

Parenting Suggestions Regarding Technology and Cyberbullying

- Ask them to take you places they frequently visit and show you what they do. Three types of sites children commonly utilize are:
 - Instant or Text Messaging
 - Social Media
 - Video or Picture Posting
- Open up accounts where they have accounts.
- If your child is under 13, you do have the option to have these accounts deleted since most of these services have an age and parental consent requirement per the Federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.
- Have them share with you all their user account names and passwords.
- Make certain they never have and will never share their passwords with anyone, even a friend. Explain the risk of someone impersonating them and ruining their reputation.
- Have them show you what they have in their profiles/pages. How do they describe themselves? Is it all accurate and appropriate? Does it show too much detail about your child? Are they protecting and sustaining a positive reputation?
- Scrutinize their friend lists on these accounts. Recognizing the identity of each person is paramount. If they don't know the person in person, then consider that person a stranger. Request they delete and block that person.
- Ask your child if they have ever been ridiculed, intimidated or humiliated on the Internet. Encourage them to come to you for support if they are being bullied. Both of you should learn how to use the print screen option to save evidence of the cyberbullying.
- In general, whether your child was bullied on-line or in person, write down the details as soon as possible. Log date, time, place, bully, bystanders, description of the event and evidence. Bring this documentation to the appropriate school official or local police department depending on the severity of the event.
- Ask whether they have bullied anyone. It's important for them to appreciate how much unkind words or images can inflict emotional pain, and that the reach of the Internet makes it far more destructive. Use Ryan's story to make the point.

Parenting Suggestions Regarding Technology and Cyberbullying

- Also, explain that this is a particularly difficult emotional period for many children and what may seem to be harmless teasing, can be devastating to the person being teased.
- Share with them that the Internet is a public forum so anything can be shared with other people without their knowledge or consent. They should be very discreet in what they say and do on-line. They need always to be vigilant in protecting their reputations. Things said and done on the internet can come back to bite them many years later.
- Have a very pointed conversation about “sexting”, the risky practice of sending sexually explicit photos or messages which can easily be forwarded on to others and damage their reputation.
- Establish clear and enforceable guidelines:
- Create your family policy for technology acceptable use. List what may or may not be allowed including clear rules about time limits.
- Be upfront with your child that this policy will be enforced and monitored. Try to set a policy that respects your child’s privacy while also considering their age, maturity level and inclination towards risky behavior.
- Purchase monitoring and time control software to help enforce your family's policy. o Search “parental control software reviews” to find the latest products, features, and reviews.
- Remove the technology (cells phones, tablets, iPods, computers) from the bedroom, specifically, when it is time to sleep.
- How much technology and access does your child need?
- Does a middle school child or younger possess the maturity, judgment, and social skills to use text messaging and social websites responsibly? Do their peers?
- Does your child need a cell phone, particularly with text messaging and photo/video features? Are they mature enough to handle these options responsibly? Would a basic flip phone suffice until they are more mature?
- When does too much technology begin to hurt a child? You need to find the right balance with other activities.
- Is it healthy for them to come home and plug right back into their social network versus having some quiet, reflective and regenerative time with their family?
- Please visit <http://www.RyansStory.org> for more information about these topics and to also learn more about bullying and teen suicide prevention.