

Bullying/ Cyberbullying

The truth about bullying/cyberbullying...

- The rise of the digital age has brought about a new type of bullying known as cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place anywhere online (SMS, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, email, etc) where people can view, participate in, or share content. Content is generally harmful in nature and visible to others, thus causing great distress to the victim.
- South Africa has the 4th highest rate of cyberbullying in the world.
- One in five South African young people have experienced cyberbullying first-hand and 84% know someone who has been a victim of cyberbullying.

How is cyberbullying different from traditional bullying?

- When comparing the motives behind cyber and traditional bullying, very little has changed. The psychology of the bully remains much the same, but their means and opportunity has increased tenfold, and the consequences are devastating.
- While bullying on the playground might have led to a bruise, bullying online now lasts for years to come. It also has a bigger reach; so many more people are exposed to the picture, comment, or video.

When you are a victim of cyberbullying, it is normal to feel isolated, hopeless, and depressed. You begin to wonder if the situation will ever improve as you desperately search for a way out. You must remember that you are not alone and that you have the capacity within you to seek help to make the bullying stop.

Here are nine tips to help you cope:

1. It is NOT about you

- Remind yourself that the bullies actions say much more about them than you.

2. Know and use your privacy settings

- Keep your passwords to your social media accounts safe and do not share them with just anybody.

3. Keep the evidence

- Cyberbullying leaves a trail behind. Keep all the evidence. Take screenshots and save recordings. These will come in handy when reporting the bullying.

4. Block or Report

- Do not be shy to block or report a bully on social media and WhatsApp. The blocking and reporting options are readily available, use them.

5. Go dark

- Taking a break from social media for a while is always a good idea. Take some time off to regroup and gain some perspective.

6. Try not to retaliate

- Retaliation can make things worse. Besides, there is nothing less satisfying to a cyberbully than no reaction at all.

7. Show your support

- If you witness someone being bullied/cyberbullied, reach out or report it. Do not participate in the hurting of others. A simple text to the victim showing them you care, will likely make a huge difference for them.

8. Stay off anonymous sites

- Anonymous sites are not for you. These sites are playgrounds for bullies, do not go there.

9. Ask for help

- The impact of bullying/cyberbullying can quickly spiral out of control and the consequences can be devastating. Before this happens, report the bully by speaking to your parents, siblings, relatives, friends, student support services teachers/lecturers. And consider counselling, by phoning HIGHER HEALTH toll-free helpline on 0800 36 36 36 or SADAG on 0800 12 13 14 or 0800 567 567.



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