

View this article online at: [patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-support-your-child-if-they-are-being-cyberbullied](https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-support-your-child-if-they-are-being-cyberbullied)

## How to support your child if they are being cyberbullied

If you suspect your child is being cyberbullied, it can be difficult to know how to approach the situation. You want them to know you are there to support them, but also don't want them to think you are intruding. However, with online bullying becoming an increasingly concerning issue with the growth of social media platforms, it's important to know how to be there for your child, and how to help prevent cyberbullying.

### How to talk to your child about cyberbullying

It's understandable why you might struggle to talk to your child about possible [cyberbullying](#). You will have [concerns for their well-being](#), but don't want them to feel that they have no privacy.

Ryan Lowe is a child and adolescent psychotherapist and spokesperson for the Association of Child Psychotherapists ([ACP](#)). She explains that the most important thing about having conversations with your children is choosing the right moment. Ideally, it should be at a time when there are no time pressures, no risk of interruption and when they are as relaxed as possible.

"Don't do it to just get it over with. Pick a time that is right for your child. There's no point trying to drag your child away from something or trying to make them pay attention when they are withdrawn. At a time when they are communicating, introduce the topic. Common times where children are receptive tend to be during car rides, out on walks or just before bed," she says.

She also suggests making [tackling possible cyberbullying](#) a collaborative process with your child so they don't think they are being punished or that you are enforcing rules.

"Appeal to their most reasonable side. Ask for their input into a plan to reduce the time they spend online and approach it as a collaborative process rather than a dictation from above."

## How can parents prevent cyberbullying?

Your child might feel ashamed to tell you they are being cyberbullied, so you should recognise their courage in opening up. They might fear making the situation worse, so you should stress that the bullying is not their fault.

Research shows that [supportive parenting](#) lowers children's risk of being bullied by peers at school.

The [Child Mind Institute](#) adds that, rather than following your kneejerk reaction of lashing out or confronting the bully, it's better to focus on your child.

"Help your child protect themselves. Tell children that the first thing they should do if they see something mean about them online is ignore it, turn off their device and walk away. Ignoring the bully might be enough to make them stop. Tell your child to block people sending nasty messages on social media."

If you know the bully, talk to their parents or guardian, as well as their school. It's unlikely they will be aware of what is going on.

Encourage your child to talk to their friends too. Studies show that [strong friendships](#) and young people standing up for each other can be effective in stopping bullies.

### Talking about cyberbullying

Lowe emphasises the importance of not ignoring the problem, hoping it will go away, and you should encourage your child to partake in activities offline.

"It takes a lot of work and a lot of strength to change online patterns in a family. Many, if not all, parents are guilty of letting things slide. The danger, however, is this becoming the norm and things then sliding further until your child's whole life centres around being online. Every time you notice screen time creep up, it's important to reset it."

She suggests having a few days away where there is [no internet](#). Camping is a great option, which you could even do in your garden or get creative with a living room fort.

### **Setting limits with social media use**

Lowe says the safest way to protect your children from cyberbullying is not allowing them an online presence at all. This can be difficult, though, and it isn't realistic when homework requires the internet and their friends use social media or games online.

But the dangers of technology are even concerning to tech giants, with high profile figures such as Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates saying his children were not allowed to own their own mobile phones until the age of 14.

"We often set a time after which there is [no screen time](#), and in their case that helps them get to sleep at a reasonable hour," he said in 2017, adding that the children couldn't have phones at the dinner table, but could use them for studying.

You should explain to your child that these limits are for their benefit while offering them an alternative activity.

## **Resources for extra support on cyberbullying**

- [NSPCC](#).
- [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#).
- [Kidscape](#).
- [Cybersmile](#).
- [YoungMinds](#).

**Disclaimer:** This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

<b>Last updated by:</b> Emily Jane Bashforth 24/03/2022	
<b>Peer reviewed by:</b> Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP 24/03/2022	

---

View this article online at: [patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-support-your-child-if-they-are-being-cyberbullied](https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-support-your-child-if-they-are-being-cyberbullied)

Discuss How to support your child if they are being cyberbullied and find more trusted resources at [Patient](https://patient.info).

---



To find out more visit [www.patientaccess.com](https://www.patientaccess.com)  
or download the app



Follow us

