TEN MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING

1. **THE MYTH:** Bullies suffer from insecurity and low self-esteem. They pick on others to make themselves feel more important.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Most bullies have average or above average self-esteem. They “suffer” from aggressive temperaments, a lack of empathy, and poor parenting.

2. **THE MYTH:** Bullies are looking for attention. Ignore them and the bullying will stop.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Bullies are looking for control, and they rarely stop if their behavior is ignored. The level of bullying usually increases if the bullying is not addressed by adults.

3. **THE MYTH:** Boys will be boys.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Bullying is seldom outgrown; it’s simply redirected. About 60% of boys identified as bullies in middle school commit at least one crime by the time they are 24.

4. **THE MYTH:** Kids can be cruel about differences.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Physical differences play only a small role in bullying situations. Most victims are chosen because they are sensitive, anxious, and unable to retaliate.

5. **THE MYTH:** Victims of bullies need to learn to stand up for themselves and deal with the situation.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Victims of bullies are usually younger or physically weaker than their attackers. They also may lack the social skills to develop supportive friendships and cannot deal with the situation alone.

6. **THE MYTH:** Large schools or classes are conducive to bullying.

   **THE RESEARCH:** No correlation has been established between class or school size and bullying. In fact, there is some evidence that bullying may be less prevalent in larger schools, where potential victims have increased opportunities for finding supportive friends.

7. **THE MYTH:** Most bullying occurs off school grounds.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Although some bullying occurs outside of school or on the way to or from school, most bullying occurs on school grounds: in classrooms, in hallways, and on playgrounds.

8. **THE MYTH:** Bullying affects only a small number of students.

   **THE RESEARCH:** At any given time, about 25% of U.S. students are the victims of bullies and about 20% are perpetrators. The National Association of School Psychologists estimates that 160,000 children stay home from school everyday because they are afraid of being bullied.

9. **THE MYTH:** Teachers know if bullying is a problem in their classes.

   **THE RESEARCH:** Bullying behavior usually takes place out-of-sight of teachers. Most victims are reluctant to report the bullying for fear of embarrassment or retaliation, and most bullies deny or justify their behavior.

10. **THE MYTH:** Victims of bullying need to follow the adage “Sticks and stones will break your bones but names can never hurt you.”

    **THE RESEARCH:** Victims of bullying often suffer lifelong problems with low self-esteem. They are prone to depression, suicide, and other mental health problems throughout their lives.

*excerpt from: “Sticks and Stones and Names Can Hurt you: De-Myth-tifying the Classroom Bully!” from Education World*

HELPING A FRIEND

Maybe you’re not being bullied but you know someone who is. Have you ever stood around when someone was being bullied but you weren’t sure what, if anything, you could do? Maybe you figured that nothing you could do would make a difference. Don’t ignore the bullying! You can help, and here are a couple of suggestions for you to try:

- **Refuse to join in.** Don’t laugh at mean jokes or crowd around someone who is being harassed.
- **Correct classmates.** If you hear an untrue rumor, correct the people who spread it and ask them to stop repeating it.
- **Try to be a friend to the person being bullied.** That person needs to know that people will be supportive through their difficult time.
- **Keep an eye on bullied kids.** When bullying becomes too much to bear, victims may choose destructive behaviors themselves to avoid the bully and the situation. If you see any of these signs, tell a parent, teacher, counselor, coach, or any other adult who is close to the situation.
- **Don’t question the victims.** Kids get picked on through no fault of their own. Be careful not to unintentionally make a victim feel as though he or she did something to encourage the bullying.
- **Let a teacher or other adult know what’s happening.** Adult intervention can stop bullying before it escalates into violence. **Don’t fight the bully yourself.** It may not be safe to fight back, and you do not want to get labeled as a bully! Tell an adult instead.
WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?  “Cyberbullying” is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. It has to have a minor on both sides, or at least have been instigated by a minor against another minor. Once adults become involved, it is called cyber-harassment or cyberstalking not cyberbullying.

HOW CYBERBULLYING WORKS  There are two kinds of cyberbullying: direct attacks (messages sent to kids directly) and cyberbullying by proxy (using others to help cyberbully the victim, either with or without the accomplice’s knowledge). Because cyberbullying by proxy often gets adults involved in harassment, it can be much more dangerous.

