating your personal profile
❏ Never divulge anything online that you would not be happy to say out loud
❏ Learn how to "block" and "report" on sites
❏ Remember the human at the other end of the online communication is a person with feelings
❏ Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online as you would offline
❏ Talk to children about the legal consequences of Cyberbullying
❏ Encourage positive bystanding

Cyberbullying - Parent to Child Advice

❏ Create email accounts applicable to the online context
❏ Always keep passwords secret
❏ Customise privacy settings of profile/account to private not public
❏ Only reply to people / share personal info with those they know in real life
❏ Always seek parental consent before uploading pictures of themselves or family, house, school etc
❏ Ensure moderators present when using chat-rooms
❏ Advise your child that photos & images are easy to circulate & manipulate
❏ Do not allow use of webcam unsupervised
❏ People you meet online are not always who they say they are
❏ Never meet "online friends" without informing parent / guardian
❏ Netiquette - treat others online as you like to be treated yourself

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Thank You

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