



Cyberbullying

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Definitions of cyberbullying vary, but usually, it is defined as some form of intentional, repeated aggression and using electronic forms of contact such as texting and social media.

I am not a big fan of the words “cyberbullying” and “bullying.” Pre-teens and teens have heard these words so many times; they roll their eyes when they come up. Do the test - ask them if they feel they have been saturated with stuff about “bullying” and see how they respond. When I talk with them about such topics, I often use the terms “online aggression” and “social cruelty.”

No matter what we call it, unkind and stressful human interactions are a part of life, and the sooner we give kids skills to practise working through conflict and cruelty, the better. [Research](#) shows that 20% of eight year olds and 40% of 10 year olds have mobile phones (the majority of which are smartphones) and children with phones, not surprisingly, are significantly more likely to be involved in cyberbullying.

Given a common aversion to the topic that teens can have, means that as adults we need to be more skilful in how we approach our conversations. Consider bringing up a news story of a person bad-mouthing another person, and then from there, a good entry is the simple question about why - “Why might a person be acting a certain way?” There are always reasons behind a person’s behaviours and talking about this with our boys is a nice way to help build their insight and empathy. For bullying, maybe a person wants to gain power in a social structure because they feel powerless in another setting.

- [Screenagers](#) has a great list of anti-bullying campaigns that addresses online cruelty and I hope it fosters many types of conversations and solutions around online cruelty.
- [MARC](#) (Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center) provides terrific resources for parents, educators, and students.
- [Elizabeth Englander](#), PhD has many free handouts for parents to help through some of these kinds of issues including information about what bystanders can do.