

What is it?

Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others (cyberbullying.org).

It can be committed using the Internet, digital, gaming and/or mobile technologies. This kind of bullying can cause great distress and impact on a child's self esteem and confidence. Victims don't feel safe, because they can be bullied in their own homes.

Cyber-bullying activities may include:

- Posting defamatory messages on social networking sites.
- Spreading rumours online.
- Excluding a young person from an online group.
- Sending unwanted messages, either by text, instant messaging or email.

What are the risks?

Recent research has found that one quarter of Australian children report that they have been cyber-bullied (Microsoft/Galaxy Research, 2008). Cyber-bullying is more prevalent in older children with 31% of 14-17 year olds reporting that they have been cyber-bullied compared to 21% of 10-13 year olds (Microsoft/Galaxy Research, 2008).

Some signs to look out for if you think your child is being bullied online:

- Trouble sleeping or having nightmares.
- Becoming withdrawn or depressed.
- Mood swings.
- Becoming anti-social and avoiding/minimising contact with friends.
- Feeling unwell.
- Falling behind in homework.

How to stay safe?

Remember the acronym I-CURRB

- **I**nvestigate what your child is doing online.
- **C**ommunicate with your children.
- **U**se family safety software to keep track of what your children are able to access online.
- **R**esearch your school's and Internet Service Provider's (ISP) policies on cyber-bullying.
- **R**eport cyber-bullying to your child's school or ISP in the first instance, or local police if you are concerned for your child's safety.
- **B**lock communications from cyber-bullies. Most Instant Messenger sites, chat rooms and email accounts allow you to block messages from identified people.

Report any cyber-bullying to your child's school or to the site service provider where the bullying-material is located. If you are concerned for your child's physical safety, contact your local police.

For more information visit www.thinkuknow.org.au