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| **Cyberbullying**  **Surviving Cyberbullying**  Leigh was in eighth grade when the messages started — first, a weird text on her new cell phone, then some angry-sounding IMs. Her first year in high school, she learned that some of her classmates had created a website specifically to upset her. The emails, texts, and posts got worse. It was so bad that she eventually changed schools.  Now 18, Leigh says she has come through the experience more self-aware and compassionate toward others. It was a terrible time, she says, but with some counseling and support from adults and friends, she was able to make sense of what happened to her.  Most people are now aware of what's come to be called "cyberbullying." Here are some suggestions on what to do if you, or someone you know, is involved with online bullying.  **What Counts as Cyberbullying?**  Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. Online threats, rude texts, or messages count. So does posting personal information or videos designed to hurt or embarrass someone else.  In some situations, cyberbullying is considered **harassment**. Intimidation or mean comments that focus on things like a person's gender, religion, sexual orientation, race, or physical differences fall into this category. Whether it's done in person or online, this type of meanness counts as discrimination and is against the law in many states. That means law enforcement could get involved, and bullies may face serious penalties.  Some schools or other organizations might make a distinction between bullying and harassment. That's because of the legal aspects that come into play. But to the person being harassed or bullied, there's no real difference — it's painful to go through, no matter what you call it.  Online bullying can be particularly damaging and upsetting because it's usually anonymous or hard to trace. People being targeted might not know what's being said about them or where the meanness is coming from.  Online bullying and harassment can be easier to commit than other acts of bullying because the bully doesn't have to confront his or her target in person.  **Virtual Acts, Real Consequences**  Because of the role technology plays in our lives, there is often no place to hide from bullies. Online bullying can happen at home, school, or anywhere else people go online. And it can happen 24 hours a day.  Sometimes, online bullying, like other kinds of bullying, can leave people at risk for serious problems: Stress from being in a constant state of upset or fear can lead to problems with mood, energy level, sleep, and appetite. It also can make someone feel jumpy, anxious, or sad.  It's not just the person being bullied who gets hurt — the punishment for cyberbullies can be serious. More and more schools and after-school programs are creating systems to respond to cyberbullying. Schools may kick bullies off sports teams or suspend them from school. Some types of cyberbullying may violate school codes or even break anti-discrimination or sexual harassment laws, so a bully may face serious legal trouble.  **Why Do People Do It?**  Why would someone be a cyberbully? There are probably as many reasons as there are bullies themselves.  Sometimes, what seems like online harassment may be accidental. The impersonal nature of text messages, IMs, and emails makes it very hard to detect a sender's tone. What one person means as a joke could be a devastating insult to someone else.  Most people know when they're being bullied, though, because bullying involves relentless insults or threats. The people doing the bullying know they've crossed a line too. It's not a one-off joke or insult — it's constant harassment and threats.  Cyberbullying also includes posts or pages that don't get taken down, even after the person has been asked to do so. In other words, it's anything that stays online for a while and is deliberately intended to hurt.  **What to Do**  If you're being bullied, harassed, or teased in a hurtful way — or know someone who is — there is no reason to suffer in silence. In fact, you absolutely should report upsetting IMs, emails, texts, etc.  **Tell someone.** Most experts agree: The first thing to do is tell an adult you trust. This is often easier said than done. People who are cyberbullied may feel embarrassed or reluctant to report a bully. Some may hesitate because they're not 100% sure who is doing the bullying. **But bullying can escalate, so speak up until you find someone to help.**  Most parents are so concerned about protecting their kids that sometimes they focus on taking all precautions to stop the bullying. If you're being bullied and worry about losing your Internet or phone privileges, explain your fears to your parents. Let them know how important it is to stay connected, and work with them to figure out a solution that doesn't leave you feeling punished as well. You may have to do some negotiating on safe phone or computer use — the most important thing is to first get the bullying under control.  You can also talk to your school counselor or trusted teacher or other family member. If the bullying feels like it's grinding your life down, counseling can help. If you're not ready for that, you can still benefit from the support of a trusted adult.  **Walk away.** What you've heard about walking away from a real-life bully works in the virtual world too. Ignoring bullies is the best way to take away their power, but it isn't always easy to do (both in the real world and online).  If you see something upsetting, try to step away from the computer or turn off your phone for a while. Find something to distract yourself from what's going on. Do something you love that doesn't give you time to think about what's happening, like playing the guitar, going for a run, or immersing yourself in a book or movie. You can also just chat with a parent or sibling or play with a pet. Taking a break like this allows you to keep things in perspective and focus on the good things in your life.  **Resist the urge to retaliate or respond.** Walking away or taking a break when you're faced with online bullying gives you some space so you won't be tempted to fire back a response or engage with the bully or bullies. Responding when we're upset can make things worse. (Standing up to a bully can be effective sometimes, but it's more likely to provoke the person and escalate the situation.) Taking a break gives the power back to you!  Although it's not a good idea to respond to a bully, **it is a good idea to save evidence of the bullying if you can. It can help you prove your case, if needed.** You don't have to keep mean emails, texts, or other communications where you see them all the time — you can forward them to a parent or save them to a flash drive.  **Report bullying to your service provider.** Sites like Facebook and YouTube take it seriously when people use their sites to post cruel or mean stuff or set up fake accounts. If users report abuse, the site administrator may block the bully from using the site in future. If you're being harassed by someone sending you mean texts or emails, you can complain to phone service or email providers (such as Gmail, Verizon, Comcast, and Yahoo).  **Block the bully.** Most devices have settings that allow you to electronically block the bully or bullies from sending notes. If you don't know how to do this, ask a friend or adult who does.  **Be safe online.** Password protect your cell phone and your online sites, and change your passwords often. Be sure to share your passwords only with your parent or guardian. It's also wise to think twice before sharing personal information or photos/videos that you don't want the world to see. Once you've posted a photo or message, it can be difficult or impossible to delete. So remind yourself to be cautious when posting photos or responding to someone's upsetting message.  **If a Friend Is a Bully**  If you know of a friend who is acting as a cyberbully, take him or her aside and gently talk about it. Without putting your friend down, stand up for your own principles: Let the bully know it's not OK.Explain to your friend that bullying can have very serious consequences: for the bully, for the person (or people) being bullied, and even for bystanders like you and your friends. Meanness is like pollution — it can spread to bystanders who may get stressed out or upset about what's going on. Do what you can to build a bully-free environment!  Reviewed by: Michael T. Morrow, PhD Date reviewed: May 2011 |  |
| http://kidshealth.org/licensees/licensee1/images/IRParents/layout/Nemours_logoPFV.png  Note: All information on TeensHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.  © 1995-2012 The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved. | |

Cyberbullying

1. Describe the actions that are considered to be Cyber bullying.
2. Explain how Cyberbullying can become illegal by explaining harassment and discrimination.
3. Explain how Cyberbulliying has conseuences for
   1. The victim
   2. The bully
4. When do pranks and jokes become classified as “Cyberbullying”?
5. List four things you can do if you are being Cyberbullied.
6. What can you do if you know your friend is Cyber bullying?