



ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - Volume 4, Issue 10

This month's ThinkUKnow e-newsletter was inspired by an episode of a comedy show on TV that looked at bullying. The father in the show was so appalled that his daughter may have been subjected to bullying on her school bus that he caught the bus with her one morning to help her. It turns out that his daughter was the one bullying another child and the father was at a loss as to how to help her. It reminded me that we devote a lot of time and effort in preparing to help children when they are wronged, but how much time and effort do we devote to making sure they don't wrong others?

In this issue of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter, we're going to focus on preventing children and young people from cyberbullying others and how to deal with it if it has already occurred.

Cyberbullying and the illusion of anonymity

Sites like ask.fm and qooh.me are built on the premise that anonymity is somehow liberating; that by not having to identify yourself, you can truly express yourself. With young people and some adults, however, this often translates into doing things without fear of consequence. It can encourage people to think only about themselves, and not their impact on others.

Children and young people need to be aware that there are always ways and means of identifying something that is sent digitally. There is always a record or trace left behind that can be used to identify who said or did what. Before you say anything online, you

Time2Talk

In this section we look at ways to start talking with children and young people about their use of technology.

Do you think it's more important to prevent cyberbullying by focusing on the offenders, victims or bystanders? Why?

What can you do to calm your emotions?

How would you go about de-escalating an online argument?

If you didn't feel comfortable talking to me about an issue, who would you confide in?

Cyberbullying hurts, but that pain doesn't entitle us to hurt others and it certainly doesn't make us feel any better. If a young person has been cyberbullied, they should know who they can talk to for support and advice and how they can seek help for themselves without hurting others.

Walk a mile in their shoes

We rarely know everything that is happening in another person's life, nor can we predict

need to make sure it something that you are willing to face the consequences of.

Conflict resolution

Many instances of cyberbullying and bullying occur because of poor conflict resolution skills. From a very young age, children need to learn how to make ethical decisions and to deal with conflict in an appropriate age. This includes conflict that may occur online or through mobile devices. An emotion experienced for only a few moments can remain forever if expressed digitally.

When emotions are running high, it's a good idea to turn away from social media and apps and do some activity that helps to regulate emotions. It might be going for a walk, listening to music, playing a game or even just getting outside. Developing strategies to calm down can help young people to resolve conflict with a more clear head and allow them to use the skills necessary to overcome conflict without hurting themselves or others.

He/she started it!

Retaliation or revenge cyberbullying is no more acceptable than other forms of cyberbullying, it is still cyberbullying. Children and young people need to realise that retaliation sounds acceptable in theory, but imagine it in practice! If everyone who was robbed went out and robbed someone else, who then went out and robbed someone else, our property crime rates would rise exponentially. The very fabric of our society would change as we all became victims and offenders and lost trust in our community.

how our words and actions are going to affect them. The best we can do is to try and see things from their perspective, to walk a mile in their shoes. This could help young people see that what they consider as just a joke, could really hurt someone's feelings, or that a careless word could be interpreted as a personal attack.

This advice is also really important for parents, particularly parents of young people who may have cyberbullied someone. Try and see what else is going on in your child's life and the issues that may have contributed to their cyberbullying. Cyberbullying, like other burning issues in the technological age, is often only the most visible of a number of issues that are co-occurring. Try to assess your child's mental wellbeing and developmental needs, is there something else going on that lies at the root of the cyberbullying that deserves your attention rather than just punishing your child for cyberbullying another?

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