

TIPS TO HELP STOP CYBERBULLYING

KNOW THAT IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT: What people call “bullying” is sometimes an argument between two people. But if someone is repeatedly cruel to you, that’s bullying and you mustn’t blame yourself. No one deserves to be treated cruelly.

DON'T RESPOND OR RETALIATE: Sometimes a reaction is exactly what aggressors are looking for because they think it gives them power over you, and you don’t want to empower a bully. As for retaliating, getting back at a bully turns you into one – and can turn one mean act into a chain reaction. If you can, remove yourself from the situation. If you can’t, sometimes humor disarms or distracts a person from bullying.

SAVE THE EVIDENCE: The only good news about bullying online or on phones is that it can usually be captured, saved, and shown to someone who can help. You can save that evidence in case things escalate.

USE AVAILABLE TECH TOOLS: Most social media apps and services allow you to block the person. Whether the harassment’s in an app, texting, comments or tagged photos, do yourself a favor and block the person. You can also report the problem to the service. That probably won’t end it, but you don’t need the harassment in your face, and you’ll be less tempted to respond. If you’re getting threats of physical harm, you should call your local police (with a parent or guardian’s help) and consider reporting it to school authorities.

REACH OUT FOR HELP: Especially if the behavior’s really getting to you. You deserve backup. See if there’s someone who can listen, help you process what’s going on and work through it – a friend, relative or maybe an adult you trust.

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PROTECT YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS: Don’t share your passwords with anyone – even your closest friends, who may not be close forever – and password-protect your phone so no one can use it to impersonate you.

IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING BULLIED TAKE ACTION: Just standing by can empower an aggressor and does nothing to help. The best thing you can do is try to stop the bullying by taking a stand against it. If you can’t stop it, support the person being bullied. If the person’s a friend, you can listen and see how to help. Consider together whether you should report the bullying. If you’re not already friends, even a kind word can help reduce the pain. At the very least, help by not passing along a mean message and not giving positive attention to the person doing the bullying.