Cyberbullying prevention – tips for parents

At a glance

- Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens.
- Be aware of what your child is doing online.
- Locate the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Don't simply ignore cyberbullying.
- Watch for changes in mood and behaviour in your child.
- Report abuse to the relevant authorities.
- All schools have anti-bullying policies – ask about yours.

The statistics around cyberbullying are sketchy, mainly because it often goes unreported. The likelihood of children being bullied online or over the phone increases as they get older at a frequently.
We also know that parents typically monitor their younger children's online activities more than teenagers. Unfortunately the age when kids are most likely to be cyberbullied coincides with the age when parents, to know about it.

Having published these and other interesting findings in a 2009 research report, the Australian Media Authority (ACMA) has created tips for parents to help keep their kids safe online as well as those who think their child may already be experiencing online bullying.

**Say NO to cyberbullying – tips for parents**

1. Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens. Work out strategies to address concerns that both of you are comfortable with so your child knows what to expect if they do report concerns to you.

2. Establish one or two other trusted adults your child is comfortable in approaching about concerns.

3. Be aware of what your child is doing online and explore it with them.

4. Keep the lines of communication open so your child will be comfortable about talking about something that is worrying them. Help your child to develop the skills they need to interact respectfully online. Guide their online activities and help them learn to communicate with friends and family.

5. Try to locate the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.

6. Discuss the kinds of sites that are ok to explore and those that are not and have clear online activities.

7. Help your child to block anyone who sends offensive content. Most social networking users to block and report someone who is behaving badly.

**What to do if you think your child is being cyberbullied**

1. Discuss any changes in mood or behaviour with them. If you are concerned, help your child to connect to friends and family they trust.

2. Notify the police immediately if you have serious concerns for your child's safety.

3. Work with your child to save some evidence of cyberbullying behaviour – it may need to be shared with the child's school, internet service provider (ISP), mobile phone carrier or the police.

4. If you need to involve your child's school, ask them to thoroughly explain their process. You can ask to see, or can often find on their websites.

5. Cyberbullying won't stop if it's ignored – you can help by listening to your child and working to take control of the situation.