

We also need to teach our kids how to respond to an online bully. Your child has received a handout titled *What to Do if Someone is Mean to You Online*. Go through it together and emphasize the key points:

- Don't fight back
- Save the evidence
- Talk to someone about it
- Report it to the site where it's happening or to police if it's making you feel scared; making it hard for you to go to school or do things you enjoy; if you are being physically threatened; or if someone is threatening to publish something that would hurt or humiliate you.

How Can I Prevent Cyberbullying?

We can reduce the risks associated with Internet use by having open, ongoing conversations with our children about their online activities and by setting up rules that will grow along with them. MediaSmarts' research shows that having family Internet rules on things like treating people with respect can have a positive impact on your children's online behaviour. (This tip sheet can get you started: http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/tipsheet/TipSheet_FamilyOnlineRules.pdf.) Research has also shown that bullying rates drop when kids know that it is against the rules and how to report it.

Tell your children to come to you right away if they feel uncomfortable or threatened online. Don't take it for granted that your child will do this: only eight percent of teens who have been bullied online have told their parents.

Encourage your children to take action when they witness someone being bullied. This doesn't necessarily mean confronting the bully: they need to consider what they can do that is most likely to help the person being bullied and least likely to make the situation worse. This may include:

- *recording* the bullying by taking screenshots (see take-a-screenshot.org for tips on how to do this) and, if it seems that it will do more good than harm, reporting it;
- *helping the person who is being bullied feel better* and offering help privately (including help in reporting the bullying to authorities: young people who are being bullied are often reluctant to tell adults);
- *trying to help* both the person being bullied and person who is doing the bullying make up; or
- *confronting* the person who is doing the bullying, either privately or in public. If this is a friend, the best way to show that you don't approve of their behaviour is by not joining in or encouraging it.

In order to fight cyberbullying effectively we need to change the culture in which it happens, starting with helping kids understand that what may seem like "just a joke" can have a powerful effect on someone else. It's also important to teach them that cyberbullying may be less common than they think it is: young people often overestimate how common bullying actually is, even though most report their own experiences as being positive. Knowing the facts is important because research shows that when young people believe that bullying behaviour is the norm, they are more likely to engage in and tolerate this sort of behaviour – and that when they understand how *uncommon* bullying actually is, bullying rates drop.

