

CYBER BULLING



Tweens, Teens and Technology: Cyberbullying, Social Networking, and other High Tech Challenges

Dr. Justin Patchin is a professor of criminal justice at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He received his Ph.D. from Michigan State University. For over a decade he has been exploring the intersection of teens and technology, with particular focus on cyberbullying and social networking. He travels around the United States and abroad training educators, counselors, law enforcement officers, parents, and youth on the prevention and consequences of cyberbullying. Dr. Patchin is Co-Director of the Cyberbullying Research Center (www.cyberbullying.us) and has written four books and numerous articles about online adolescent behaviors. His co-authored book: "Bullying beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying," was named Educator Book of the Year by ForeWord reviews. His new book for teens, "Words Wound: Delete Cyberbullying and Make Kindness Go Viral" was published in December, 2013. He has presented at the White House and the FBI Academy, and has appeared on CNN, NPR, and in the New York Times to discuss issues related to teen use/misuse of technology.

Technology and popular social networking sites change so rapidly it is difficult for parents to keep up with their teenager's online activity. When adolescents realize that their parents have discovered the social networking site they are on (ie. facebook), they move on to the next new thing (ie. instagram). Legally, facebook may be used at the age of age 13!

Research shows that children who were born in 2010 will spend more time with a screen (ie. computer, cell phone, etc.), than with a human being during their lifetime.

Dr. Patchin used the analogy of teaching a child to drive a car with teaching a child to responsibly use technology. We have state laws that mandate when a child is eligible to drive. Our children are required to sit in a classroom for "x" amount of hours learning every detail about the driving laws, reviewing the intricacies of operating a motor vehicle, and preparing them for the potential scenarios encountered while driving. This instruction culminates with a written test. Next, we make our children drive with an adult in the car to gain experience for "x" amount of hours. Then our children take a driving test before earning a provisional/restricted license with the stipulation of restricted driving hours and only with certain people in the car with them. After that period of time, with no infractions, the child secures a regular driver's

license. With technology, there are no classes, no direct instruction, no tests, and no mandated supervision.

Dr. Patchin is recommending parents explicitly train their children to use technology appropriately, just as they would with teaching them to drive a car.

Dr. Patchin offered advice regarding cell phones as well. Parents often give cell phones to their children when they are younger so the parent can easily get in touch with their child whenever is necessary. He suggested that parents should give a cell phone to their children a little earlier than typical, so that parents can teach their children how to use their cell phones appropriately. He feels it best if children learn this information from a parent versus a peer. Also, it is important to ease a child into using a cell phone. The parent can set parameters with the child. For example, the parent can say that for the first 3 months, the child can only use the cell phone to call Mom and Dad. After those 3 months, the parent can sit down with his/her child, show the child the cell phone bill and the call history, and explain the monetary impact of cell phone use. Finally, if a child demonstrates he/she can use the phone responsibly, the parent can allow his/her child to call Grandma, Grandpa, and a couple of close friends, in addition to Mom and Dad. By using this system of *incremental growth*, parents are modeling appropriate cell phone use and setting clear guidelines and expectations for their children.

Dr. Patchin added the caveat that the more parents restrict their children's use of technology, the more they will seek it out without parent's permission. Instead, it is imperative that parents give their children access to technology with parental guidance and support.

Dr. Patchin shared a new cell phone application called "qik", which allows individuals to stream videos to the web immediately through their cell phones. Dr. Patchin discussed the implications of such an application in terms of children recording other children in embarrassing or vulnerable situations without the child's knowledge.

Next, Dr. Patchin discussed cyberbullying. He mentioned that cyberbullies usually have a relationship with the person they are bullying. For example, they may be a former friend, former girlfriend or boyfriend, or the new boyfriend or girlfriend. Cyberbullying can be a lot more difficult to cope with compared to in-person bullying because of the viral nature of online bullying. Everyone can see the bullying immediately on the internet. Also, cyberbullying is more difficult to escape, because the bullying can occur on the cell phone, home computer, etc. It is no longer just isolated to the school, playground, etc. Children do and say things online that they would never do or say in person. These children have the luxury of not seeing the faces and reactions of the person they are harming. They are disconnected from the impact of their words. Which makes technology an easy way out of facing accountability & feelings of guilt that they more likely would experience in person.

*When a child is cyberbullied, the first and worst thing they can do is to delete the message and/or respond to the bully, respectively. **Dr. Patchin emphasized that the child should NOT delete the bullying message and should NOT respond to the bully.** Rather, the child should report it to a trusted adult (parent, teacher, school counselor, etc.).*

Schools can discipline students involved in cyberbullying if the situation causes a substantial disruption to the operations of the school. Cyberbullying offenses, particularly those involving threats, can be reported to the police.

Dr. Patchin's website <http://cyberbullying.us/> has lots of valuable information. We encourage all parents to check out the resources posted on this site.

o Resources for parents: <http://cyberbullying.us/resources/parents/>

o Resources for teens: <http://cyberbullying.us/resources/teens/>