

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is an intentional, repeated, aggressive, hostile, or harmful act that involves sending or posting harmful text or images using the internet or other digital communication devices. The prevalence of cyberbullying has doubled between 2007 and 2019. The five criteria for cyberbullying are:

**Intention** of causing harm.

**Repetition** of actions by the bully.

**Power imbalance** between the victim and the bully.

**Anonymity** of some bullies to hide their identities when bullying.

**Publicity** can be one of the traits in some cases where the victim is humiliated publicly.

### Forms of Cyberbullying

Some forms of cyberbullying are:

**Flaming or Bashing** -- Using abusive language against someone or spreading offensive messages about them.

**Trolling** -- Saying something derogatory about someone with the intention of having more people make fun of them.

**Sending Explicit Images or Messages** -- This is done without the consent of the victim.

### Symptoms

#### Effect on Mood

Depression, anxiety, and mood disorders and contemplating or attempting suicide.

#### Effect on Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem, self-worth and social confidence and engaging in self-harm behaviours.

#### Effect on Social Life and Education

Self-isolation, poor relations with peers, absenteeism from school and poor performance.

### Treatments that Work

#### In School

Psychologists can train staff and recommend policies that help recognize and address bullying. Psychotherapy can help students and their families develop socio-emotional capacity and skills.

#### Treating those who Bully

Psychologists can help these individuals realize the negative impacts bullying has on others, develop skills to control behaviours and resist peer pressure, and look for leadership opportunities that would encourage using their power in a meaningful way.

#### Treating Victims of Bullying

Psychologists can help develop a safety plan, so the individuals feel safe. They can listen with empathy and decrease self-blame thoughts. They can also help build their self-esteem and confidence by making them understand their human rights to safety, respect and dignity.

**Resources** – [Learn how to stay safe online](#), Government of Canada

**References** –Verywell Mind: [The Psychology of Cyberbullying](#)

Canadian Psychological Association: [“Psychology Works” Fact Sheet: Bullying among children and youth](#)