

# Cyber Bullying Facts

By D.A.R.E. Officer Brown

Cyber-bullying is using the Internet or a cell phone to threaten, spread rumors or post doctored photographs. Using technology, messages or pictures can be sent to thousands of users within seconds. Many times it is smart kids thinking they have absolute anonymity on the web. This can happen to anyone or by anyone.

If you think your child may be the victim of cyber-bullying, here are some things you can do:

- Ignore the "flame" and never respond — they want you to get upset and react.
- Let your child know they can always come to you if something makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Block the bully from sending future communications. All email and instant messaging programs make it easy to block a sender.
- Contact the school and report it to your Internet service provider. If it's severe, report it to law enforcement.

The Internet can be a great place for recreation with a wealth of online games. You can find entire websites full of games. Some even created by kids. Online games are unique because you can actually play others online. This allows you to play against a friend or stranger in real-time. Some of the games have a live chat component that allows you to play with people anywhere around the world. You can also connect online with a game console like Xbox or PlayStation. You can never be sure that people online are really who they say they are. Always protect your name, your identity, and your reputation. Interactive games can be competitive and complex and encourage hours of playing in order to beat the game. It's important to find a balance between real life and screen time.

**Keep communicating:** Children who have only *one* conversation about Internet safety with a parent are *six* times less likely to engage in risky behavior online.

A great way to start a dialogue with your child is by discussing the following three rules of online safety:

- **Keep safe** your personal information. Be sure to discuss what personal information is and why it's important to guard.
- **Keep away** from Internet strangers no matter what they tell you - 14% of 13-17 year olds have actually met face-to-face with an Internet stranger.
- **Keep telling** your parents about everything you experience on the Internet.

One easy step to take to help families create an environment that encourages safe Internet use is to place the computer in a public place in the home. Keeping computers in public places helps us remember that the Internet is never private or completely secure. Parents can also monitor what their children are doing and it allows for conversations about their activities online.

The Internet is forever — what you post online can be retrieved even after you've deleted it. It will never completely go away and will follow you to future job interviews and college admissions.

You are NOT anonymous: the Internet is a public forum. Everything you post can be viewed by others and identified by law enforcement.

Be aware that you don't always know to whom you're talking.

So THINK before you post anything online.

Be sure to protect your name, identity and reputation.

