

SESSION FIVE: DEALING WITH CYBERBULLYING

One of the most important things we can do as parents to protect our kids from bullying, is simply making sure our children know they can come to us if they have been bullied and that we will hear them out and take action to make them feel safe again. A child will be much more likely to report bullying they have experienced, rather than bottling up those feelings, if they know that an adult will genuinely listen.

1. Make sure the child is safe and feels secure. Whether your child is the victim or the bully, communicate to them that what you want in the end is for the bullying to stop and for all involved parties to feel safe.
2. Look into what happened and try to fully understand the situation. This might mean asking your child to show you the texts, emails, instant messages, or other evidence of bullying. Fully understanding what happened between your child and another will allow you to form an appropriate response and will prevent you from jumping into conflict without knowing if your child was the victim, the bully, or both.
3. Try not to immediately ban access to the cellphone or internet. The problem was not the form of communication used, but the personal conflict that is at the heart of the issue. The internet or cell phone is not the problem, both of these are tools that can be used by individuals to create or solve problems. Banning access to cellphones or internet after cyberbullying shifts the blame onto the line of communication, rather than the issue itself.
4. If it is appropriate, contact the school administration or the parents of the cyberbully or the victim.
5. If the issue involves material that is offensive that is still on the internet, contact the website or social media site that the offensive material is on and ask them to look into the issue and remove the material.
6. Sometimes it is necessary to involve the police. Get the police involved if the cyberbullying involves threats or a possible crime, including sexual harassment.
7. Talk to other parents about cyberbullying. If your child has experienced it, there may be other children who have also experienced it. It could be an isolated incidence, but it could be a community wide problem.
8. Apply firm, logical consequences if your child is the bully.
9. Contact your child's school. Schools often have people who are experienced in these kinds of problems and can help bring about a solution.
10. Communicate with your child. What was the problem in the situation? Explain to your child that the internet and their cellphone are not inherently good or bad. The internet is a tool for communicating information. If your child was the victim, explain to them exactly what the situation was and how they could have dealt with it before it became a problem. If your child was the bully, explain to them exactly what they did wrong.

Are these strategies and responses realistic? Do you think this issue is or will be an important issue in the community?

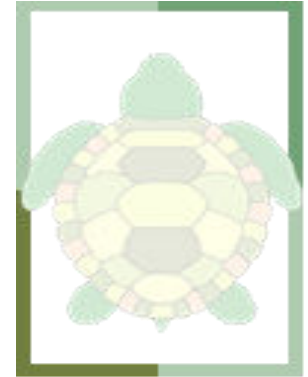
(Adapted from Responding to Cyberbullying: Top Ten Tips for Parents, by Sameer Hinduja, PhD. And Justin W. Patchin, PhD.)

SESSION FIVE: HOW TO HELP

On a daily basis, kids face peer pressure, stress from parents and school, and anxiety about putting their best foot forward. With support from family and friends, children can overcome these obstacles. It is normal from time to time to be sad or irritable, but sometimes these feelings become very intense and kids don't know how to handle them. This is a tool that will help you recognize signs of depression and suicide in others.

Signs of Depression:

- Your child is constantly acting irritable, sad, or angry
- Nothing seems fun anymore - they feel bad about themselves
- They sleep too much or not enough
- They have frequent headaches or other physical problems
- Anything and everything makes them cry
- They've gained or lost weight without trying to
- They can't concentrate; and their grades may be in trouble
- They seem to feel helpless and hopeless



How to help:

- Ask if they need help
- Try not to let them be all alone
- Remind them that they are not alone
- Encourage healthy activity and foods
- Help them avoid alcohol and drugs
- Encourage them to talk to parents or another responsible adult

Is my child's friend depressed?

- Are they are using alcohol/drugs or hanging with a bad crowd?
- Have they stopped going to classes and after school activities?
- Do they talk about being bad, stupid, or ugly?
- Do they make comments or posts statuses to online social networks that make you worried about them?

Helping a Depressed Child:

- Get them to talk. Let them know they can trust you and you are here to help them.
- If you see something posted on the internet, take it seriously and talk to them about what they wrote.
- You don't have to have all the answers. Just be supportive and listen to what they have to say.
- Encourage them to get help. Urge them to talk to a parent, teacher, or counselor. Offer to go along for support.
- Stick with them through the hard times. Sometimes depression makes people do things or say things that are mean – but their depression can make them say things they don't mean.
- Remember, it is not your responsibility to "heal" them or to "make them better," but to offer them support and to get them more help.

SESSION FIVE: OPENNESS CONTRACT

CHILD

If I begin to feel down or depressed, I will come and talk you. When I am stressed from school and friends, I will come to you rather than isolate myself. If I am depressed or one of my friends is depressed, I will go to an adult and ask for help. I promise to be open with the things that are going on in my life as long as you listen to me.

Child's Signature: _____

Date: _____

PARENT

If you come to me with your problems, I promise to listen and be patient. If you think you or one of your friends is depressed, I will take you seriously. I will help you in any way I can. Remember that I love you and I want you to be healthy and happy.

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