WHY DO STUDENTS CYBERBULLY EACH OTHER?  When it comes to cyberbullying, students often are motivated by anger, revenge or frustration. Sometimes they do it for entertainment or because they are bored and have too much time on their hands and too many ‘tech toys’ available to them. Many do it for laughs or to get a reaction. Some do it by accident, and either send a message to the wrong recipient or didn’t think before they did something. The ‘power-hungry’ do it to torment others and for their ego. ‘Revenge of the nerd’ may start out defending themselves from traditional bullying only to find that they enjoy being the tough guy or gal. ‘Mean girls’ do it to help bolster or remind people of their own social standing. And some think they are righting wrong and standing up for others. Because their motives differ, the solutions and responses to each type of cyberbullying incident has to differ too. Unfortunately, there is no “one size fits all” when cyberbullying is concerned.

EFFECTS OF CYBERBULLYING  No longer limited to school yards or street corners, modern-day bullying happens at home as well as at school—essentially 24 hours a day. And, for teens who are being cyberbullied, it can feel like there’s no escape. Severe cyberbullying can leave victims at greater risk for anxiety, depression, and other stress-related disorders. In very rare cases, some kids have turned to suicide. Many teens who are cyberbullied are reluctant to tell a teacher or parent, often because they feel ashamed of the social stigma, or because they fear their computer privileges will be taken away at home. Signs that someone is being cyberbullied vary, but some ‘red flags’ are:

- signs of emotional distress during or after using the Internet
- withdrawal from friends and activities
- avoidance of school or group gatherings
- slipping grades and "acting out" in anger at home
- changes in mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite

A 2006 poll from the national organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids found that 1 in 3 teens and 1 in 6 preteens have been the victims of cyberbullying. As more and more youths have access to computers and cell phones, the incidence of cyberbullying is likely to increase.

WHAT TEENS CAN DO  Teens can attempt to prevent cyberbullying by:

- Always thinking about what they post or say. Do not share secrets, photos or anything that might be embarrassing to you or others. What seems funny or innocent at the time could be used against you. You do not have complete control over what others forward or post.
- Set privacy settings on your accounts. Make sure that you are only sharing information with people you know and trust. Pay attention to notices from social networks because sometimes privacy settings change.

MAKE CYBERBULLYING STOP  If you or someone you know is being cyberbullied, know that it does not have to be this way. There are things you can do to help you and your friends: 1) Block the person who is cyberbullying you. Many websites and phone companies let you block people. Cyberbullying may violate the “Terms and Conditions” of these services. Consider contacting them to file a complaint. 2) Contact law enforcement if the aggressive behavior is criminal (threats of violence, child pornography/sexting, photo image of someone where he/she would expect privacy, harassment/stalking, sexual exploitation, extortion)

FOR MORE INFORMATION  For more information on cyberbullying, visit http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/ or http://www.stopbullying.gov/topics/cyberbullying/

Taken from Stopbullying.com, National Crime Prevention Council and TeenHealth websites
DEALING WITH CYBER BULLIES

“Cyber bullies use e-mail, IMs, text messaging, and postings on blogs and social-networking sites to threaten or insult others. Cyber bullies are a new breed of the old ‘schoolyard bully’. Cyber bully attacks are double scary because a lot of time you don’t know where they’re coming from. It’s like getting sucker punched in the dark! Cyber bullying comes in a few guises. ‘Flaming’ is posting of derogatory remarks on someone else’s webpage or IMing nasty remarks to someone. ‘Impersonation’ is when a person logs into someone else’s account and sends out messages pretending to be that user. ‘Bad Mouthing’ includes creating profiles that make fun of another person, erecting blogs that rate people in your class or creating home pages that make fun of others. Being bullied hurts all the time, whether it’s in the real world or on-line. If you are getting harassed on-line, here are some things you can do to make it stop.

Call someone—Victim advocates associations like the Stalking Resource Center (202) 467-8700 or Safe Horizon (800-621-HOPE) help you assess threats and explain your legal options. If you sense a threat, call 911 and get law enforcement.

- Block the harasser—It is the easiest way to knock out harassment but does not always work.
- Create a new identity—Delete your old profile, blog, e-mail or IM accounts and make new ones.
- Document the harassment—All text, IMs and e-mails should be saved to show to the proper authorities if the harassment continues.
- Don’t Post Personal Information—Do not give cyber bullies access to your life.
- Don’t Respond—Responding to a bully just fuels their bad behavior.”

Excerpt from ‘Society Safety’