TIP OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER 2011

BACK TO SCHOOL & CYBER BUILLYING

September is back to school month in The Bahamas and children here will be facing the newest method of bullying employed by internet savvy kids who use modern technology to advance their dark intent to bully others.

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying, also known as electronic bullying or online social cruelty is defined as bullying:-

- through email
- through instant messaging
- in a chat room
- on a special networking or gaming site
- through digital messages or images sent to a cellular phone.

Although sharing certain features in common with traditional bullying, cyber bullying represents a unique phenomenon that has only recently begun to receive attention in both the popular press and in academic circles. Cyber bullying not only looks and feels a bit different than traditional bullying, but presents some unique challenges in dealing with it. (Kowalski, Limber and Agatston 2007).

Who Cyber Bullies?

Both boys and girls cyber bully, although it appears that girls are more likely to engage in cyber bullying and be targeted by cyber bullying than their male counterparts. This is a difference from traditional bullying, where we find boys engaging in bullying behaviors or being targeted in higher numbers than girls.

How can we prevent Cyber Bullying?

Parents

Communicate with your children about their online experiences.

Parents need to discuss cyber bullying with their children as part of their regular discussion about Internet Safety and appropriate use of technologies. Parents can make it clear that using the Internet or cellular phones to embarrass or hurt others' feelings is not part of their family values. Discussing the golden rule as it applies to internet and technology use can be very helpful. Parents should discuss bystander behavior as well, encouraging children to speak out against cyber bullying they witness and report to the appropriate person. In addition, parents need to set up guidelines for appropriate use for each new piece of technology that is brought into the home.

Educators

Teach Students Online "Netiquette", Safe Blogging, and How to Monitor Their Online Reputation

"Online netiquette skills are becoming vital as technology is increasingly being incorporated into most career paths. Many schools encourage teachers to keep blogs where class and homework assignments are posted for students to review. Students are asked to post assignments online. Providing tips on appropriate posting and online etiquette as part of incorporating more technology in the classroom is critical. In addition schools need clear policies against bullying and cyber bullying, and bullying prevention programs in their schools." (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2007).

Students

Become a courageous bystander!

- Don't engage in or support mean material, gossip, or rumors posted online, or talk about it at school.

- Support a classmate being targeted online by posting positive messages!
- If you know the person being targeted, invite him/her to spend time with you.
- Tell an adult at home and at school.
- Print the evidence to share with an adult.
- Confront the student who is cyber bulling if it is safe, and make it clear that you think their behavior is wrong.
- Remember that we are not invisible online, and anything we post can be traced back to us. Monitor your online reputation.
  (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2007).

Remember Privacy is the Best Policy.

For more information about the above or any other aspect of the Data Protection, please e-mail us at dataprotectin@bahamas.gov.bs or visit our Website www.bahamas.gov.bs/dataprotection.