

The Cyberbully

Bullying has always been a concern to parents, and as technology continues to evolve, cyberbullying becomes more and more common. Unfortunately, the role of technology in cyberbullying means that parents can't always see if their child is experiencing cyberbullying and are often even less likely to notice if their child is in fact a cyberbully.

Cyberbullying as a concept did not really exist a decade ago, but the issue has become a persistent one today, and that is perhaps because of the nature of problem. Cyberbullies do not have to be strong or fast; they do not even have to be particularly good or swift with words, or even have a lot of followers to back them up, they just need access to a networked phone or computer and the motive to target someone.

For that reason, in theory, anyone can be a cyberbully, and because of the disassociation provided by the separation of the computer/phone screen, they usually don't have to worry about having face-to-face confrontation with their victims. In fact, the anonymity of cyberbullying may cause students who normally would not bully in the traditional sense to become a cyberbully simply because they do not have to face the hurt and reactions of those they are targeting. (Poland, 2010).

Who Are The Cyberbullies?

Research cannot as yet give us a conclusive profile of a cyberbully, in part because the definition of cyberbullying itself is still in flux, and also because of the differing motives and methods employed by those who do employ cyberbullying techniques. In essence, this means that the child who perpetrates a continuous campaign of cyber-harassment against another child, may differ from the child who puts up a single deliberately humiliating image knowing it will spread.

Traditional bullies have been found to be more likely to engage in cyberbullying (Sticca et al, 2012), and therefore it is likely there may be features traditional and cyberbullies will have many features in common. However, with that in mind, some of the traits that have been found common (O'Moore, 2014) to those who cyberbully:

- Are prone to mood changes
- Are Aggressive
- Dominant

- Impulsive
- Have difficulty following rules
- Experience Moral avoidance/disengagement
- Are Manipulative
- Have Low empathy
- Have Low self-esteem
- Are Socially anxious
- Have themselves been bullied

Low empathy plays a crucial role and, as has been mentioned, anonymity plays a substantial part. It is suggested that cyberbullies may experience less empathy for their victims than even traditional bullies or that cyberbullying may attract persons with low levels of empathy as the distance between the cyberbully and the victim prevents the cyberbully from observing the immediate consequences of their behaviour.

In what is described as the 'online disinhibition effect' (Suler, 2004) the anonymity of phones/cyberspace also gives the cyberbully a definite sense of being removed or even shielded from their actions, which allows them to say things to others online that they would never say in person.

Put simply it is the difference between attacking your victim up close and having to witness the pain/effects, or using a sniper rifle from a distance, taking shots but not seeing the damage caused. This effect also allows for children who may not have been targets for traditional bullying, e.g. those stronger or more threatening, to become targeted.

Why do they Bully?

As outlined, cyberbullying's true distinction lie in the methods available to the bully allowing for a wider range of bullies and victims; the sense of disassociation afforded by those methods and the wider ranging effects of the behaviour. However, it should be kept in mind that despite these distinctions cyberbullying is not some form of aggressive behaviour that stands wholly apart from other bullying in terms of motives.

Be it in its traditional or cyber form, bullying is a learned behaviour, with the behaviour and beliefs of a child or adolescent's peers, home, school and society contributing to the development of aggressive attitudes and behaviour. Studies (Calvete et al, 2010; Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2011) suggest that bullying is significantly associated with an environment of proactive aggression, the exposure to violence, envy,

prejudice and intolerance for things, like disability, religion and gender. For that reason when looking at a cyberbully these influences in their lives must be assessed.

However, according to E.U. studies on cyber bullies (O'Moore et al, 2012) the reasons children cyberbully are outlined as....

....they see bullying as normal

...they enjoy it

...they are bored

...break up of friendships

...tensions and conflicts

...revenge

...makes them feel powerful

...to be accepted by their friends

Cyberbullies have been found to be predominantly motivated by anger and to a lesser extent by power, fun and affiliation (Gradinger et al, 2012). Other motives have also been found to play a part, such as revenge, jealousy and boredom. (Kowlaski et al, 2012).

In terms of gender cyberbullying for reasons of power and fun were more widely associated among boys. While reasons of jealousy and affiliation were cited more frequently in relation to girls with that jealousy often being related to cliques, e.g. a best friend would meet someone outside their clique; as a result the girl would cyberbully her together with the other girls of the group. (Saunders et al, 2011).

