

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:

The intention of causing harm.

Repetition of actions by the bully.

The power imbalance between the victim and the bully.

The 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 members and recommend policies that help recognize and address bullying. Counselling students and their families can help them develop socio-emotional capacity and skills.

Treating those who bully others – 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 those who are bullied – 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 explaining 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](#)