



## ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - Volume 5, Issue 3

In our previous issue of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter we looked at how we can empower children and young people to become ethical and active bystanders. In this issue, we're going to reverse this and see how we as adults can become more ethical and active bystanders to cyberbullying. We all have a role to play in educating children and young people and helping them to grow into informed and ethical adults. This isn't restricted to what we teach young people, but also in the way we live our lives as an example to them.

### Parents as bystanders

Many parents want to protect their children from harm, and it can often seem as though cyberbullying is an omnipresent risk. Rather than focussing on eliminating this risk, it is more beneficial to help children and young people develop coping strategies and skills to help them overcome the challenges that they may face.

It may also be useful to change our approach to cyberbullying – instead of looking for early warning signs, developing and nurturing a positive relationship with your child can protect them from a number of issues and they are more likely to come to you if something is going wrong.

### Teachers as bystanders

Schools are often the environments where cyberbullying is expected to be addressed and rectified. Many teachers are to be commended for the efforts they put into addressing these issues, yet in other

### Time2Talk

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

**How would you overcome cyberbullying? Is there a way you would like me to help?**

**Do you know what your school would do to address cyberbullying?**

**Are there people in your community that you can talk to about cyberbullying, outside of family and friends?**

**How much notice do you take of media reports on cyberbullying?**

Naming and shaming sounds like a good approach, but it isn't backed up by research. It usually results in the person who has been bullying becoming the person being bullied, without any attempt to address the underlying issues. What the research does show is that people who bully and are bullied suffer more harm than those who only take one role. Circulating this (mis)information about an incident on the internet could also jeopardise any criminal investigation.

### The media as bystanders

We also need to address the role of traditional media (newspaper, radio and TV)

cases, the response by teachers can make the situation worse and lower confidence in reporting. It's important to look beyond the surface issues (cyberbullying and bullying are often the most visible of a range of co-occurring issues) and see what's really going on.

If the school doesn't have the resources to do this, utilise existing services in your community to assist. Make sure you have a good relationship with youth health services in your area so they can support you.

### **Community members as bystanders**

The response of the community to cyberbullying can also impact the actions of children and young people. Often, well-intentioned community members will post reports of cyberbullying on social media and encourage their friends and followers to "do something" to address this issue. This is often in the form of liking, sharing and reposting these reports, usually as a way of "naming and shaming". It's nice to know that the community wants to help, but there are better ways of doing this.

in incidents related to cyberbullying. The broadcasting of filmed fights, reproducing harassing social media posts in newspapers and the labelling of children and young people in media discussions may be detrimental to all involved. The media has a role in informing the community of what is occurring around them, but where this impacts upon the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, there needs to be appropriate safeguards and procedures in place. This also includes coverage of suicide linked with cyberbullying.

**The 21st of March is the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence - a great opportunity to speak with young people about these issues.**

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