Types of Cyberbully

Parry Aftab (2011) an expert in cyberbullying and internet law devised a classification of the types of cyberbully that is now often cited. This classification includes four types of cyberbully and one 'sub-type', and they include:

- The Vengeful Angel
- The Power-Hungry
 - Revenge of the Nerds
- The "Mean Girls"
- The Inadvertent Cyberbully or "Because I Can"

This classification asserts that some types of cyberbullying are unique to a certain sorts of cyberbullies, as are the ways the cyberbully keep their identity secret or broadcast their actions to others. It states that some of these cyberbullies are secretive, some actively want an audience and some are entirely inadvertent.

There is no “one size fits all” where cyberbullying is concerned, methods and motives differ from cyberbully to cyberbully, therefore the solutions parents need to address the situation if their child is a cyberbully needs to be pertinent to the type of cyberbullying going on. Understanding more about why they cyberbully others will help. You have to address the motives.

“The Vengeful Angel”

Here the cyberbully doesn’t see themselves as a bully at all. Instead they see themselves as an avenger, or hero, righting wrongs and/or protecting themselves or others from the “bad guy” they are targeting. This includes situations where a victim of cyberbullying or offline bullying retaliates and becomes a cyberbully themselves. Angry at something their target did they feel they are taking completely justified revenge or teaching them a lesson. The “Vengeful Angel” gets involved when trying to protect a friend who is being bullied or cyberbullied.

They generally work alone, and tend to keep their identity a secret but on occasion may share their activities and motives with their close friends and others they perceive as being victimized by the person they are cyberbullying. Which may indicate a desire to be perceived as strong or a hero.

Their inclination is to use all kinds of technology but they often resort to direct attacks, sending threatening messages telling their target to stop or face the consequences, or utilising hacking and high tech attacks to embarrass, set up or even pose as their target to get them into trouble.

When dealing with a ‘Vengeful Angel’, parents need them to know that no one should try and take justice into their own hands. That in resorting to the tactics and threatening behaviour of their target they themselves become a bully. They need to understand that fighting fire with fire, or fighting bullying with more bullying only makes things worse. They need to see themselves as bullies, not the Robin Hood they may think they are.

It also helps to discuss and address the reasons they retaliated in the first place. If they sense injustices, maybe there really are injustices, and solutions may require that the situation be looked in to, to see what can be done to address the underlying problem. Is

there a place to report bullying or cyberbullying? Can it be done anonymously? Is there a support or official group to help with these matters? The more realistic alternative methods that can be offered or shown to these kinds of cyberbullies to handle these situations, and the more they are encouraged to use official channels to right wrongs, the less often they will try to take justice into their own hands.

The “Power-Hungry” and “Revenge of the Nerds”

Like their traditional schoolyard counterparts, some cyberbullies want to exert dominance or authority, and show that they are powerful enough to make others do what they want. Some actively want to control others with fear, or simply hurt them. They may choose someone because they consider them a challenge to their dominance, or because it will make a good ‘example’ to others, they may have taken an active dislike to the other person, or someone may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

“Power-Hungry” cyberbullies usually prefer and need an audience to make their point, be it made up of their friends or those within their circle at school. They usually operate alone but are not scared of revealing their identity because a) they want it known who is doing it, and b) they want the target to know they don’t scare them. In fact they often brag about their actions. They want a reaction, and without one may escalate their activities to get one.

They tend to use any kind technology and may make physical violent threats, either to their targets personal self via text messages, IMs or emails, or threaten their cyber accounts using more high tech methods. They are destructive, sending malware or breaking into systems to hack, delete files or reformat drives. They think they are tough and want you to know it.

Within this category of cyberbullying type there is however another group. A group who may themselves be the victims of traditional offline bullying. These may be smaller boys, girls, those with weaker interpersonal skills, or personalities, who are targeted ‘in real life’ because they may not be popular/cool enough or because they are perceived as ‘annoying’. However, this group may have superior technical skills, which they can then deploy themselves empowered by the anonymity of the Internet and digital communications and the fact that they never have to confront their victim. This is classified by Aftab as “Revenge of the Nerds” cyberbullying. It is their intention to frighten or embarrass their victims, and through those actions restore a modicum of control to their lives. Their attacks are direct and resemble those of the “Power Hungry” cyberbully but they are not tough in real life, just playing at it. If they share their actions, they are doing it only with others they feel would be sympathetic. The rarely appreciate the seriousness of their actions and because of this and their tech skills, they can be the most dangerous of all cyberbullies.

