

cyber ~~BULLY~~ bullying no more



Parenting a
High Tech
Generation

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Cyber Bullying No More: Parenting A High Tech Generation

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Foreword by

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Cyber Bullying No More: Parenting A High Tech Generation
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Foreword

Bullying is an issue occurring with increasing frequency and consequence within the lives of our children, a phenomenon witnessed regularly in our role as school psychologists, private practice therapists and as parents. Significant levels of attention are now being given within schools in an effort to stem the tide, empower victims, and deflate the aggressors. Many schools have made a commitment to eradicating this pattern of reprehensible behavior and have adopted formal programs to raise awareness by actively involving students and parents in reducing, reporting and preventing bullying. Schools deal with the face-to-face issues taking place during school hours, and at times, even those incidents reported outside of school when the effects spill over into the school day. However, issues arising through venues beyond school hours are often left to families to handle by themselves. How many parents are actually prepared to recognize and address bullying when it occurs through the Internet, texting or social media avenues that our children often conceal from “prying” parental eyes? It is especially concerning because, as Kenley cites, “Many experts suggest that children do not report being violated online for fear of having their technology taken away or fear of retaliation.” Likewise, Kenley teaches us that children’s technological level of savvy for their age far surpasses their ability to make sound judgments regarding potential risks of on-line communication.

We know that the exploding social network brought to us by the rapidly advancing technology supporting the Internet, has altered the very fabric of human communication and interaction. Geographical distances are no longer a roadblock to immediate contact, and millions of people can be accessed simultaneously and instantly. Face-to-face discussions are being replaced by pixels on a screen and visually deciphered symbols and words in the absence of facial expression,

physical demeanor, or vocal inflexion. The sender can decide to be anonymous, or if clever, easily disguise herself as someone else. Like most change, the revolution in communication brought to us by millions of linked computers and phones, carries with it both amazing benefits, and frightening pitfalls. Kenley has provided us with a powerful, accurate, and concise description of the already prevalent concern known as “cyber bullying”, as well as a well thought out conceptualization of how parents can approach this expanding phenomenon.

In her “no holds barred” manual, Kenley has captured the incredible significance and power of cyber bullying, in a way that leaves the reader both shaken by its impact, and relieved by the steps offered to manage it. This pamphlet is not an expression of fear or worry; rather it is a brilliant effort to provide parents with the tools and concepts they need to both understand the potentials of internet communication, as well those needed to protect and assist their children in using technology effectively and safely. She makes her point quickly, thoroughly and accurately, leaving the reader to feel that he has the foundation to better understand, communicate and protect his child in a world with so many unknowns.

Laurie Zelinger, PhD, RPT-S and Fred Zelinger, PhD:
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Introduction

There has been much in the news over the past several years about the dangers and abuses of online behaviors. Many of the harmful actions come from the classmates, friends, and peers of our children rather than from strangers or predators. Bullying, which has caused significant injury in the lives of countless victims throughout the years, has now become a relentless and horrifically destructive cyber force. As our children embrace a world that has been magically transformed by the wonders of technology, they also enter into an electronic culture void of human regard for one another; and tragically, they often find themselves navigating through a climate infused with revenge, retaliation and regret.

With one out of every five children having been the target of cyber bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011), educators, psychologists, civil leaders and legal experts have been working tirelessly developing programs to combat it. In addition, professionals in a myriad of fields are developing strategies to intervene on behalf of the victims while searching for ways to hold the perpetrators accountable as well. However, every day, countless numbers of individuals fall prey to the abusive behaviors generated through social networking sites as well as other electronic means of communication. Sadly, as is often the case, parents/guardians who are struggling with the stressors and responsibilities of everyday life know little about the online bullying culture or aware of the importance of their role in parenting a high-tech generation.

Although there are dozens of books, videos, websites, and resources available for help in dealing with cyber bullying, the purposes of this article are to give parents/guardians a manageable number of principles and practices to incorporate into their daily lives. The parenting strategies will cover three areas of importance: Protection, Intervention, and Prevention.

Protection

Our children are growing up on a diet of technology with immediate access to worldwide social connections. Because it has become so common in our society for our children to have a cell phone, laptop, iPhone, or iPad, etc., we sometimes forget about the window of danger that is open to them. Parents would never hand over the car keys to their teens without the required number of education courses, behind-the-wheel practice hours, and supervision by an adult. And yet, we put a cell phone or a laptop in the hands of young children without adequate preparation, instruction or monitoring. We can begin protecting our high-tech children by implementing several safety measures into our parenting.

1. Know why you are giving your children access to a piece of technology or giving them permission to utilize the technology.

One excellent tool of measurement as to when a child should be given a piece of technology is for the parent/guardian to have a valid reason for doing so. These reasons might include providing for the safety of children or for emergency contacts. Caving into peer pressure or your child's rebellious attitude is never an example of responsible parenting. As children age, more access to different kinds of technology is appropriate. Again, check your adult rationale for doing so. However, with each device, parents must gradually guide their children through the various electronic mediums and venues. If your child made a new friend you'd want to know where he is going, what he is doing. The same is true with this piece of technology. Teach your children how to navigate through the new territory. If you are like many parents/guardians who are not as tech savvy as their children, have them share their web world with you while discussing and implementing safety measures.

2. Clearly explain the rules and expectations about the use of technology.

Families need to take time to talk about how to use technology responsibly. Handing it over without instruction is leading your child blindly into a dangerous environment. Whether it is a cell phone, laptop, iPad, etc., develop a set of rules and expectations about its usage:

- What is it to be used for?
- How often can it be used?
- When and where is it not to be used?
- What costs are being incurred? Who will pay?
- Who or what may be contacted? Who or what is not to be contacted?

It is mandatory that parents/guardians establish an “internet use agreement” with their children. Examples can be found and downloaded from the *Family Online Internet Safety Contract* (www.fosi.org/resources.html), *Family Internet Use Contract and Cell Phone Use Contract* (www.cyberbullying.us/cyberbullying_internet_use_contract.pdf), and *Family Contract for Online Safety* (www.safekids.com/family-contact-for-online-safety) (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

Although it seems like a lot of energy and time to hammer out an agreement or to put one into place, remember that we are talking about the safety of children. Like most issues in parenting, doing the hard work upfront often saves everyone from tremendous heartache in the end.

3. Monitor the use of the technology.

When parents/guardians have established some ground rules for use of technology, they then have a foundation from which to monitor the agreed-upon expectations. This serves as an excellent communication tool to revise and revisit needs as they change or evolve. Parents often think that as children get

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Writers On The Edge offers a range of essays, memoirs and poetry written by major contemporary authors who bring fresh insight into the dark world of addiction, from drugs and alcohol, to sex, gambling and food. Editors Diana Raab and James Brown have assembled an array of talented and courageous writers who share their stories with heartbreaking honesty as they share their obsessions as well as the awe-inspiring power of hope and redemption.

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— JERRY STAHL, author of *Permanent Midnight*



“*Writers On The Edge* is a thoughtful compendium of first-person narratives by writers who have managed to use their despair to create beauty. A must-read for anyone in the recovery field.” — LEONARD BUSCHEL, Founder, *Writers in Treatment*

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