

Online Bullying – Some top tips

Abusive behaviour online is a common issue for children and young people, and many have come to just accept that this is part of being online. Some will try and laugh it off as harmless 'banter' but sometimes it can have a huge impact on the well-being of the person being targeted, especially as the person being abusive is known to them.

Here are some of the top tips we share with children and young people in schools, which we feel will help them manage abusive behaviour, and what we, as parents and carers, should try to promote.

Don't Respond – This is one of the hardest things we will ever ask anyone to do and, if we are being honest, it's difficult for most adults to do. Responding is a natural reaction to this behaviour, but it also gives the other person what they want – they will know that their actions have caused upset. Not responding also means that we won't get reported for posting abusive comments or saying horrible things back.

Save a copy - This is actually pretty straightforward and will work on any app. By pushing or holding a couple of buttons on our device (usual the home/power button and a volume key – just google your device to find out which,) we can permanently save a copy of comments, posts or messages. This means that our children can evidence the abusive behaviour, as it will not only show what was written, but also includes the date/time and name of the individual.

Report - All apps and games will give you the ability to report any user who breaks the rules – sometime referred to as community standards or guidelines. If people aren't acting nicely, then you can inform the app that you feel their behaviour is not acceptable and the app will take action. Reporting is anonymous so they won't know who has reported them and most reports are viewed by a moderator (a real life person) who can then decide whether the rules have been broken and what action to take.

Block - Blocking will stop the user from chatting, messaging, commenting, gaming or accessing their profile. Once that button is pushed, the other users will have no way to communicate with them, and is one of the best methods of keeping yourself safe from abusive individuals.

Tell Someone - This is the one bit of advice that children and young people find the most difficult – telling an adult they trust that someone is being abusive towards them online. Many children report being fearful of the consequences of telling an adult – loss of a device or use of an app – for something that isn't really their fault. It's perfectly understandable why parents and carers would do this, to remove them from the environment, but it also means that children may not always report to them that they are experiencing this abuse and will simply put up with it, having a much greater impact on their well-being. As hard as it can be when your child is involved, teaching them how to manage these individuals can be a better way of keeping them safe while still allowing them to enjoy all the benefits a digital world will bring.

Some of these tips are easier than others but it's important not to blame our children or remove them from the internet because of somebody else's behaviour – this can sometimes send the wrong message and make children reluctant to seek help and advice from adults.

Childline offers some great advice too about online bullying, including ways we can help someone who is experiencing it. Learn more here - <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-cyberbullying/>