“Revenge of the Nerds” cyberbullies usually target their victims one-on-one and the cyberbully often keeps their activities secret from their friends. They also often resort to cyberbullying-by-proxy.

For parents faced with these types of cyberbullies they need to be aware that all threats made to a person, hacking or destruction of property even if it is an online account or game have to be reported. Because of IM Messages, texts and emails, Investigators can almost always find the ones behind the attacks, even if the cyberbullies try and mask their identities. Educating everyone about the law and what will happen when the law is broken, highlighting existing cases if possible, can be an invaluable help. Teaching anger management and alternate forms of dispute resolution can help deflate the anger that many Power-Hungry cyberbullies feel.

“Mean Girls”

The cyberbullying occurs here when the cyberbully is bored or looking for entertainment. It is largely ego-based and the most immature of all cyberbullying types. Contrary to the indication of its name this type of bullying is not solely committed by girl, girls do make up the larger bulk of participants, but more and more males are, according to Aftab, joining in this method of bullying.

It often occurs following a real or perceived slight or threat to a romantic relationship. The break-up of friendships, jealousy, righteousness, envy, and boredom fuel this type of a campaign. These are the most protracted type of cyberbullying campaigns and can be the most deadly. It is a social-exclusion method, where the cyberbully or teams of cyberbullies are showing their social clout. It is largely ego-based and revolve around jealousy or a perceived slight. The leaders identify themselves, happy to show their social clout.

As this kind of cyberbullying is done for entertainment “Mean Girls” cyberbullying is usually done, or planned, in a group. The cyberbullies in a “mean girls” situation want others to know who they are and that they have the power to cyberbully others. This kind of cyberbullying grows, often very quickly, when fed by group admiration, cliques or by the silence of others who stand by and let it happen. It just as quickly dies if they don’t get the entertainment value they are seeking.

This kind of bullying can be exceptionally personal in nature, targeting perceived physical or emotional weak points and can do serious damage, especially to young teens and older preteens. They attack reputations and don't deal with physical threats. They want their victims hated, ignored, socially-excluded or driven away. Their preferred methods of attack

are through cell phones, text messaging, and social networks. They wish to embarrass and belittle their targets. Because of this they favour widely used social sites like Facebook, Twitter, Vimes, and Instagram as well as text messages and IMs. They like tech that can be used to make fun of their victims such as photo shopping, happy to fake what they don't have.

Parents who may have to deal with this type of cyberbully, need to highlight the extreme damage this kind of cyberbullying can do, outlining the real cases that have occurred in the past years, and how they can often result in deadly outcomes with very severe consequences for those involved. Work on empathy should be a priority, looking at how the cyberbully views others, and placing themselves into the positions of others, teaching respect and sensitivity for others, while exhibiting it oneself.

The Inadvertent Cyberbully

Inadvertent cyberbullies don't intend to hurt anyone and usually don't think they are cyberbullies at all. They may be pretending to be tough online, or role playing, or they may be reacting to hateful or provocative messages they have received. However unlike the "Revenge of the Nerds" cyberbullies, they don't lash out intentionally. They just respond without thinking about the consequences of their actions. This may be because they feel hurt, or angry because of a communication sent to them, or something they have seen online. Theirs is an instinctive, unconsidered response born of anger or frustration, not thinking before clicking "send."

Sometimes, while experimenting in role-playing online, they may send cyberbullying communications or target someone without understanding how serious this could be. They do it for the heck of it "Because I Can." They do it for the fun of it. They may also do it to one of their friends, joking around. But their friend may not recognize that it is another friend or make take it seriously. They tend to do this when alone, and are mostly surprised when someone accuses them of cyber abuse.

Education plays an important role in preventing inadvertent cyberbullying. Teaching them to respect others and to be sensitive to their needs is the most effective way of dealing with this kind of cyberbully. Being careful and thoughtful and reviewing what you write before you send it is the best way to avoid becoming an inadvertent cyberbully. Anger management lessons are also useful, teaching them to count to ten and not respond when they are angry is a life lesson that will stand to them. Teaching everyone to take it offline when something doesn't make sense is the best advice. Taking it offline lets you know that

you are really communicating with your friend and allows you to clarify any misunderstandings.

