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on social media

The internet can be a great tool for communication, but it can also be a risk factor that can negatively affect how we think, act and feel - this is especially true for young people. As our students begin the school year, one thing is certain, the majority of them are going to be posting online and on apps. Let's be proactive and teach our kids how to be good digital citizens and use responsible behavior on and offline.

Research Shows:

Recent articles have been published linking cyberbullying with depression and suicide, but statistics on the health effects are largely unknown. We know that regular face-to-face "bullying" during teen years can double the risk of depression in adulthood. We also know that cyberbullying is not the sole factor contributing to a death by suicide, but kids who are bullied or bully others are at an increased risk for suicide. A new study in the UK, that included review of more than 150,000 young people across 30 countries over a 21-year period, found that young people under the age of 25, who are victims of cyberbullying, are more than twice as likely to self-harm or attempt suicide compared to a non-victim. It was also found that the perpetrator was more likely to be dealing with suicidal ideation and behaviors. For these reasons, we need to address cyberbullying with our kids.

To adults, cyberbullying and digital drama might sound like the same thing. It turns out, they're two different terms in the online world. Cyberbullying is the repeated harassment of someone, while digital drama is the day-to-day tiffs that occur among friends, acquaintances, classmates, coworkers, etc. online or via text messaging. More times than not, young people who post or make comments about someone else, do this with the thought of an audience in mind. We believe it's our job as educators and parents to step in, and keep our kids safe and responsible behind the screen.



NOTICE



INVITE



CHALLENGE



EMPOWER

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How to be a good digital citizen:

Think before you post: Would I say this to this person's face in real life? If not, don't post it. Am I purposefully trying to hurt someone's feelings with this post? Don't do it. If confronted by an adult for my post, would I be in trouble or embarrassed? Save yourself the trouble and delete it.

Set boundaries: Relationships are now built and played out both on and offline. Families and teachers can help kids understand and establish appropriate boundaries for healthy relationships.

Take time away from the screen: The back and forth online is constant. Encourage kids to log off and get outside, read a book, play a game, or spend quality time face-to-face with family and friends.

Let kids know you're always there for them: It is important for young people to have at least one adult in their life they can trust. This could be a parent, a school counselor, a favorite teacher or coach. If they are a victim online or in the classroom, they have to know it's okay to tell an adult. It's not going to get them in trouble and it shouldn't "just make things worse."

Follow the rules: Many social sites require at least a 13-year-old age minimum for both legal and safety reasons. These restrictions were set by the creators for a reason. Stick to the rules. There are also community rules of conduct on apps like Instagram and Snapchat that say they do not tolerate cyberbullying and accounts can be taken down in the event this is happening. Take a minute to look over them with your kids. Remember the Internet is like a giant community - you can help keep it a nice place by reporting bad behavior.

Only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse

Bullying victims are 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide

Nearly 43% of kids have been harassed online. 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once

81% of young people think being mean online is easier to get away with than being mean in person



notice what is right and good about someone so you can notice when something is different. If you notice a change in behavior or personality lasting two weeks or longer, it's time to have a conversation with that person because it could be the onset to a mental illness. notice what platforms your child is using and how they are using them.

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Avoid drama

For the first time, parents are trying to protect their kids on a platform they don't fully understand. So what's the best approach to take when it comes to having a productive conversation and getting your kids to open up honestly about their online activity?

As a be nice. School, there is a language in place and students, staff and parents are learning to notice, invite, challenge and empower - they're learning the be nice. Action Plan. As a parent, you can teach your kids how to use online apps and platforms responsibly and establish that the way the treat someone can have an effect on the way a person thinks, acts, and feels.

90% of teens who have seen social-media bullying say they have ignored it. 84% have seen others tell cyber bullies to stop

About 58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. More than 4 out 10 say it has happened more than once

Having the conversation with your kids

It's not unusual for a toddler to play on a tablet or a cell phone, and as toddlers turn into preschoolers who grow up into high schoolers, using apps and the internet have become, the norm. Because of this:

Over 80% of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most common medium for cyber "bullying"

Start the conversation early: From the beginning, parents or guardians need to talk to their kids about the dangers of the online world, and how they can stay safe. What is and is not appropriate online behavior. What information is okay to share and what is too much? Don't approach this conversation with the fear factor. Approach it the same way you would with any other lesson and keep it age appropriate.

68% of teens agree that cyber harassment is a serious problem

Don't make it a forbidden fruit: We don't have to look much farther than one of the first stories ever written, Adam and Eve. If you tell kids they can't have or do something, they're likely to have an increased desire to have or do that thing. It doesn't have to be forbidden, but it can have restrictions like the amount of time spent online or not having a computer in their room.



invite yourself to start a conversation. Reach out to someone who may be struggling. Be an inviting person. invite yourself to say something if you see different or worrying behavior online. invite a conversation to begin by sending a direct message.

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Take time to understand social media: You might be on Facebook, but it's likely your kids are not. They are turning to apps like Instagram and Snapchat. Don't belittle their interests, especially if they open up to you. If you do, it's likely they won't share more information on the topic with you again in the future. Make them the expert! Encourage them to keep you up-to-date with what's trending on social media. This way, if a problem comes up with inappropriate behavior, cyberbullying or digital drama, they are more likely to come to you for help.

