



Tips for Parents: Girl Cyberbullying

Girls and gadgets—it's more than many parents can keep track of. Girls spend huge amounts of time listening to their MP3 players, talking on the phone, texting, surfing the internet, emailing and instant messaging their friends. Much of a girl's relationship with others in her peer network happens using technology, and this has led to a new phenomenon called "Cyberbullying."

When a girl is cyberbullied, she is attacked by peers using technology. Another girl at school may spread a vicious rumor—anononymously—and by the next day almost everyone at the school will have heard it. Or, a girl or group of girls may attack another's MySpace or Facebook page, filling it with harsh, hurtful accusations or rumors.

These rumors and attacks can take on a life of their own and overnight cause a girl with many friends to be completely ignored or outright mocked or attacked by everyone she knows her age. Recent news articles tell stories of girls being so hard hit by these attacks that they have committed suicide.

Here's what you can do:

1. Keep an eye on what your daughter is saying and doing online and on her phone. You don't need to spy but you can ask her what she's talking about—insist that your know her privacy is important but that as a parent, it's your job to make certain she is making safe and respectful choices.
2. Encourage her to talk to you about her friends and what other kids are doing. Ask if she's heard about cyberbullying, and if it has happened to her or other kids she knows. Explain that saying things in a text or on a Facebook page are just as bad as saying them in person—and that it is not the right way to resolve problems.
3. Teach her healthy ways to resolve conflict such as sharing feelings, asking someone to stop, being honest, and asking for adult help when a situation becomes too difficult to handle. Make certain you teach conflict resolution by your example.
4. Many parents are unaware of what their girls are saying and doing on their phones and computers—and would be completely shocked to know their daughter is behaving that way. Speak with other parents in your daughter's circle about cyberbullying, and encourage all of you to work together as a group to support your girls in treating each other with respect.

To learn more about Cyberbullying and what you can do, check out these

resources:

www.cyberbullying.us

www.StopCyberbullying.org

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