Warning Signs & Prevention Strategies

The indicators that a child has an inclination to cyberbully others can often be the same as those of traditional bullying. However, the following signs are specific to cyberbullying:

- Easily threatened, quick to get into an argument or fight with siblings and peers, and is quick to blame others
- Often denigrates, mocks, teases or uses put downs when referring to peers
- Spends a lot of time on the internet
- Uses multiple online accounts or accounts with a fake name
- Uses the computer or mobile devices late at night or when he or she is unsupervised.
- Very defensive or secretive about online activities. May react with anger when a parent enters the room or may close down the webpage or computer
- Gets extremely angry/defensive if computer privileges are revoked
- Shows extremes of emotion – from hilarity to hostility – when online, either alone or with a group of friends.
- Spending more time with a new group of friends, or might no longer be interacting publicly with a long-time friend.
- Regards cyberbullying as a bit of fun and can't understand the big fuss that is made about it

(Eaton, S.E, 2013; Lupold Bair, A., 2013; O'Moore, 2014)

As with traditional bullying it is vital that cyberbullying is caught and stopped early, and as with most strategies an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If parents note multiple incidents of the kinds of indicators outlined above, or even as a matter of course with children who are online frequently, they should consider implementing the following preventative tactics.

Computer Location - It sounds simple, but keeping the use of all home computer(s) in communal spaces rather than allowing them to be kept in bedrooms. The restriction of use of internet ready devices such as phones beyond regular cellular data (calls etc.) while at home can also be of use.

Talk to your Childs School – See what preventative measures, discussions are going on in your child’s school in relation to dignity and respect of others, and specifically in educating the students about cyberbullying and the effects that it has on others. Get involved in encouraging, developing and participating in school anti bullying measures. The more the messages of positive interaction with others are mirrored and reinforced between home and school the better, and the co-operation of parents and staff is absolutely key.

Educate yourself – Computer software and the popularity and use of social networks change and proliferate with often bewildering speed. Try as much as possible to keep yourself educated and aware of the software and sites that are popular among kids as a whole, and with your own children. If necessary the checking of browser history will give you site usage information, conversely if the browser history has been wiped there may be conversations to have. Consider installing parental programme tracking software but do not rely on tools like this. (Feinberg & Robey, 2010)

Manage your own reactions: Be aware that you are one of, if not the, major role model to your child in how they deal with others. Be conscious of how you react and talk to others, including your child, and indeed how you speak of others when they are not present. Keep in mind that sense of disassociation and anonymity when speaking negatively/derogatorily about others when they are not around is to an extent mirrored in the online experience. Encourage and practice speaking positively and help children recognise the triggers for emotions like anger and fear and find ways to manage them.

Netiquette - Having good manners online is commonly referred to as ‘netiquette’ (online etiquette) and that there is another human at the far end of that screen who can be hurt as they can be hurt. Cyberbullying can be prevented if a child appreciates that the internet is not just about technical skills, but about knowing how to conduct themselves online. The core rules of netiquette (Shea, 1994) are outlined as:

- Remember the Human at the other end
- Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life
- Know where you are in cyberspace
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth
- Make yourself look good online
- Share expert knowledge
- Help keep flame wars under control
- Respect other people's privacy
- Don't abuse your power
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes

Talk to Children About the Legal Consequences of Cyberbullying –The more well-informed children are about the legal consequences of cyberbullying, the less likely they are to become involved in such behaviour. Talk to them about cases you may have heard about or researched, talking about the effects, the ease with which the perpetrators are found by investigators and the consequences of their actions. The less abstract the concept of cyberbullying and its penalties are the better.

Talk About ‘False Fun’ – Often bullying is passed off as ‘a bit of fun’, or they say there were ‘only having a laugh/a joke’. Remind children that because there are no facial expressions to draw on (unless emoticons are deployed) poking fun online with other children must be done cautiously and they must be confident that their intended target shares/understands their sense of humour, because they cannot see you and in turn their reactions cannot be seen. Misunderstandings and miscommunication can often be the cause of unintended hurt and escalating situations, when what was meant to be funny backfires and causes offence.

Encourage Listening - Being a good listener is as important to good interpersonal relationships as is the ability to talk personably with someone. Help your child to understand the necessity of listening to peers and treating/responding to their opinions with respect even if they do not share or are not particularly interested in their views. Encourage them to try and always see someone’s point of view, and if they do not agree with it, to politely say so and withdraw from the discussion rather than getting dragged into a spiralling often reductive argument.

Building Empathy - Children are less motivated to bully when they recognise the ill-effects of bullying, and remember that like them the people they are dealing with have thoughts and feelings of their own, no less likely to be hurt or angered than they themselves are. If you suspect that your child is lacking in compassion for others, are over fond of slagging or mocking others even if not to their face, then it will help greatly if you guide them towards developing a more empathic response.

