



15-17
years old

Bullying

Dealing with Digital Abuse

FACTS ABOUT DIGITAL ABUSE

According to the 2011 AP-MTV Digital Abuse study:

- ▶ 76% of people ages 14-24 say that digital abuse is a serious problem.
- ▶ Compared to 2009, young people in 2011 were significantly more likely to step in if they saw someone "being mean online."
- ▶ Some of the most frequent forms of digital abuse include people writing things online that aren't true (26%), people writing things online that are mean (24%), and someone forwarding an IM or message that was intended to stay private (20%).
- ▶ Digital abuse isn't generally the act of strangers and perpetrators are usually people the victims know well.

WHAT IS DIGITAL ABUSE?

Digital abuse happens when kids and teens use cell phones, social networks and other communication devices to bully, threaten and aggressively badger someone. Digital abuse is a form of cyber-bullying.

A few texts a day can turn into a few hundred. Relentless and unreasonable demands escalate. The abuser presses for things like the other person's passwords and sexy photos. They may spread lies, impersonate someone or even resort to blackmail.

Stay
connected.
Stay safe.





Dealing with Digital Abuse (cont.)

WHY IT MATTERS

Digital abuse has real consequences for those who are targeted, which can even include dropping out of school, engaging in risky behavior and considering suicide.

Parents can support their teens by understanding that modern relationships are often played out both online and in public, and kids need parental guidance in establishing appropriate boundaries for healthy relationships.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

If you suspect your teen is being digitally abused:

- ▶ **Start a discussion.** Your teen may not tell you if abuse is happening directly to him or her. But, you can bring it up when you talk about online safety and responsible behavior.
- ▶ **Let them know you're always there for them.** Remind teens often that you're always available to talk and that school counselors, teachers or even a friend's parent are also people they can turn to.
- ▶ **Help them set boundaries.** Tell teens never to do anything that's outside their comfort zone, like sharing passwords or sending sexual photos.

If you suspect your teen may be digitally abusing someone:

- ▶ **Check up on them.** Check your teen's Facebook page and cell phone to see what kind of messages she's sending and whether anyone is telling her to back off. Check in with other parents who may know something you don't.
- ▶ **Help your teen find a counselor** or an organization that's equipped to help.
- ▶ **Check your teen's texts, and status updates.** Be aware of who your teens talk to, what they're saying and how they're saying it. If your teens won't share their messages, look at your bill to see the quantity of texts.
- ▶ **Have a zero-tolerance policy.** No sexting, no hate speech, no stalking. Make sure you explain the rules of responsible ownership of their devices.
- ▶ **Teach teens to be up-standers, not bystanders.** If teens see their friends being digitally abused, they should report it to a teacher, a counselor or another responsible, trustworthy adult.
- ▶ **Talk about what's private.** Teens differ from their parents in their take on what's "private" and what's okay to share. Explain to them the consequences of posting or sending intimate stuff. It can be copied, forwarded, and sent to thousands of others in an instant.