

# CYBERBULLYING FACT SHEET FOR YOUTH



A recent Canadian study<sup>1</sup> found that 42% of youth had been cyberbullied in the previous month and 60% had witnessed it. While social media allows youth to constantly communicate and share information with others, youth can also use social media to say hurtful things to others, especially when their conversations are not monitored.<sup>2</sup>

## Definitions

### What is cyberbullying?<sup>3</sup>

Cyberbullying is targeting, embarrassing, harassing or threatening another person on purpose using online communication technology (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat). For example:

- Sending mean or threatening texts, emails or messages
- Ridiculing someone online about their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation
- Spreading rumours, gossip or secrets about someone on social media
- Impersonating someone online to post embarrassing comments, play tricks and hurt another person's reputation;
- Posting embarrassing photos of someone and sharing it with others.

### What is an online bystander?

- A bystander is someone who sees, reads, visits, likes, screenshots or shares something that could be hurtful to another person.
- 85% of Canadian youth say they would intervene if they were online bystanders to extreme forms of cyberbullying (e.g., hurtful messages that are unfair or morally wrong) especially if it was directed at a family member or friend.
- Canadian youth said they were less likely to intervene if they were online bystanders to less extreme forms of cyberbullying (e.g., joking around or drama).<sup>4</sup>

### Facts about Cyberbullying

- In one Canadian study 30% of youth who were cyberbullied reported that it caused problems for them.<sup>5</sup>
- Youth who are cyberbullied can experience problems with friends, family or trouble learning in school due to the emotional toll (e.g., anxiety, loneliness) cyberbullying can have on them.<sup>6</sup>
- Canada has federal criminal code laws to protect people against some forms of cyberbullying.<sup>7</sup>



## Advice for Youth

### For youth who are bystanders: **STAND UP! to cyberbullying**<sup>8</sup>

#### **When you see it, tell someone.**

Talk to friends, parents and other people you trust about the kind of help you would need and the kind of help they would need if faced with a situation like this. You'll learn how to better support each other in a way that really helps.

#### **Put yourself in their shoes.**

If you were being cyberbullied, would you feel mad, sad, scared, humiliated or lonely? What would you want people to do or say for you? Putting yourself in another person's shoes helps you recognize when it is not just a joke for that person or just drama.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Be there for your peers.**

Reach out! Support your peers who are cyberbullied, online or in person. Even if you are not good friends, let them know that no one deserves to be cyberbullied or should go through cyberbullying alone.

#### **Take action.**

If you feel safe and comfortable to do it, calmly and firmly tell the person who is cyberbullying to stop.

#### **Don't encourage cyberbullying.**

Stop and think before you share. Posts that hurt others do not deserve to be liked, resent, reposted or retweeted.

### For youth who experience cyberbullying: **Seek support and take action!**<sup>10</sup>

#### **You are not alone.**

- Youth tend to keep cyberbullying to themselves, but ...
- When cyberbullying occurs, you can talk to someone you trust, like a parent, teacher, school counsellor, coach, sibling, friend, or even Kids Help Phone<sup>11</sup>.
- Social support can help you cope emotionally with the effects of cyberbullying.
- You can ask friends and family not to intervene unless you are comfortable with it.

#### **Suggestions for if you experience cyberbullying:**

Cyberbullying can range from mildly annoying to terrifying and traumatic. Below are some tips that can be used across different situations:

##### **1. Do not seek revenge.**

Pay attention to how you are feeling. If you are feeling angry or frustrated and have the urge to say or post something back, try asking yourself, "Will this make the situation worse or better?" Getting revenge most often makes the cyberbullying worse.

##### **2. Ignore it.**

If it is a one-time incident, try ignoring the cyberbullying.

##### **3. Talk about it.**

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Try talking or send a private message to the person who is cyberbullying you. Calmly and firmly explain that you would like this person to stop sending messages to you or remove the offending material. Let the person know that their actions are not ok and are hurtful.

#### 4. Report it.

- Screen shot the text, blog, post, website, or other hurtful material so you can report these behaviours if needed.
- Remove online material that is being used to hurt you (e.g., un-tag pictures, block mean or threatening messages, request removal of posts).
- Report offensive images, blogs, or posts to the social media site(s) where they are posted, and to your service provider. Report your age; if you are under 18 your complaint will be made a priority.

#### For youth who take part in cyberbullying: Stop and think before you send

- Because online behaviour can be impulsive and spontaneous, youth don't always think of how their message could hurt someone before they press send.
- A 15-year old Google Science Fair finalist found:
- More than 93% of youth would not send a message if they were reminded that it could hurt someone.<sup>12</sup>

**When you Stand UP! to bullying, you are helping to make your community a better and safer place.  
For more information, visit [www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca)**

<sup>1</sup> Li, J., & Craig, W. (2015). Young Canadians' experiences with electronic bullying. Kingston, ON: PREVNef<sup>2</sup> Della Cioppa V., O'Neill, A., & Craig, W. (2015). Learning from traditional bullying interventions: A review of research on cyberbullying and best practice. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 23, 61-68.

<sup>3</sup> For more information related to cyberbullying visit: <http://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/cyber-bullying>

<sup>4</sup> See Li & Craig, above.

<sup>5</sup> Steeves, V. (2014). *Young Canadians in a wired world, Phase III. Cyberbullying: Dealing with online meanness, cruelty and threats*. Ottawa: Media Smarts.

<sup>6</sup> Beran, T., Mishna, F., McInroy, L. B. & Shatiff, S. (2015). Children's experiences of cyberbullying: A Canadian national study. *Children and Schools*, 37(4), 207-214.

<sup>7</sup> For more information related to legislation visit: <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbullying/cyberbullying-law>.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on better bystander reactions to cyberbullying, see <http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/tip-sheet/turn-things-around-tipsheet.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> To help you recognize whether behaviour is teasing or bullying, see the *Teasing or Bullying Tip Sheet*.

<sup>10</sup> Jacobs, N.C., L., Völlink, T., Dehue, F., & Lechner, L. (2014). Online Pestkoppenstoppen: Systematic and theory-based development of a web-based tailored intervention for adolescent cyberbullying victims to combat and prevent cyberbullying. In T. Völlink, F. Dehue, C. McGuckin, T. Völlink, F. Dehue, C. McGuckin (Eds.), *Cyberbullying: From theory to intervention* (pp. 110-155). New York, NY, US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

<sup>11</sup> Confidential help is available for teens online or by phone, free, at <https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/Home.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Prabhu, T. (2014). Rethink: An effective way to prevent cyberbullying. Finalist presentation at Google Science Fair 2014. <https://www.google-science-fair.com/projects/en/2014/f4b320cc1cedf92035dab51903bd495a846ae7de6869ac40c909525efe7c79db>