THE 7TH GRADE TIMES

In this month's issue, I would like to discuss the important topic of **cyber-bullying**. Ever since the pandemic, it seems like everyone's screen time has increased, including our students; how we choose to use that time is important. Since our students will be turning 13 this year, the minimum age to create social media profiles, it is crucial to address the topic of cyber-bullying before our students enter the world of social media.

As always, don't hesitate to get in touch with me at **tk2881@tc.columbia.edu** if you have any questions or would like to discuss the topic further.

CYBER-BULLYING

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs electronically through digital devices such as smartphones and laptops. Cyberbullying includes sharing private information and harmful content about others. It commonly occurs on social media platforms, messaging and chatting apps, online boards and rooms, email and online gaming communities.

Cyberbullying can be persistent, result in permanent artifacts and may be difficult to both notice and prove.

(stopbullying.gov)

WHAT DO THE NUMBERS SAY?

- The prevalence of cyberbullying is highest in middle school [1]

- 15.3% of students who reported being bullied were cyberbullied [5]

- Females are three times more likely to get cyber bullied than males (females 21.4 %, males 6.8 %) [5]

- 93% of students who report being bullied online are also bullied at school [2]

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT CYBER-BULLYING:

- ***Start the conversation early.*** Before your child signs up to social media accounts and online gaming, talk to them about cyberbullying.
- ***The online world is the real world.*** Be sure your child understands that the same rules for treating people offline apply to online.
- ***Talk about general internet safety.***
- ***Make sure your kid understands what constitutes cyberbullying*** so they are able to know when it's happening to themselves or their friends.
- ***Find examples and teachable moments.*** Look for comments on their favourite celebrity's social media accounts to show examples of cyberbullying and harassment and discuss ways the celebrity can deal with the situation with your child.
- ***Be open and supportive and keep an open door for communication.*** Being nonjudgemental helps your child feel safe asking you questions and reporting incidents of bullying to you.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO TO HELP PREVENT CYBERBULLYING AND HELP YOUR CHILD WHO MAY BE BULLIED:

- Become familiar with the apps and websites your child uses
- Help your child set up their privacy settings.
- Set rules and limits for electronics and internet use
- Monitor your child's social media accounts
- Talk about the permanence of online posting with your child. Make sure your child understands not to post personal or private information about themselves or others.
- Teach and encourage empathy. Help your child understand that being a bystander and an accomplice can be hurtful and harm others.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS GETTING BULLIED:

- **Signs that your child is being bullied include** Changes in appetite, mood, sleep, online behaviour and school performance, fear of going to school or spending time with peers and becoming socially withdrawn from friends and family.
- Help your child **ignore** the bullies by **blocking** their accounts.
- **Don't take your child's devices away** as they may feel they are being punished.
- **Record evidence and report** the bullying to appropriate parties (e.g., school, law enforcement (when necessary/threats to safety are made), social media apps)
- Help your child **manage stress** and find **supportive friends**.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING ANOTHER:

- **Listen to your child and investigate the situation**. Knowing what caused the child to bully is the first step in helping the bullying to end.
- **Remain calm.** Provide your child with a safe and understanding place to talk about what happened openly and honestly.
- **Help your child build empathy.** Talk about how the victim may be feeling and help your child understand how their actions are hurtful and harmful.
- **Decide on appropriate consequences and next steps.** Discuss consequences such as limiting time with devices or closing certain accounts. Think about the next steps by talking about how to stop the bullying, and apologizing to the victim.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- **Click here** for a helpful guide on what parents should know about cyberbullying from Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center.
- **Click here** for a link to an overview of cyberbullying for your child to read.
- Visit **stopbullying.org** for more information on bullying for both parents and their children
- Visit **Stomp Out Bullying's website** for more information and resources and show your child how to use their online **HelpChat Line** for free and confidential support.

REFERENCES:

1. CDC. (2019). *Preventing Bullying*. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv/bullying-factsheet508.pdf
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3. StopBullying.org. (2021, August 27). *What Is Cyberbullying*. StopBullying.Gov. https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it
4. Troutner, A. (2021, October 18). *A Parent's Guide to Stop and Prevent Cyberbullying.* VPNoverview.Com. https://vpnoverview.com/internet-safety/kids-online/cyberbullying/
5. U.S. Department of Education. (2019, July). *Student Reports of Bullying: Results From the 2017 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.* https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019054.pdf