

Cyberbullying: What Every Parent/Guardian and Student Should Know

As children and teens spend more time online, the risk of cyberbullying becomes more real. Cyberbullying is when someone uses digital platforms—like social media, messaging apps or gaming chats—to harass, threaten or embarrass others. It can happen to anyone, and it often goes unnoticed by adults.

Why It Matters

Cyberbullying can have serious emotional and psychological effects, especially during the sensitive developmental years between 7 and 18. Victims may experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and even physical symptoms like headaches or trouble sleeping.

Common Forms of Cyberbullying

- Sending mean or threatening messages
- Spreading rumours or lies online
- Posting or sharing embarrassing photos or videos
- Excluding someone from online groups or chats
- Impersonating someone to damage their reputation

What the Law Says (Europe & Cyprus)

Across Europe, cyberbullying is increasingly recognised as a serious issue. The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Better Internet for Kids initiative promote safer digital environments.

In Cyprus, while there is no single law titled “cyberbullying law,” several legal provisions apply:

- Harassment and threats are punishable under the Criminal Code.
- Sharing private content without consent (such as photos or videos) can lead to prosecution under data protection and privacy laws.
- The Cyprus Police Cybercrime Unit investigates online abuse and provides support to victims.

Ages 7–11: Primary Years

What They Might Experience:

- Name-calling or teasing in online games or group chats

- Being excluded from online groups
- Seeing or sharing hurtful messages without understanding the impact

What They Need to Know:

- Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet to be mean or hurtful.
- It's never okay to make someone feel bad online—even as a joke.
- If something online makes them feel upset, confused or scared, they should talk to a trusted adult right away.

What Parents/Guardians Can Do:

- Supervise online activity and use parental controls.
- Teach children to block and report harmful behaviour.
- Encourage kindness and empathy in digital spaces.
- Remind them: if they wouldn't say it in person, they shouldn't say it online.

Ages 12–14: Early Adolescence

What They Might Experience:

- Mean comments, rumours, or exclusion on social media
- Pressure to share personal photos or information
- Group chats where others are targeted or mocked

What They Need to Know:

- Cyberbullying can seriously affect someone's mental health.
- It's okay to leave a group chat or unfollow someone who makes them feel uncomfortable.
- They should save evidence (screenshots) and talk to a trusted adult if they're being bullied or see it happening.

What Parents/Guardians Can Do:

- Talk openly about online experiences and peer pressure.
- Help them set boundaries (e.g., no phones at night).

- Encourage them to curate their feed—follow people who make them feel good.
- Explain that sharing private content without consent is illegal and can result in serious consequences.

Ages 15–18: Older Teens

What They Might Experience:

- Harassment, threats or public shaming online
- Pressure to participate in or ignore harmful behaviour
- Long-term consequences of digital actions (e.g., digital footprint)

What They Need to Know:

- Cyberbullying is a serious issue and can be reported to authorities.
- They have the right to feel safe online—no one should threaten or humiliate them.
- Their [digital footprint](#) matters—what they post can affect future opportunities.

What Parents/Guardians Can Do:

- Support teens in building a healthy digital identity.
- Discuss the legal implications of online behavior (e.g. harassment, data privacy).
- Encourage critical thinking about what they see and share online.
- Be a safe space for open conversations—without judgment.