Deal with the Need for Acceptance/Affiliation – Children, especially teens, value hugely being part of a group/being accepted and admired by its members. It is this that can so often lead a child or teenager to initiate or be drawn into bullying. Monitor your children’s peer group as best you can, their attitudes and behaviours, who they pal around with can cast a huge influence on their life. Make sure they understand the importance of not standing by while others are being bullied and help them find the words to tell their friends that they refuse to participate in these bullying actions. This is why it is important for

parents to be aware of their child's peer group, and to take cognisance of their child's level of self-esteem/self-worth, and take steps to raise it outside of their peer group.

(O'Moore, 2014)

Steps to take if your Child is a Cyberbully

No parent wants to believe that his or her child is capable of bullying or harassing other youngsters be it in the school, online or elsewhere, as either ringleader or as participant. Parents reluctance to accept the truth of the matter may be because they simply do not wish to believe that their child is capable of such actions, when in truth anyone can be capable of bullying another, alternatively it may be because they feel to have a child who is a bully is a poor reflection on their parenting style, or even that it may hold up a mirror to ones own behaviour, attitudes and values. However, to overlook or ignore their behaviour truly is a reflection of one's attitudes, allowing as it does your child to continue in a pattern of behaviour that is hurtful to other children, and which can be ultimately destructive to themselves and their future relationships with others.

As mentioned in the section on 'Types of Cyberbullies', the methods employed by the child in cyberbullying can help to dictate what kind of action a parent should take if they discover their child is a cyberbully. Along with the specific tactics mentioned in brief there, the following are the kinds of steps that can be applied as outlined by O'Moore (2014):

Do not react aggressively/punitively – While it can be distressing to learn that your child has been bullying or involved with bullying others, and the instinct would be to be angry, remember that their behaviour can often be an expression of some form of stress or unhappiness, or an expression of poorly developed social skills and, in particular, a lack of emotional empathy. Identifying the reasons is more easily done when a positive proactive relationship is established between parent and child, soon as possible will help to correct underlying causes and thus prevent further bullying behaviours.

Find out what is causing the cyberbullying behaviour – look at the methods your child had deployed in their targeting of others, and discuss the reasons behind what they did what they did. If you can discern what category of cyberbullying they may fall into (Vengeful Angel, Inadvertent Bully, etc.) it may help give you clues as to both the motives behind it and what areas (e.g. empathy, anger management) you may need to address with them.

Create an accurate awareness of what cyberbullying is – gather together what information you can on definitions and effects, so not everything is coming 'from you', and outline to

your child thoroughly what cyberbullying is, what effects it has on others, and what the outcomes are for those who perpetrate such behaviour. If necessary and appropriate initiate contact with the school and bring a counsellor or teacher into the discussion.

Discuss the rules for responsible internet and computer use – go through netiquette rules, what is and isn't appropriate behaviour in dealing with others online, and outline the legal consequences for the behaviour they are involved in.

Monitor and supervise internet use appropriately – consistent, firm and fair rules are important, and no less so in this situation. If your child has been found to be cyberbullying others then you will need to explain to them clearly that they have to expect certain outcomes. Establish a routine of monitoring and supervision around their internet use, placing their devices, or use thereof, in communal areas.

Teach skills of empathy at home - If you feel your child is lacking in compassion then building a greater empathic response will it help them to better relate to others and recognise the ill effects, thereby making them less likely to bully. Building such a response takes a consistent effort, and vigilant attendance to their responses to others. Some tips to facilitate empathy training include:

- Not accepting excuses or blame for negative behaviour that is laid at a sibling's or a classmate's door
- Encouraging your child to talk about their feelings
- Encourage them to reflect on what triggers their emotions, on how they express the emotions and on the effects their behaviour may have on others
- Encourage them to apologise and to make some form of amends both for their cyberbullying and any other negative behaviour towards others they may perpetrate in the future.
- Take care to model empathic behaviour in the company of your family.

Build self-esteem at home – contrary to popular belief a bully's self-esteem can often be lower than those they target, insecurity, jealousy, a sense of worthlessness or a need to exert control when they feel they have none, among other things can all help fuel cyberbullying as they seek to draw self-esteem from it.