Girls are about twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying

Be transparent: An easy way to upset your kids or lose their trust is by sneaking around to spy on their social media accounts or online activity. How you monitor their activity is up to your discretion as parent/s. Maybe you want to see who they follow or who follows them. Agree to scroll through their Instagram feed together from time to time. Make sure you are "friends" with them and/or their friends. Whatever you decide is necessary, don't do it secretly.

About 75% of students admit they have visited a website bashing that is bashing another student

The Internet is not private: Remind them that anything posted on the Internet stands the risk of being exposed at some point. Even Snapchat, where pictures are programmed to disappear after 10 seconds or less, are not technically gone forever. There's also the chance a potential employer or college admissions staff will see your posts even if you hide them from your timeline, so think of your online reputation.

70% of students report seeing frequent "bullying" online

What are young people using these days?

The best way to stay up-to-date on the latest social media trends is to talk and listen to your kids or students! There's a chance they tell you everything you need to know about the app, or you catch the name of it and can look into it yourself. Here at the MHF, we've heard about a few ways kids are using social media to harass other kids, and we think it's important to share them with you. Here are some instances that have been brought to our attention:



challenge the STIGMA associated with mental illness. challenge others to stop negative behaviors. Mean behavior online is not okay.

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How it works: Lets users take, edit and share pictures and videos publicly or in a private network of followers. You can share, see, or comment on photos or videos posted by other users.

What to watch for:

1. Users are on the prowl for “likes.” Kids may even measure their success, popularity and self-worth based on the amount of likes they receive. Make sure this is not where they turn for validity.
2. If your profile is not set to private, it is public to the entire Instagram community.
3. **Finstas or Spam Accounts:** These profiles are typically set up to “slam” someone else who is not invited or approved to join the small group of followers. It can be an outlet for someone to vent their frustration, mock and tease, or purposefully exclude someone who is usually in their inner circle who they are currently upset with.
4. MHF staff has also been told by students that other students are not afraid to post mean comments directly onto someone’s post with their name attached to it. If your child or student is being bullied this way, it’s a good idea to take screengrabs for proof in case the situation gets out of hand. Let a young person know that this is what other parents will do as well.



How it works: This is a messaging app that allows users to set a timer on pictures or videos they send before they disappear.

What to watch for:

1. While a lot of kids use it to share funny or entertaining blips, it can be used to mock others or share inappropriate content.
2. There is a new feature that allows people to swipe up on someone’s “story” and allows them to leave comments anonymously. This can lead to rude comments or continual harassment without a name behind offender.
3. Snapchats are forever. Anything you send never truly “disappears.” Data is data and there is record of it somewhere. Also, the receiver can “screenshot” the image and keep it on their own device.



empower yourself and others with the knowledge that YOU can have an effect on how someone THINKS, ACTS and FEELS. Empower others and yourself with positivity and protective factors on social media.

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How it works: This is a microblogging tool that allows users to post brief 140-character messages or “tweets.”

What to watch for:

1. “Sub-tweeting” is an easy way someone can target someone else and publicly shame them, but the trick is...they don’t say or tag who exactly they are talking about. However, more times than not, the person who is being targeted along with their peers knows who the tweet is aimed at.



How it works: This is an app that allows you to post almost anything on your profile; pictures, videos, articles, stickers, ads, outside links, etc. It also allows users to leave comments or send private messages to other users. Profiles can be public or private.

What to watch for:

1. Users can post comments under photos. Since kids are often searching for “likes” or affirming “comments,” it can be a blow to their self esteem if someone is leaving rude or nasty comments.
2. Users have the ability to send private messages to each other, giving someone the opportunity to send messages directly to their target’s inbox.



How it works: This app allows users to ask questions and receive answers anonymously. Users can sign up using their Facebook and Twitter account, and will show questions and answers from other unknown users who are in their social networks.

What to watch for:

1. This service can be used to repeatedly pick on the same person with rude questions, insults or threats...anonymously.

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For Middle and High School be nice. Liaisons:

Often, we hear from middle and high be nice. Leadership Chapter students that the way we treat each other on social media is a concern to their group. Being part of the be nice. Leadership Chapter is empowering them to think of ways to make a change. Here are a few activities the students can use to help spread the be nice. Action Plan online. All of the activity descriptions can be found on the be nice. Portal.

be nice. Delete Day: all students spend 20 minutes deleting anything on their accounts that doesn't fit n.i.c.e. - how are they treating others and themselves?

Small group discussion about social media - have students tell you what is new and possibly concerning to them. Give them tips on how to reach out or to stick up for someone.

Create social media accounts for your school
- eg. "Positive Bulldogs" is an account at one HS that sends positive posts to people who need it. Two anonymous seniors run it, and they pass the baton when they graduate.

Social Media Committee within the be nice. Chapter
- have students collaborate about ways to spread n.i.c.e. on various social media platforms.

Competitions or contests using social media - eg. students posting when they see someone utilizing the Action Plan or posting pictures of others living be nice.

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Keeping young people and ourselves safe on social media begins with boundaries, but also reminding kids and ourselves that how we treat others has an effect on how someone thinks, acts and feels - their mental health! Remember and remind others frequently: we can be nice. by asking someone if they're okay after we notice them acting differently and especially after we notice negative activity on their social media sites. We can invite ourselves to start a conversation about what we've noticed. Challenge ourselves to stand up for others by reaching out and offering them a resource, and empower the online community by posting positive messages or sending them to others who might need it.



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