



Department of Health

# Bridge

This Newsletter aims to promote communication between schools and the Student Health Service of the Department of Health

June 2014 Issue No. 63

Publish by the Student Health Service, Department of Health

## Editorial

Nowadays, with the advancement in information technology, Internet has become an integral part of adolescents' daily lives. However, more and more internet users think that they have the "right" to express themselves freely and result in all kinds of irresponsible behaviour. Have you ever been insulted or humiliated in an online discussion forum or social networking web site? Have your personal information ever been disclosed or your photos being edited and posted, etc.? As cyberbullying is becoming more and more serious, young people should learn how to manage these bullying in the cyber world?

In this issue, a Clinical Psychologist of the Student Health Service explores the problems of cyberbullying and discuss proper ways on how to deal with it. Let's enjoy all the fun brought by the new information technology.



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# Health Decoding :



Clinical Psychologist : Miss Lam Chi Kwan

## Is it always fun to be online?

In a world where technology is part of our everyday lives, we all use the Internet nowadays. Almost all children and teenagers love using technology. It is fun to connect with our friends through instant messaging and social networking sites. We can give our comments and express ourselves freely in chat rooms and message boards. By sending messages and pictures, we can share a lot of interesting things with our friends anytime anywhere.

While we are enjoying the fun of the Internet, are we aware that the Internet has also become a playground for those who target others by sending unpleasant and unwanted messages? Have you ever thought of how we can protect ourselves and others from these unacceptable online activities?

## Am I to be blamed for just making fun?



Some people may think that they have the right to criticize others publicly or to say something negative online about someone, especially those they think are different or inferior. Some people may believe that they are just making fun or sending something online as a joke. There are also some people who think that they are doing no harm by sharing or forwarding others' private messages. Are you aware that all of the above behaviours can be considered as cyberbullying?

'Cyberbullying' is when someone uses technology, like the Internet or mobiles, to deliberately and repeatedly bully another person. It can be in the form of nasty and hurtful messages, pictures or videos. It can include a wide range of unacceptable behaviours, including harassment, threats and insults.

## Why do I have to be so serious about cyberbullying?



Try to imagine how you would feel or respond if you are the victim in the following incidents.

*'Some of my classmates created a website about me. On this site, they uploaded embarrassing videos of me and posted cruel gossip and rumors about me to damage my reputation. They also invited anyone visiting the site to submit their comments. Most of the comments are offensive and insulting.'*

*'I recently posted some comments on a discussion board. An anonymous group of people who disagreed with me then started attacking me with vicious messages and vulgar language. Some of them even tried to make my private identity and personal information public by posting my full name, school and photos online.'*

When people use the Internet, they often feel they are invisible. Believing that 'you can't see me' and 'nobody ever get caught', cyberbullies may attempt to attack others anonymously. Since the cyberbullies are never in the same physical space as the targets, they do not receive tangible feedback about the serious consequences of their actions, including actions that have hurt someone else. This often leads to the perception that online actions are 'just a game.' It is also common that cyberbullies tend to provide excuses or rationalizations for their wrong behaviours such as 'Everybody does it.' 'I was just playing around.'

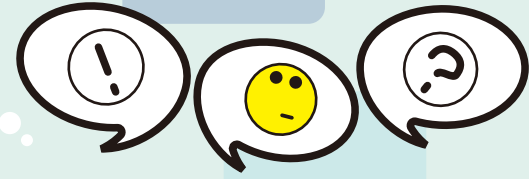
Overseas and local studies found that cyberbullying victimization is associated with serious psychosocial, affective and academic problems such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, school refusal, sudden decline in academic performance, social withdrawal and even suicidal ideation.





# Say 'No' to Cyberbullying

## Cyberbullying is none of my business



You may think that if you are neither a cyberbully nor a target, you are not involved in cyberbullying and you are not going to be affected. However, the fact is that some bystanders are part of the problem. **By sharing or forwarding bullying messages or doing nothing to help the target, some bystanders are in fact supporting the cyberbully unintentionally.**

## What can I do to prevent cyberbullying?



### Be a responsible 'digizen'

To prevent cyberbullying, it is best to start by being a responsible 'digizen' yourself. Always show respect to people and be open to different opinions. **It is important to always think about the consequences before you send any messages or images and before you post information on a website.** Be aware of how others may feel if you say something negative online about someone. Something sent as a joke may be deeply upsetting or offensive to the recipient. All of us should be responsible for what we say or do online. Avoid making negative comments anonymously or sending messages that contain sexual or violent content.

### Be respectful to others



**Always treat others the way you want to be treated.** If you receive a rude or nasty message about someone, do not forward it. You could be assisting a bully, and even be accused of cyberbullying. Respect the privacy of others by not disclosing information of others when using the Internet. Always seek permission before sharing, posting or forwarding messages or pictures publicly online. Support the victim of cyberbullying by reporting the incident to a trusted adult.

### Protect personal information



Be aware of the consequences of your digital footprint and think before sharing photos or videos online. All electronically circulated content is hard to control. What you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever as anyone can save and repost before you delete them. **Always think before you post.** Ask yourself why you post the information on a website. Do you really want everyone to see the messages or images you post? Is there a chance that someone will hurt you with the information you shared?

