

CHILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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PREVENTING CYBER-BULLYING Tips For Parents

1. **Establish that all rules** for interacting with people in real life also apply for interacting online or through cell phones.
2. **Educate your children** about appropriate internet behaviors. Explain to them the problems that can be created when technology is misused (e.g., damaging their own reputation or the reputation of others, getting into trouble at school or with the police, etc.).
3. **Model appropriate technology use.** Don't harass or joke about others while online. Don't text while driving.
4. **Monitor your child's online activities.** This can be done informally (through active participation in, and supervision of, your child's online experience) and formally (through software). Use discretion when covertly spying on your kids...honesty and transparency is the best policy.
5. **Hold them accountable for what they do and say online.** When first given the responsibility of a cell phone, for example, make a habit of reviewing all their texts with them so you can coach them on appropriate texting tone, content, etc.
6. **Use filtering or blocking software** to control access both to and from your child. Understand, however, the blocking software alone will not keep kids safe or prevent them from bullying others. Nor will it keep them from accessing inappropriate content. Most tech-savvy kids can figure out ways around filters very easily.
7. **Use a Contract for Internet and Cell Phone Use** to foster a clear understanding about what is appropriate and what is not with respect to the use of technology.
8. **Look for warning signs** that something abnormal is going on with respect to their technology usage. If your child becomes withdrawn or their use becomes obsessive, they could either be a victim or a perpetrator of cyber bullying.
9. **Cultivate and maintain** an open line of communication with your kids so they are ready and willing to come to you when they experience something unpleasant or distressing in cyberspace.
10. **Teach and reinforce** positive morals and values about how others should be treated with respect and dignity.
11. **Do not allow access** to a phone, social media sights, internet, or email without first explaining appropriate use, communicating consequences for misuse, and most importantly providing *coaching* on how to use each technology appropriately.
12. **Do not ignore it** when you see your child post something inappropriate, mean, bossy or sassy on social media or in text messages. Use it as an opportunity to have an open conversation about why their comments or their tone was offensive.
13. Make sure your child understands that **everything they post online creates a permanent record somewhere** (yes, this means Snapchat too). You should preach the mantra that there is absolutely zero expectation of privacy when it comes to email, text, pictures and comments posted online. Every email, text, photo and comment can be forwarded without their knowledge, altered to look or say something completely different from the original version, and used for purposes beyond their knowledge or control.
14. **Set privacy settings to Friends Only.** Make sure that is not mistaken for "Friends of Friends," which is essentially one small step from a public profile. The only way you and your child can control who sees their content is if people have to ask permission to do so, and they have the option of severing the connection. If a social media sight does not provide that level of privacy, be very careful about how you decide when your child has an account on that sight.