Cyberbullying and Sexting Growing Dangers

Cyberbullying and sexting are becoming more common among teens ages 13 to 18. Many parents don’t even know whether their child has been a victim of cyberbullying or sexting. So, what can parents or guardians do to combat these growing dangers?

Cyberbullying occurs when a person is being bullied online, whether through a text message, email, or social networking website. Some forms of cyberbullying include receiving an anonymous email with a hateful or threatening message, or a rumor that is started through a social media website. Cyberbullying can even occur while your child is playing a video game with other online. In all of these instances, an online bully can remain anonymous if he or she chooses.

Cyberbullying can be as emotionally painful for a child or teen as being bullied in person. While your child is playing a video game or chatting with others online, it’s especially important for children to tell others if they feel uncomfortable while online.

A survey conducted by Cox Communications and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children indicates that:

- More than one-third of teens surveyed have been cyberbullied, have perpetrated cyberbullying, or know friends who have experienced (or perpetrated) it.
- 48% think cyberbullying is a serious problem.
- About four in five teens (81%) think that cyberbullying online is worse to get away with or hide from their parents than bullying in person.

Parents can help keep their children safe from cyberbullying:

- Remind your child that he or she can come to you if feeling threatened or scared by a comment or image. Many times, they are hesitant to tell their parents for fear that they will be blamed, are embarrassed, or will be banned from using their technology or social networking sites.
- Do not respond to the message. It’s important that your child not engage the cyberbully.
- Save the message or image in case you need to share it with your child’s school or local law enforcement if the harassment continues.
- Report the cyberbullying to the social media outlet where it was seen – whether it was an Instant Message on Facebook or a text message on your child’s cell phone. And, don’t forget to remove the bully from your child’s online friends list.

- Monitor your child’s online pages and text messages to make sure they are not receiving harassing or threatening messages.

Sexting – sending, receiving or forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos through a cell phone – is another growing problem among teens. The survey conducted by Cox Communications and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children indicates that 81% of teen “sexters” are under 18. The survey also indicates:

- 19% of teens surveyed have engaged in sexting.
- 66% of teens who sent sexts say they send photos to their boyfriend or girlfriend; 11% say they’ve sent sexts to someone they don’t even know.

In addition to talking to your kids about the dangers of sexting and how it can negatively impact online reputations, there is some other things parents can do to help protect them from harm.

- Remind them that the sending and receiving of sexually explicit messages is illegal, so they need to delete a sext immediately if one is sent to them.
- Encourage your teen to tell you if he or she recognizes an individual in a sext. The person in the photo may be a victim and not aware that a sext is being shared, or someone may be being circulated.
- Remind your child that sext messages should be deleted immediately if received, or if someone makes them feel uncomfortable while online.

Teens who don’t tell their parents about cyberbullying or sexting have stated they won’t tell because they’re embarrassed by the content or photos they receive and they’re afraid their parents will blame them for receiving the message. When talking to teens about cyberbullying or sexting, hold them accountable for using appropriate behavior online, but stay calm to keep the lines of communication open.

Also, remember that teens don’t just access the Internet through computers. Nineteen percent of teens surveyed go online via their cell phone, and their parents are often unaware. That can change if parents take action. Be talking to their kids and visiting websites such as www.Cox.com/TakeCharge for online safety tools and tips.

On behalf of our 2,000 employees dedicated to providing the very best, fastest and safest Internet experience available, Cox Communications has created this special section for you as part of our ongoing commitment to San Diego families.
TAKE CHARGE: Navigating safely through the digital age

A&O with digital media expert James Andrews

Decoding Internet, texting lingo
What kids are really saying online

Survey reveals teens not as safe online as they think 48% now have social networking profile

By Michelle Wintersteen

Teen Online Safety & Digital Reputation

San Diego teen Michelle Wintersteen discussed online safety for Missing & Exploited Children (MCMEC) and partnered with The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. There, I met with teens from San Diego, CA who play video games online with people they don’t know and also meet people online. I also learned about what kids are really saying online and what parents don’t know about the common chat functions they can use, such as posting risqué photos and videos online.

Most kids seem to know that they post something and expect it to be seen. Many are still posting inappropriate comments or sexual explicit images of themselves online. With all of this in mind, it is important for parents and guardians to understand the risks.

A TEEN’S PERSPECTIVE
Managing your reputation online

By Michelle Wintersteen

Teen Online Safety & Digital Reputation

Teenagers use social networking sites to create the best possible reflection of who they are. When college admissions officials are reviewing thousands of similar 3.9 GPA applicants, I want them to see that I am the responsible, hard-working student I am. When college admissions officials are reviewing applications from other students, they are looking for what makes you stand out among the other students. With all of this in mind, it is important for parents and guardians to understand the risks.

Online Safety for Seniors

Nine ways to be Internet savvy

Clare Byrce-Faddegon

For many San Diegans, the Internet is a new path to connection. With just a click, you can be connected to friends and family, who play video games online with people they don’t know and also meet people online. It is important for parents and guardians to understand the risks.

Everyone’s a critic

A reporter who writes on the Internet is a “critic.” Just because you write on the Internet doesn’t mean you have to be a professional critic. Just because you write on the Internet doesn’t mean you have to be a professional critic.

Social Media is a powerful tool for communicating online and can be a great benefit to you if you understand how to use it properly. If you are selling products or services, you should be looking for ways to use social media to promote your business.

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