Risks children face online: Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place via technology. Whether on gaming sites, through a mobile device or via a social networking site, the effects can be devastating for the young people involved.

With online technologies accessible 24 hours a day, cyberbullying can be relentless. It can also intrude on spaces that were previously personal, for example at home; it can feel that there is no escape from it.

21% of 8 to 11 year olds *have been deliberately targeted, threatened or humiliated by an individual or group through the use of mobile phone or the internet and* ***28% of 11 – to 16 year olds.***

Beatbullying, Virtual Violence II

The use of technology can increase the audience of the bullying and multiply the number of bullies involved, as young people re-post, send or 'like' bullying content. Bullies can also attempt to be anonymous which can be extremely distressing for the victim.

As hard as it can be to admit, it is also possible that your child is or has been a bully. They could have set up or joined a malicious profile or 'liked' a mean comment they have seen about someone online. They could be acting in this way due to peer pressure or in retaliation for something that has happened to them. When talking to your child about bullying it is important to let them know how you as a family feel about the act. Talk to them about how it makes others feel and the consequences of their actions.

What to do if my child is being Cyberbullied

Offer reassurance and support. Your child may be in need of emotional support or feel like they have nowhere to turn. It is rare that cyberbullying is only taking place online and is often someone your child knows through school or a group they attend. Their school should have policies and procedures for dealing with cyberbullying.

Your child could visit Cybermentors. This is an online counselling service with a difference; the counsellors are also children and young people. This site has proved very popular and offers practical advice - www.cybermentors.org.uk

Tell your child that if they are being bullied to always keep the evidence. Whether it's a text message or email, tell them not to reply to the bully or delete the comments. Ask your child if they know the bully or where the messages are coming from. Often it is someone within the school environment and can be dealt with quickly and effectively with assistance from the school.

Block the bullies
If someone is bullying your child on a social networking or chat site encourage them to block or delete the individual so that they can't be contacted by them anymore.

Report any bullying content to the website it's hosted on. If content has been posted, for example a video or image, which is upsetting your child you should report it to the website, for example, Facebook. Learn how you would report content on sites like Facebook and YouTube; every site is different. Contacting the website is the only way to get the offensive content removed, unless it is illegal. In cases of illegal content for example indecent images or videos of young people under 18, contact your local police or report it to www.clickceop.police.uk.

CLICK CEOP
Advice Help Report

For further help and guidance on all the information mentioned please visit
www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents