

Pointers For Parents

Protecting Your Kids From Cyber Bullies

(NAPS)—Whether it's e-mail or schoolwork or just having fun, most kids nowadays spend time online almost every day.

While the Internet is a great place for kids to find information, share ideas and meet new people, parents should talk to their children about how to keep safe online. Kids who talk to their parents about Internet safety are six times less likely to meet an Internet stranger in person.

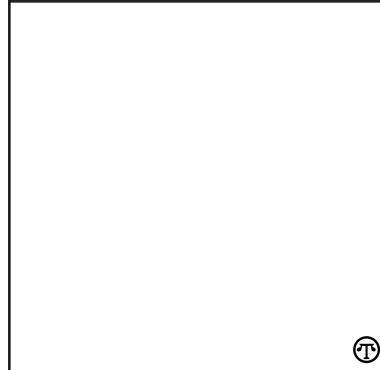
One threat that kids encounter is cyber bullying. It may start out as harmless joking but can escalate into insults and rumors—ending up as a form of harassment. Cyber bullies use Web technology to insult, intimidate, extort and embarrass other Web users.

One form of online embarrassment might be posting someone's private message to social Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook, popular hangouts for teens.

The harassment can also take the form of physical threats. If your child receives threats to person or property, experts at the Internet Keep Safe Coalition say it should be reported to the police.

If the bullying involves an adult harassing a minor child, it may be an attempt by a predator to intimidate a child and should be reported to the police and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

If the bully is a student in your child's school, or if you can identify the school in which the bully is enrolled, you can contact the school about its policy for inter-



Warn your kids about cyber bullies. Kids who talk to their parents about Internet safety are six times less likely to become victims.

vention. Surprisingly, most cyber bullies are smart kids from affluent families. In many cases, they are kids who have found a way to feel in control when they may not have a physical advantage in the real world.

Many children do not report cyber bullying because they are afraid their Internet privileges will be taken away. If your child tells you about bullying or harassment, stay calm. Thank them for telling you and don't overreact because doing so could make them less likely to confide in you another time.

Teach kids not to respond to insulting or defaming messages. A common tactic among bullies is to post compromising responses and label the victim as violent and unstable.

The Internet Keep Safe Coalition offers parents free tools and tips at www.ikeepsafe.org.

Did You Know?

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