

What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?

Discover how cyberbullying can impact victims



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Bullying, no matter whether it is traditional bullying or cyberbullying, causes significant emotional and psychological distress. In fact, just like any other [victim of bullying](#), cyberbullied kids experience anxiety, fear, [depression](#) and low self-esteem. They also may deal with low self-esteem, experience physical symptoms and struggle academically. But targets of cyberbullying also experience some unique consequences and negative feelings.

Here are some common feelings cyberbullied teens and tweens often experience.

Feel overwhelmed. Being targeted by cyberbullies is crushing especially if a lot of kids are participating in the bullying. It can feel at times like the entire world knows what it is going on. Sometimes the stress of dealing with cyberbullying can cause kids to feel like the situation is more than they can handle.

Feel vulnerable and powerless. Victims of cyberbullying often find it difficult to feel safe. Typically, this is because the [bullying](#) can invade their home through a computer or cell phone at any time of day. They no longer have a place where they can escape. To a victim, it feels like the bullying is everywhere. Additionally, because the [bullies](#) can remain anonymous, this can escalate feelings of fear. Kids who are targeted have no idea who is inflicting the pain.

Feel exposed and humiliated. Because [cyberbullying](#) occurs in cyberspace, online bullying feels permanent.

Kids know that once something is out there, it will always be out there. When cyberbullying occurs, the nasty posts, messages or texts can be shared with multitudes of people. The sheer volume of people that know about the bullying can lead to intense feelings of humiliation.

Feel dissatisfied with who they are.

Cyberbullying often attacks victims where they are most vulnerable. As a result, targets of cyberbullying often begin to doubt their worth and value. They may respond to these feelings by harming themselves in some way. For instance, if a girl is called fat, she may begin a crash diet with the belief that if she alters how she looks then the bullying will stop. Other times victims will try to change something about their appearance or attitude in order to avoid additional cyberbullying.

Feel angry and vengeful. Sometimes victims of cyberbullying will get angry about what is happening to them. As a result, they plot [revenge](#) and engage in retaliation. This approach is dangerous because it keeps them locked in [the bully-victim cycle](#). It is always better to [forgive a bully](#) than it is to get even.

Feel disinterested in life. When cyberbullying is ongoing, victims often relate to the world around them differently than others. For many, life can feel hopeless and meaningless. They lose interest in things they once enjoyed and spend less time interacting with family and friends.

And in some cases depression and [thoughts of suicide](#) can set in. If you notice a change in your child's mood, get him evaluated by a doctor as soon as possible.

Feel alone and isolated. Cyberbullying sometimes causes teens to be excluded and [ostracized](#) at school. This experience is particularly painful because [friends](#) are crucial at this age. When kids don't have friends, this can lead to more bullying. What's more, when cyberbullying occurs, most people recommend shutting off the computer or turning off the cell phone. But, for teens this often means cutting off communication with their world. Their phones and their computers are one of the most important ways they communicate with others. If that option for communication is removed, they can feel secluded and cut off from their world.

Feel disinterested in school. Cyberbullying victims often have much higher rates of absenteeism at school than non-bullied kids. They skip school to avoid facing the kids bullying them or because they are embarrassed and humiliated by the messages that were shared. Their grades suffer too because they find it difficult to concentrate or study because of the anxiety and stress the bullying causes. And in some cases, kids will either drop out of school or lose interest in continuing their education after high school.

Feel anxious and depressed. Victims of cyberbullying often succumb to anxiety, depression and other stress-related conditions. This occurs primarily because cyberbullying erodes their self-confidence and [self-esteem](#). Additionally, the added stress of coping with cyberbullying on a regular basis erodes their feelings of happiness and contentment.

Feel ill. When kids are cyberbullied, they often experience headaches, stomachaches or other physical ailments. The stress of bullying also can cause stress-related conditions like stomach ulcers and skin conditions. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied may experience changes in eating habits like skipping meals or [binge eating](#). And their sleep patterns may be impacted. They may suffer from insomnia, sleep more than usual or experience nightmares.

Feel suicidal. Cyberbullying increases the risk of [suicide](#). Kids that are constantly tormented by peers through text messages, instant messaging, social media and other outlets, often begin to feel hopeless. They may even begin to feel like the only way to escape the pain is through suicide. As a result, they may fantasize about ending their life in order to escape their tormentors. If your child is being cyberbullied, do not dismiss their feelings. Be sure you communicate daily, take steps to help end the torment and keep close tabs on changes in mood and behavior. Get your child evaluated by a health care professional if notice any personality changes at all.