Cyber Bullying

Cyberbullying is another hazard now appearing on social networking sites. Kids no longer need muscles to bully and torment their peers. Some young people use Web sites, cell phones, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogs and other cyberspace options to harass, threaten and ridicule. What may start as a joke, once launched into cyberspace, can be very serious. The impact on the victim can be devastating and even tragic.

Cyberbullying is highly varied and hard to define. Parents can no longer count on seeing the tell-tale physical signs of bullying - a black eye, bloody lip or torn clothes. But the damage done by cyber bullies is no less real, and can be infinitely more painful.

At its core, it is sending or posting derogatory or hateful material on the Internet with the intent to harm another. Cyberbullying can be defamatory to a group, a team, a race or target a single victim. Bullies employ any or all cyber communications, including posts to social networking sites, chat rooms, email, instant messaging and blogs, to harass, threaten, spread lies or distribute embarrassing pictures. The Internet gives bullies a worldwide audience for taunting their victims while maintaining some anonymity.

Cyberbullying Tips for Parents:

- Talk to your children about what they are doing on the Internet, what sites they visit and who they chat with.
- Keep a record of any rude and harassing emails, text messages or postings, but do not respond.
- File a complaint with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or cell phone company about any cyberbullying messages.
- If the cyberbully attends the same school, inform administrators and school resource officers.
- If the cyberbullying involves threats of violence, coercion or intimidation, call the police.
- If a Web site is defaming or mocking a person or group, contact your ISP and inform police to get the Web site removed.

Cyberbullying Tips for Kids:

Bullying is no longer about the strong picking on the weak in the schoolyard. Learn about ways you can stop cyberbullying from happening to you:

- Tell a trusted adult about the bullying, and keep telling until the adult takes action.
- Don't open or read messages by cyber bullies.
- Tell your school administrators if it is school related. Schools have a bullying solution in place.
- Don't erase the messages - they may be needed to take action.
- Protect yourself - never agree to meet with the person or with anyone you meet online.
- If bullied through chat or instant messaging, the "bully" can often be blocked.
- If you are threatened with harm, inform the local police.