

The WITS Programs

The WITS Programs bring together schools, families and communities to help elementary school children deal with peer victimization. The WITS acronym stands for **W**alk away, **I**gnore, **T**alk it out and **S**eek help and represents strategies children can use when faced with conflict.

In the past, peer victimization occurred in person. Now, more children are being victimized while communicating with their peers through email, online chats, texting and other social media.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that takes place electronically using the Internet or cell phones and includes the following behaviours:

- Sending nasty or insulting messages over the Internet or on cell phones
- Sending or posting gossip, secrets or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
- Pretending to be someone else and sending negative messages or posting material to get others in trouble or to hurt their reputation or friendships
- Purposely excluding someone from an Internet group, chat room or friend list
- Posting real or digitally altered photographs of someone online without their permission
- Using websites to rate peers' popularity or appearance

Additional Resources

Books

- *Cyberbullying and cyberthreats*. By Nancy E. Willard. Published by Research Press (2007).
- *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the digital age*. By R. Kowalski, S. Limber, and P. Agatson. Published by Wiley-Blackwell Press (2007).

Websites

- www.cyberbullying.us
- www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- www.stopcyberbullying.org/parents
- www.bewebaware.ca

Online Resources for Children

- **CYBERBULLY 411**
www.cyberbully411.com
Provides resources for youth who have questions about or have been targeted by online harassment
- **STOP CYBERBULLYING**
www.stopcyberbullying.org
Provides age-appropriate cyberbullying information for children aged 7-10, 11-13 and 14-17

This pamphlet was developed through an ongoing collaboration among the Rock Solid Foundation and researchers from University of Victoria's Centre for Youth & Society.

Centre for
Youth & Society

University
of Victoria



Cyberbullying

A Resource for Parents



Creating responsive communities for the prevention of peer victimization



www.witsprogram.ca

What can parents do to get involved?

- Keep computers in a shared space in your home – not in a child’s bedroom.
- Learn everything you can about what your child does online: be familiar with any profiles (e.g. Facebook), web pages or electronic journals (blogs) they use.
- Know your child’s passwords.
- Teach your children to never post online or send in a text message anything they wouldn’t want the entire world to see or read.
- Discuss the importance of treating others with kindness and respect when sending electronic messages, not just in person.
- Encourage your child to come to you if someone says or does something online that makes them uncomfortable.
- Children are not always aware of the consequences of their actions, but cyberbullying is an *illegal* activity. Knowing what cyberbullying is and talking about its seriousness may prevent children from engaging in or becoming victims of or silent bystanders to cyberbullying.

What to do if your child is a victim of cyberbullying...

Cyberbullying can have negative consequences, such as low self-esteem and school avoidance. If your child tells you that he or she is being bullied online:

- **Listen and provide support**
- **Save the evidence: phone and Internet records can be traced**
- **Tell the bully to stop if their identity is known**
- **Report the incident(s) to school administrators**
- **Notify the police**



How is cyberbullying different from other forms of bullying?

- It often *looks* anonymous. It does not occur face-to-face so cyberbullies think their online identity is unknown but phone numbers and Internet addresses can be traced.
- It is often more cruel. Cyberbullies say things online that they wouldn’t say in person.
- It is far-reaching. Electronic messages can be easily sent to an entire school or community, or posted on a website for the whole world to see forever.
- It can take place 24/7 – not just on the playground or at school – and invades the child’s home and personal spaces as well as the school environment.
- A single incident of cyberbullying can be experienced as multiple attacks with repeated and long term consequences. Content that is taken offline can reappear or be circulated again.