

Cyberbullying information and advice for young people



The information in this guide appears online at <http://www.cyberbullying.org.nz/youngpeople/>

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying. It's using the internet, a mobile phone or other technology like a camera to hurt somebody or embarrass them.

What does cyberbullying look like?

Bullying on the internet or mobiles can include many things, like being sent anonymous text messages to your phone, posting nasty or threatening comments on your Bebo or Facebook page or sending mean or embarrassing photos or videos of you to other people.

Cyberbullying can involve people spreading rumours about you and scaring you. Sometimes people may try to stop you from communicating with others or they may hack and steal passwords for your online accounts.

Is cyberbullying a big deal?

No one likes to be bullied or harassed.

Cyberbullying takes many forms and some of these may be harder to deal with than others.

Depending on the situation, some young people are able to sort it out quickly, or simply shrug it off.

Other situations may be more serious. About 1 in 5 New Zealand high school students say they have been cyberbullied and many say it makes them feel scared, depressed, angry or ashamed.

If you get sent nasty messages outside of school time sometimes it can feel hard to escape the bullying. Some people say it's worse if you can't tell who the bullying messages are coming from.

Posting mean or nasty pictures or videos of people online can embarrass them in front of their school and spread quickly out of control.

If you post altered pictures of people online these can exist long after you delete them and can also be used as evidence by teachers and police.

What can I do to prevent cyberbullying?

- Be careful who you give your mobile number to and don't pass on friends' numbers without asking them first.
- Don't respond to texts from people you don't know. These can often be sent randomly to find people to bully.
- If you witness cyberbullying try to help the victim. You can offer them support, or report the bullying anonymously if that feels safer.
- Don't post revealing pictures of yourself or others online - they may get sent on and used to bully you or other people.
- Keep your online identity safe - create strong passwords with a mix of lower and upper case letters and numbers. Pick difficult answers for your "secret question" on your accounts that people who know you wouldn't easily guess.
- Don't share your password with anyone - even your friends.

What can I do if I am being cyberbullied?

- Tell people you trust - a good friend, a parent, or a teacher. They will want to help you stop the bullying quickly and safely.
- Do not reply to the people bullying you, especially to text messages from numbers you don't know.
- Save evidence of all bullying messages and images. You can save messages on your phone and take screen shots of bullying on websites or IM chats. This may be used later if you report the bullying to your school or the police.

If the bullying online or on your mobile involves physical threats, like threats to hurt or fight you, contact the police. Making threats of harm is criminal behaviour in New Zealand.

Bring in any evidence you have when you meet with the police (messages stored on your phone or print outs of screenshots). If you are worried about your safety contact the Police immediately.

Cyberbullying at your school

If you think the people bullying you are at your school tell the Principal or Deputy Principal as soon as possible. Schools in New Zealand want all students to be safe and teachers want to help stop bullying.

Cyberbullying on your favourite websites

Report internet cyberbullying to the website where the bullying took place - usually there is a "Report Abuse" button or "Safety" link.

Cyberbullying on IM

If you can, block the bullying messages coming through.

Take screenshots of any nasty messages sent to you and save them as evidence.

Cyberbullying and your mobile

If you are being bullied on your mobile contact your phone company.

Report the abuse and ask them to take action.

What can I do to help someone being cyberbullied?

If a friend comes to you for help reassure them that they've done the right thing by talking with someone.

Tell them not to reply to mean or nasty messages.

Make sure they save the bullying messages on their phone and/or take screenshots of website and chat abuse. This is important so that proof of the bullying is recorded and can be used as evidence later on.

If you see that someone is being cyberbullied, contact them and let them know that you support them. This can help them feel less isolated. Reporting the cyberbullying to someone who can help, like an adult you trust or to the website where the bullying is happening. You can do that anonymously if you want to protect your identity.

Cyberbullying on websites and IM

If they are being bullied on a website or instant messenger help them to block the bullying and report the abuse to the website.

Cyberbullying on mobile phones

If they are receiving bullying text messages or calls they should tell their mobile phone company.

If they already have evidence of bullying texts the company should be able to take action.

Cyberbullying at school

Does the bullying involve people at school? If you think so tell the Principal or Deputy Principal as soon as possible. Schools in New Zealand want all students to be safe and teachers want to help stop bullying.

When to call the police

If any cyberbullying threatens harm - like hurting or fighting - this breaks the law. Save the evidence and contact the Police.

What if I'm scared about getting involved?

If you witness any form of cyberbullying but are worried about helping you can still do the following:

- If you see cyberbullying online then report the problem anonymously to the website where bullying takes place.
- You can also try to talk to the target of bullying away from an audience. Bystanders who support people being bullied can make that person feel less isolated.

'At a Distance' – standing up to cyberbullying

Watch the New Zealand made short film about cyberbullying at <http://www.cyberbullying.org.nz/at-a-distance-film/>