

## Cyberbullying<sup>1</sup>

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Bullying—or aggression on a continual basis between peers where one has a power advantage over another—is common among children and adolescents. Using intimidation and physical force or spreading rumors is often what comes to mind when we think of bullying. However, a form that parents and teachers may be less aware of is called “cyberbullying.” This involves put-downs, publicly sharing personal information, stalking, and other overt attacks upon a person, all using electronic communication.

Those who cyberbully may feel that cyberspace is an impersonal place to vent and consider it less harmful than face-to-face bullying. However, it can be very destructive. For example, teens may start a poll and cast online votes for the ugliest girl in the school. And, in Japan, cell phone photos taken in a locker room of an overweight boy were shared online with his peers. Death threats and hateful words travel easily through cyberspace in anonymous e-mails or cell phone calls.

Research on cyberbullying has found about 22% of teen males and 12% of teen females were cyberbullies, and about 25% of both males and females were victims. And although 64% of these teens believed adults would try to stop cyberbullying, only about 30% would actually tell an adult (Li, 2006).

Parents should be alert to the way their children use their electronic communications and talk to their children about the risks involved.

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## Reference

Li, Q. (2006). Cyberbullying in schools: A research of gender differences. *School Psychology International*, 27, 157-170.