

# Welcome to our Web Rangers Digital Literacy Training Guide For Parents!



Web Rangers empowers children with skills and knowledge, so they use the internet and social media safely and responsibly, so they are able to champion their rights in the digital world.

Web Rangers is here to help you navigate the challenges and opportunities of raising children in a digital world.



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## Today's topic is

### Cyberbullying



Digital technologies have made it easier than ever before for humanity to stay connected regardless of geographical and time differences. But this ease of access is not always a good thing, especially for children and teenagers as it can expose them to all sorts of online harms. The evolving nature of children's capabilities means that they are most vulnerable to online harms and without interventions from adults and tech platforms these can severely impact on their current and future well-being.

There are a variety of cyber ills that taint online spaces, but cyberbullying is the most common and prevalent of all such online harms. A report released by UNICEF in 2011 highlights the extent the problem when it states that 1 in 3 South African children are at risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Given this shocking statistic, it is vital that parents have as much information as possible on the topic so they can help their children successfully deal with this growing menace.

#### What is Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using digital devices. It is repetitive behavior that aims to scare, anger, humiliate or shame those who are targeted.

Cyberbullying appears in the form of:

- Hurtful posts that include images and videos about someone.
- Nasty or false rumours sent by email sent by email or on social media platforms
- Impersonating someone and sending mean messages on their behalf or through fake accounts.

Physical bullying often takes place alongside cyberbullying; however, cyberbullying leaves a permanent digital trail that can scare victims repeatedly.

### **How does this affect my child?**

Cyberbullying can have severe mental, emotional and physical effect on children:

- Victims of cyberbullying develop feelings of anxiety, shame and fearfulness. These feelings can lead to increased and persistent negative thoughts which adversely affect children's mental health and wellbeing. In some instances physical illnesses such as stomach cramps, headaches, eating disorders and lack of sleep can also develop.
- The effects of being bullied, laughed at, or harassed by others can prevent child victims from attending school regularly, speaking out or trying to deal with the problem; and in extreme cases – even suicide.
- Digital bullying can cause your child to lose motivation for participating in activities they enjoy and isolate them from people they love and trust.
- Unlike physical bullying, cyberbullying opens doors to harassment that can occur 24 hours and provides the culprits with relative anonymity and distance from the target subject; so there is a lack of immediate consequences.

### **Helping my child combat cyberbullying – What can I do?**

Dealing with cyberbullying is a complex process, early identification and reporting is crucial to reducing its harmful effects. When confronted with a cyberbully, the most effective tool your child has at their disposal is the ability to report and block the offender. They need to keep the evidence by taking screenshots of the harmful messages, then report the offender to the platform and to a trusted adult.

If you suspect your child of being bullied, create an environment of safety and trust in the home where children can share their experience with you without fear of judgement or reprisal.

Educate your child on the importance of memorizing the Childline South Africa phone number – 116 (toll-free). They have a team of experts on hand to assist your child with any matter that involves violence or abuse.

Social media companies have developed tools to help children combat cyberbullying, check out some of the vital features listed here:

- Google has several tools and resources to help families combat cyberbullying – visit [Googles' Safety Center](#) to find the most relevant tool for your family.
- Tik Tok's [Safety Center](#) offers a wide variety of information on topics related to digital well-being. Look under their 'Topics' tab to find the more information on their initiatives to prevent bullying on their platform.
- Meta's (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram) [Safety Center](#) has an abundance of resources and guides to help parents and trusted adults cater to their family's needs. They have developed bully prevention guide for young people by young people which you can download [here](#)

## Stay in Touch

Stay Updated: Subscribe to our newsletter for the latest in digital literacy and safety. Learn more at [Web Rangers](#).

Digital Dilemmas? Get expert advice from Agony Aunt to navigate your child's online challenges. Visit [Hash Play](#) for support.

Report Misinformation: Encounter harmful content online? Report it to [Real 411](#) for expert reviews and action against digital threats to democracy.

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