

# CYBERBULLYING

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES



## CONTENT

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What are cyberbullying and harassment?

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What is cyberstalking?

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What do we mean by trolling?

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Three steps to prevent and respond to cyberbullying

## What are cyberbullying and harassment?

Cyberbullying is when someone bullies or harasses others on the internet and in other digital spaces, particularly on social media sites. A frequently used definition of cyberbullying is "an aggressive, intentional act or behaviour that is carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself." (Smith et al, 2008\*) It can include posting rumors, threats, sexual remarks and defamatory remarks.

Victims of cyberbullying may experience lower self-esteem, increased suicidal ideation, and a variety of negative emotional responses including being scared, frustrated, angry or depressed.

\*Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S., & Tippett, N. (2008). Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49, 376–385



## What do we mean by trolling?

Internet trolls intentionally try to provoke or offend others in order to elicit a reaction. Trolls and cyberbullies do not always have the same goals: while some trolls engage in cyberbullying, others may be engaged in comparatively harmless mischief. A troll may be disruptive either for their own amusement or because they are genuinely a combative person.

## What is cyberstalking?

Cyberstalking is a form of online harassment where someone uses electronic communications to stalk a victim. This is considered more dangerous than other forms of cyberbullying because it generally involves a credible threat to the victim's safety. Cyberstalkers may send repeated messages intended to threaten or harass, and they may encourage others to do the same, either explicitly or by impersonating their victim and asking others to contact them.

### If you are affected by cyberstalking

- Gather and document as much evidence as you can.
- Report the stalking to the police.
- Most social networking sites have a means of reporting such issues, for example Facebook. Twitter is also introducing an in-Tweet "Report Abuse" button across all apps and its website.



## Three steps to prevent and respond to cyberbullying

### STOP - The Bully

- The bully should stop and think well before they send any bad and harmful comments to anyone.
- The bully should not do things to others that they don't wish to experience themselves. For example, they shouldn't post bad comments, or post photos of others in order to make of fun of them.
- The bully should recognize that there are many websites, online games, and social media programs, which have strict rules for cyberbullying. Once the bully has been reported, those responsible for those sites take certain actions that may lead to expulsion or block from the site.

### SPEAK - The Victim

- If you are being cyberbullied, talk to someone close to you, such as your parents, teachers, friends or a counselor.
- Make sure you report if you are being cyberbullied via the reporting feature on social media sites.

### SUPPORT - The Bystander

- If you see a situation of cyberbullying happening to another person, report this abuse electronically through reporting features.
- Support the victim of cyberbullying by posting a positive comment for them.

**University Counseling Services**  
**WE ARE HERE FOR YOU.**

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