How do I protect my child from cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. When the bully has real or perceived power over the victim and is using technology to repeatedly harass, threaten, or embarrass someone, it is considered cyberbullying.

There are many different social media sites and platforms on which cyberbullying occurs, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok. Cyberbullying can also be done via text and messaging apps, instant messaging, direct messaging, online forums, chat rooms and message boards, email, and within online gaming communities.

Some examples include:

- Creating fake social media accounts to hurt, shame, or harass others
- Pretending to be someone else online in order to post personal or false information about another person
- Spreading rumors about someone online or via texts
- Posting mean or hurtful pictures or videos
- Name calling, threatening, or encouraging others to self-harm or commit suicide

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying:

It is important to work with your child to prevent cyberbullying from occurring. Set clear expectations about what they are allowed to do on social media sites. Agreeing with your child on appropriate behavior for social media use will help create an open conversation. Monitor your child's social media accounts, apps, and browsing history to make sure you are aware of any cyberbullying should it occur. You can monitor what your child is doing by friending them on social media, setting specific privacy settings, and talking with your child about new ways people are connecting online to stay current with the latest technology.

What to do if cyberbullying occurs:

- Tell your child that they have your support and can share openly and honestly.
- Talk with your child about what happened and how they are feeling.
- Remember to document and report any bullying that occurred.
- If they are a bystander or victim, do not take away their technology devices.

What your child should do if cyberbullying occurs:

- Resist the urge to reply.
- Save any evidence of the cyberbullying.
- Block and report the cyberbully.

For more information, visit stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying.