



Supporting children and teens  
who are experiencing online bullying

## Starting a conversation

The following information is a summary of the information found in our Cyberbullying training at [parentline.com.au/cyberbullying](https://parentline.com.au/cyberbullying) to help guide your role in supporting children and teens navigate online bullying.

### Understand your confidence in starting a conversation.

Check in with yourself first; it's ok to be uncomfortable with tricky conversations. The best way to increase your confidence is to plan the conversation first. Be clear with your end goal (welfare check/do they need support?) as this will help you keep the conversation on track.

### Plan ahead and use your knowledge of your child's needs.

This will help you seize an opportunity with your child to have a productive conversation or be prepared if the conversation is started with you, by the child.

### Take direction from your child

This conversation may not take place all in one hit. Keep the conversation open ended.

Let them feel empowered to close the conversation down at any time, but also feel as though they can start it again at anytime.

### Time and location are important.

Choosing an appropriate time and place that allows for open, one-on-one conversation is important. An interrogation style conversation will decrease the chances of conversation flow.

#### Some suggestions may be:

Avoid starting a conversation in a group situation as this may feel like an audience (unless the child initiates the conversation because they perceive the family unit as a safety net).

**Driving in the car** - unlocked eye contact can help some people open up. (It is also a closed environment where no one can interrupt you).

OR

**While performing a normal shared chore**, such as preparing a meal or folding laundry - busy hands can alleviate that feeling of, 'I am uncomfortable with this topic and don't know what to do with my body'.

### Resist the urge to retaliate.

This is for both you and the child. If you experience the urge to retaliate or seek justice yourself, this is understandable, but not necessarily helpful. Acknowledge these feelings within yourself and use that to help understand their feelings and/or the feelings of your child in wanting to retaliate.

Expressing the desire to retaliate is an understandable response to being hurt. The parental role is to listen to these feelings/frustrations of the child, and use this as a time to invite reflection and validate how the online bullying has hurt them and redirect this anger into finding a better solution.

### **Aim for a strengths-based approach.**

Prepare for this conversation by thinking about some positive behaviours of the child, or things the child is good at. This will help acknowledge the child's abilities and capabilities as they may be lacking in confidence.

### **Ask the child/teen for background context.**

It is important to understand the background of this situation. There may be some history to this rift you aren't aware of, the best way to know, is to ask.

### **Be a role model.**

Your role is to reiterate kindness in the child's life. Remember not to automatically label the child as a 'victim' as this can impede the recovery process, but rather, someone who has experienced online bullying and took positive action to reverse it.

### **Be prepared to guide them.**

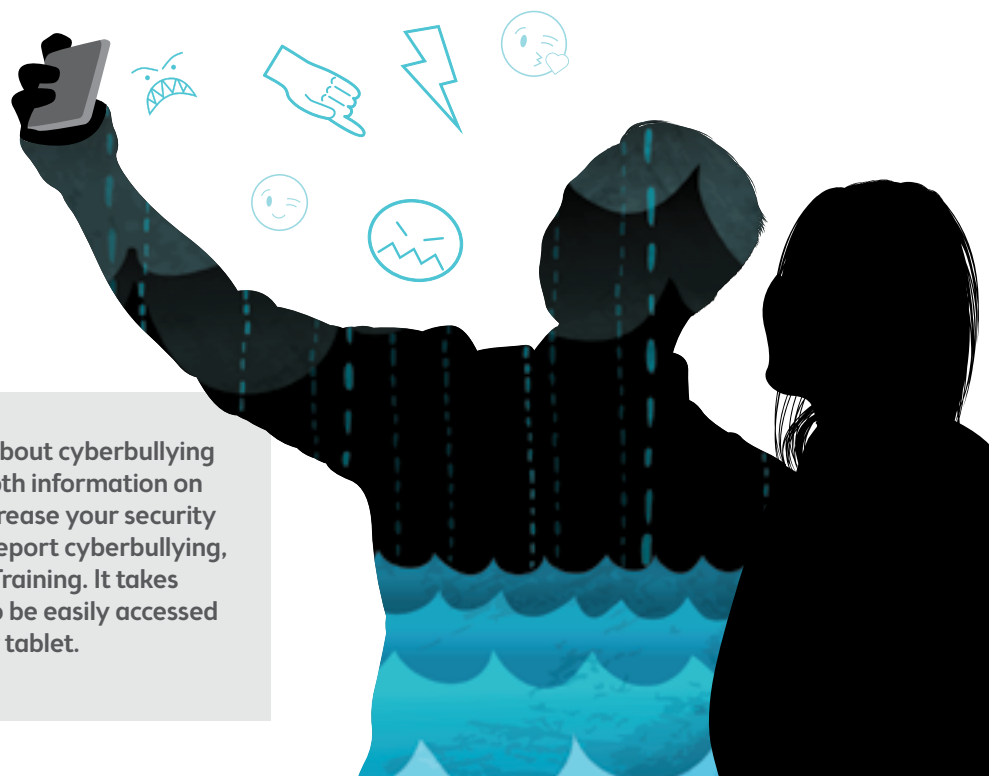
Highlight ways to reverse the harm.

Some actions that may be helpful to prompt the conversation with the child:

1. Approaching the person (online or face-to-face) and asking why they are being mean
2. Reporting the harmful content, if not done already
3. Collecting evidence and reporting the content
4. Speaking to their school counsellor
5. Gaining permission from the child to speak to/not to speak to the school

Any combination of these actions will help start the ball rolling.

**REMEMBER:** the goal is to let the child choose how they wish to take action to reverse or reduce the harm and to encourage/praise their decision as appropriate.



If you are interested in learning more about cyberbullying behaviour, warning signs, more in depth information on how to start a conversation, how to increase your security and privacy setting, along with how to report cyberbullying, you can do so in the full Parentline Training. It takes approximately an hour and designed to be easily accessed from your mobile device or tablet.

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[parentline.com.au/cyberbullying](https://parentline.com.au/cyberbullying)

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