What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying

refers to the act of using the Internet to attack or harass other people. It can be in the form of "*...posts, comments, texts, messages, chats, live streams, memes, images, videos, and emails.*" Cyberbullying can happen on social media sites, gaming services, online chatrooms, and other online platforms.

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Some examples of cyberbullying:

"Sending hurtful messages about someone"

"Sharing embarrassing photos or videos of someone"

"Spreading nasty gossip or fake news about someone"

Making someone feel left out or isolated online

"Creating a fake account in someone's name"

"Tricking someone into believing you are someone else"

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Signs to watch out for

"being upset after using the Internet or devices such as mobile phones, tablets, and laptops"

"appearing sad, lonely, angry, worried, or upset more than usual"
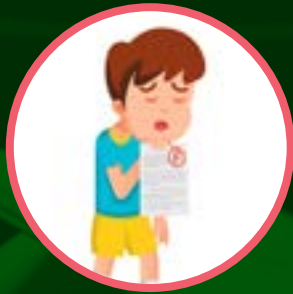
"feeling or looking sick or tired"

"unexpected changes in friendship groups"

"not wanting to be around people, even friends"

"avoiding school, out of school care, clubs or social activities"

"not doing as well as usual at school"

"changes in personality, such as being more withdrawn or anxious"

"changes in sleep patterns, eating, or energy levels"

"becoming secretive about their mobile phone use or what they are doing online"

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What to do when your child is being bullied online

✓ "Let them know you have noticed they are feeling or behaving differently and you would like to help."

✓ "Tell them they don't need to face difficult issues on their own and that it's OK to talk to someone instead of you."

✓ "Listen without judgment" when they decide to talk.

✓ Help them report "harmful content to the online platform used to send, post, or share it."

✓ "If the cyberbullying is really serious, help them to report it to the authorities."

✓ "Help them to update the privacy settings on their devices and accounts."

✓ "Encourage them to speak with a counsellor or even a doctor."

✓ "Assure them that you won't be angry or ban them from their devices. (Banning can make them more lonely, isolated, and rejected.)"

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Keep in Mind

Cyberbullying can be an extremely difficult experience for your children.
So, it's important to cultivate a safe space at home where your children can feel comfortable talking about their problems. Finally, take time to learn about the features of digital platforms that can help you respond to incidents of cyberbullying.

Source

1 eSafety Commissioner, Australian Government (n.d.). "Cyberbullying: For family and friends." https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/cyberbullying/friends-family

2 Unsplash https://www.unsplash.com

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