**Fake ?!**  **Real ?!**

### Be critical about online information

Information widely circulated online may not be true. **Always check and verify online content or messages you receive from others.** Analyze information and its sources critically to avoid getting inaccurate information. If someone you do not know send messages to you, be alert and never reply to them or forward their messages to others, in order to avoid spreading rumors or inaccurate information.



# Health Decoding :



## Does it help if I disclose a cyberbullying incident?



Make sure you turn to your parents or teachers for help and advice when you are cyberbullied. They can help you report the incident to the right place. The service provider or the moderator of the site may also help in case of cyberbullying. If the cyberbullying is serious, report to the police. Keep records of offending messages, pictures or on-line conversations as evidence for investigation. Do not retaliate or reply to bullying messages so as to avoid triggering more bullying messages.

## How can parents and teachers support young people to fight cyberbullying?

### Have a better understanding of young people's internet use



If parents have a better understanding of their children's internet use, their children are more likely to turn to them for help if they encounter problems or difficulties. **Parents' active engagement and conversations with their children are crucial.** Parents should be more positive and keep themselves updated about the technologies that young people enjoy. Take time to explore their favorite online activities and websites, the way they communicate with their friends and the information they get from the Internet. Use the Internet together and look for family activities or games. Be aware of both the fun and the risks involved.

### Increase awareness of 'cyberbullying'



All young people should be made aware of what cyberbullying is and the consequences of cyberbullying. The school's antibullying policy should be emphasized. **Teachers should help students understand that cyberbullying, like other form of bullying, is never acceptable.** What you think is a joke may really hurt someone else. Cyberbullying victimization can be associated with serious consequences. By increasing students' understanding of the potential impact of cyberbullying, teachers can help them understand ways to address the problem and to prevent unacceptable online activities.

### Encourage proper etiquette and positive online behaviours



Parents and teachers should encourage young people to use proper language to express themselves and to communicate online. Starting from a young age, children should be taught to avoid violent or sexually-explicit content and websites that might contain abusive language or inappropriate behaviours. **Children and teenagers should also be encouraged to create a positive footprint and to make positive use of the Internet for fun and learning.** Adults can recommend to young people websites that are educational, fun and reliable.





# Say 'No' to Cyberbullying

## Provide emotional support



Parents and teachers should be alert to signs that may point to cyberbullying such as showing signs of significant emotional distress after using Internet, becoming more anxious when emails or texts arrive, declining grades and loss of interest in schoolwork, being bullied at school, avoidance of social situations or not wanting to go to school. **Support and encourage them to seek help. Do not blame the victims when they make a disclosure.**

## Support young people to stop cyberbullying

**If children and adolescents seek help from a trusted adult, their courage and assertiveness should be acknowledged.** If maladaptive thoughts such as 'the bullies have the right to demean those who are inferior' or 'it is useless to seek help' are identified, they should be corrected. They should understand that cyberbullying is never acceptable. Everyone should have a right not to be harassed and bullied online. It is important to report cyberbullying incidents in order to stop the bullies and to fight it effectively.

## Let's fight cyberbullying together

As a member of the digital world, every one of us should play a part in fighting cyberbullying together. All of us should be respectful to others both online and offline. We should also be responsible for our own behaviours. While enjoying the convenience and fun of using the Internet and mobile technologies, we should also be aware of the risks involved. With the support of our parents and teachers, we all can make good use of the Internet wisely and responsibly.

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# Bridge Blog

My views on using the internet and electronic communicating devices

It strengthen my relationship with my friends.

I dislike surfing the internet. I might get addicted if I spend too much time on it.

I believe many people are addicted to the Internet.  
I hope people can let go of it and spend more time in the real world.

Do not spend too much time on it.



Useful and convenient. But, prolong use will affect our vision.

The way you use electronic devices is important.  
It is good to use it for learning but is no good for gaming.

An effective way for seraching update information

Less conversation between people.  
They focus too much on the functions of the smartphone.



# Bridge Chat



Wah :

Please reason for me.

Ming :



What is it? I shall help you.



Wah :

Keung uploaded a picture of me being penalized.  
He also made some comments.

Ming :



He might be wrong.



Wah :

Please ask your friends to criticize him on the internet.

Ming :



NO! We should not do that.  
If we do, we are Cyberbullies.



Wah :

What should I do?

Ming :



Let's go and ask Mr. Wong for help.



Wah :

OK. I shall wait for you at the exit.



# Junior Health Pioneer

Junior Health Pioneer has noticed that Cherry was unhappy and seldom talk to her friends recently. Therefore, he chatted to Cherry during the recess.

Cherry, you seem rather unhappy recently.



I got a pair of new glasses recently. My student friends said that I look like a cartoon character in the internet discussion forum.



No.

Did you tell them that you are not happy about this?



You should be frank and tell them that you are unhappy and asked them to stop the discussion.



For enquiries of student's health problem, please send e-mail to "Health Box".  
Email Address: [shsbridge@dh.gov.hk](mailto:shsbridge@dh.gov.hk)