Work with your children to ensure their sense of self-worth is good. Give your child something to be a part of, be it sports, art, music, build their self-esteem and their creative outlets/sense of achievement. Encourage them in their endeavours, reward positive behaviour, reinforcement is always appreciated, ask for their opinion regularly, give them

tasks to do that they can learn from and carry forward in life, giving them a sense of independence and give them positive feedback whenever appropriate. Teach equal treatment in your family, and speak well/show your admiration for every child.

Facilitate children's catharsis - Sport and team tasks when properly run provide an excellent opportunity for children to run off excess energy and learn the principles of fairness and respect for others, as well as building confidence and the concept of teamwork. Encourage participation in school or extracurricular training/events that lead to skills in conflict resolution and mediation. If your child learns to master's skills of mediation and the understanding of conflict then they can both be better able to avoid conflict escalating into bullying and help others who may be involved in such situations. Similarly learning the skills and rules of debating may also help temper children's reactions to others.

Anger Management - It may be the case that you need to deal with anger issues with a child who cyberbullies. Anger at others actions may often be the reason for their cyberbullying them, though their anger issues may actually stem from other issues in their life (e.g. situations within the family, difficulties with their academic work). The main steps to take to help your child deal with their anger and to prevent them from being drawn to bullying as a means of expressing their anger are:

- Encourage your child to talk about the reasons for their anger. Prompt them if necessary. Is it because they are frustrated, jealous or disappointed? The more your son or daughter understands the cause of their anger, the better they will be at dealing with it
- Encourage your child to express their anger in an assertive and respectful manner. Explain to them that getting angry is not going to fix anything, it generally will make matters worse. Focus instead on finding a solution
- Practice listening skills in the home. Show them that you really listen to them by repeating what they are telling you and that you understand their feelings. Suspend judgement until you have heard all sides of a story, remain calm and respond in a respectful manner. For example, learning to use 'I' statements is the secret of good assertive communication.
- Teach and practice calming methods with them. Relaxation techniques including, taking deep breaths, counting backwards from twenty to one and switching thoughts to a pleasant image or memory can help calm down angry feelings
- Model these behaviours and practices yourself. There is little point in teaching your children that anger is counterproductive and destructive if you yourself are prone to angry outbursts. A do as I do, not as I say attitude must be exhibited.

Social Skills -the more socially skilled children are, the better able they will be to initiate and maintain enduring friendships, and thus fulfil their need for acceptance. Work with them where necessary, from direct coaching on interacting with others, to role-playing and showing children films depicting good peer interactions. Tactics include helping your child to recognise their own feelings and the feelings of others. Helping them build a vocabulary of words to express feelings and help them choose the appropriate actions to convey the different feelings. Helping your child to express emotions (joy, affection, sympathy) so that they need not hold back if they wish to comfort or support their peers. Helping your child achieve a balance between reluctance to disclose and oversharing, thus risking boring or alienating peers.

Dealing with the Need for Power – A need for exerting personal power as discussed in items like the Power Hungry/Revenge of the Nerds’ types of cyberbully is often cited as a reason behind a cyberbullies actions. This need for personal power reflects a desire to make an impact on individuals. Parents need to help children understand the adverse consequences of exercising personal power provide opportunities so that their children may enjoy recognition and rewards for any pro-social behaviour they exhibit. Encourage charity or volunteer work or have children help family and friends who may be aged or have special needs. The thanks and reinforcement that comes from the work and seeing the positive effect their help has on those individuals can do much to promote their pro-social behaviour.

Discuss screen violence and desensitisation –The sense of removal children have from those on the other end of the screen can desensitise them to the possible effects of their actions. Use film and TV to take time to address that desensitisation and discuss the screen characters and the rights and wrongs of violence.

Teach respect for diversity – ‘Being different’ is often cited as a prime reason for people being victimised. Teach the child to respect and be tolerant of differences whether in social ability, verbal acuity, race, gender, religion or sexuality, and model this behaviour, being mindful of casual terminology that may be derogatory.

Also look to dealing with ‘**False Fun**’, and the ‘**Need for Peer Affiliation**’ as touched on in the Prevention Strategies section above, as the topics touched on in them can also be effective tools in intervention discussions.

Finally, remember, do not bite off more than you can chew. Parents are often afraid of stigmatising their child by taking them to speak with others, but it can be far more damaging



in the long run to either ignore an issue with your child, or taking on more than you can handle with them. So seek professional help to overcome any emotional and behavioural problems in your child or teenager that may, with your own best efforts, be resistant to change.

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