Help Kids Fight Cyberbullying and Other Mean Online Behavior

common sense education®

Most kids will encounter mean behavior at some point in their digital lives. For some kids, this experience is a blip that's easily forgotten, while for others it can have deep, long-lasting effects. For parents, the key is staying involved in kids' lives -- both online and off -- so they can step in and offer help if necessary. With guidance from parents and educators, kids can learn how to dodge the drama and stand up for others.

Check out these 6 tips

1. *Define your terms.*

Make sure kids understand what cyberbullying is: repeated and unwanted mean or hurtful words or behavior that occur online (through texts, social media posts, online chat, etc.).

2. *Check in about online life.*

Just like you'd ask your kid about their sleep, exercise, and eating, stay on top of their online life. Who are they chatting with? How do people treat each other in the games and on the sites they're using?

3. *Role-play.*

If kids feel like they might have trouble removing themselves from digital drama, experiment with some different ways they can make a graceful exit. Talk through words they can use, ways they can steer conversations in positive directions, etc.

4. *Encourage upstanding.*

Let kids know that supporting a friend or acquaintance who is being bullied can make a big difference. If they feel safe confronting the bully, they should. If not, a private message to the victim can be enough to help someone through a tough time. Speaking up against hate speech is important, too.

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Take breaks.

If you notice your kid getting pulled into digital drama, help them take a break. It's great if they can determine for themselves when they need to step back, but they might need some help setting limits. Putting devices to bed at a specific time, plus breaks for mealtimes and face-to-face connection, can help kids recharge.

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Review worst-case steps.

Walk through what to do if your kid is being bullied online. First, step away. Ignoring a bully can be very effective. If the bullying continues, take screenshots or print out evidence. Then block the person. If it gets worse, report the behavior to a trusted adult. Talk about who those people are and make sure your kid has their contact information.

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