

5 digital safety experts to share the top signs of cyberbullying

Tips parents can use to prevent, monitor, and dialog with their student about cyberbullying.

As the amount of time students spend behind a screen increases, many parents are wondering how they can ensure their children don't become victims of cyberbullying. Understanding the signs of cyberbullying and finding creative ways to offer support, are the best ways parents can monitor and prevent cyberbullying for their children. However, some parents may not know what the signs of cyberbullying are and what to look out for.

1. Stay involved in every aspect of your child's life

Dr. John DeGarmo, The Foster Care Institute, @DrJohnDeGarmo

Bullying has changed in the 21st century with the marriage of technology and bullying. Cyberbullying is the use of technology to embarrass, threaten, tease, harass, or even target another person. With the use of online technology and social networking sites, today's bully can follow their targeted victim wherever the child may go. Cyberbullying takes many forms, as today's youth as so very technologically savvy, they can use this technology as a tool to bully others. This type of bullying can be done through emails, chat rooms, social network sites, text messages, cell phones, and even websites. There are countless ways a child can be bullied with this type of technology, and the number of ways is increasing, just as technology continues to advance.

Here are some signs that a child may be cyberbullied.

- Become nervous or show signs of anxiety when they receive a text, email, or instant message
- Withdrawn from family and others
- Lashes out in anger towards others
- Show signs of depression
- Tries to find excuses not to go to school
- Spends less time/no longer uses time on computer or other online devices
- Shows signs of suicidal thoughts or actions
- Has difficulty sleeping
- Change in diet that leads to significant weight gain or loss

The most important thing you can do as a parent in protecting your child from cyberbullying is to stay heavily involved in all aspects of the child's school life. Ask your child each day how school was. Enquire about your child's friends. Keep in regular contact with your child's teachers, and

ask for updates on the child's behavior and academics. If possible, become a volunteer at the school, as you can become more involved in the child's school life. Not only will these strategies help monitor any possible cyberbullying behavior, you will also help your child with any academic challenges, as well. Watch for sudden mood swings that might suggest the child is being bullied, as well as signs of depression, isolation, and separation from others.

2. Provide calm and nonjudgemental support

Nityda Coleman, [Teen Therapy Austin](#)

Here are some warning signs that your teen may be the victim of cyberbullying:

Marked changes in behavior: refusing to go to school (although cyberbullying happens online, it is most often classmates that do the bullying), decreased interest in school-related activities, academic problems and a drop in grades, difficulties concentrating and making an effort in tasks at home and at school, increased isolation or talking to parents less often, dismissal of affection or praise, change in dress code, change in weight or eating habits including eating disorders, engagement in cutting or other forms of self-harm, use of negative self-talk, expressing anger towards peers or friends, increase in risk-taking behavior or putting oneself in dangerous scenarios, change in sleeping habits (less or more), nightmares, increased anxiety, alcohol, and drug use.

Emotional signs: increased irritability, unpredictable changes in mood, crying spells, depressed mood, anxious mood, or other changes in mood, noticeable shift in mood after time spent online.

Of course, the warning signs listed above could be attributed to a number of mental health concerns. It's important to notice how the child's mood is impacted by time online. It's even more important to listen to the verbal and nonverbal indicators that something is going wrong in your teen's world and to provide calm and non-judgmental support.

3. Have open communication with your child

Glenn Allan, [Allan Family Media](#)

Some of the signs of cyberbullying are the same as bullying and abuse in particular physical and sexual abuse. One of the most obvious signs of cyberbullying is if your child becomes withdrawn and what follows in many cases is a drastic change in their personality. It is much easier to observe in a child who was out-going and then suddenly becomes quiet, withdrawn, and avoids the computer or other devices. Depression is

another tell-tale sign that a student is being bullied online especially if they become sad, tearful, frustrated or angry after being on their computer. It's vital to have open communication with your child about who their 'cyber-friends' are. Also, locate the internet access computer in a high traffic area where they can be supervised and therefore have less of an opportunity of being taken advantage by a sexual predator or bully. Parents should also take a course on the use of the internet. But most importantly your child should always know that they can come to you and know that they will be believed and supported by parents and authorities.

4. Add new behaviors to your parental radar

Justin Lavelle, [BeenVerified](#)

Be on the lookout if a teen becomes sad and withdrawn but also add to your radar new behaviors such as a lack of interest in their phones or computers or overly obsessive use of either. Be concerned if they become guarded or secretive about online happenings and their social profiles or if they delete them. If your child is showing one or more of the above traits, check your phone bill call log for an increase in incoming texts and calls from new numbers on your child's phone.

5. Remember that cyberbullying is used in conjunction with traditional bullying

Sarah Tippett, [Homeschool Base](#)

The major problem with cyber bullying is that it is used in conjunction with more traditional forms of bullying. Pictures of a kid getting beat up or made fun of get posted on Facebook where the same audience views them later that day. Then, the next day everyone is talking about it which makes more people notice the online bullying. We need to be teaching people that it isn't hard to block someone or simply turn off your device.