Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying happens when someone harasses, threatens, or embarrasses another person online. It includes aggressive or cruel online communications such as texts, direct messages, and social media posts. Some cyberbullies also share personal information, pictures, or videos designed to hurt or shame their targets.

Here are some common warning signs that your child may be experiencing cyberbullying:

- Hesitancy to use devices — or stopping altogether

- Getting emotional before, during, or after using a device

- Being secretive or avoiding discussions about online behavior

- Avoiding school or social activities

- Changes in grades, mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite

Recommended Actions

- **Reassure your child** that you love and support them unconditionally.

- **Don't automatically take away their device**. Show your child that they won't be punished if they tell you the truth about what's happening.

- **Learn about cyberbullying laws in your state**. While there is no federal law against cyberbullying, the laws in every state (except Alaska and Wisconsin) have specific references to it. Check out the **cyberbullying laws** where you live.

- **Document everything**. Work with your child to keep a log of all harmful messages. This will be useful should you need to report these events to your child's school or to law enforcement. **Be sure to include**:

  › What happened and when
  › The names / usernames of all bullies and witnesses
  › What websites / platforms (e.g. Instagram, text messages, etc.) were used
  › The content of the messages, including screenshots if possible

- **Block the bully**. Instruct your child to unfriend, unfollow, or block the individual(s) antagonizing them.

- **Assess the scope of the problem**. Talk to your child to see if they are being bullied offline as well. Consider contacting their school to see if they have additional insight.

Helpful Resources

› **Cyberbullying Tactics**

› **Finstas: Where Kids Hide From Parents**

› **How to Stop Cyberbullying**

› **Cyberbullying at School**

› **CyberbullyHelp Resources**

Conversation Starters

→ **Can you tell me about a time someone was mean to you online?**

→ **What would you do if someone started calling you names on Instagram?**

→ **Why do you think it's sometimes easier to write mean things online than to say them in real life?**