INTERNET SAFETY CONCEPTS
— EDUCATE. EMPOWER. PROTECT. —

When online moments turn hurtful



A parent's guide to cyberbullying, group chats, and helping kids through it.

You don't need to have every answer.
Start by listening—and take the next step together.

"I'm glad you told me. You don't have to handle this alone."

When your child reaches out about something hurtful online, it takes courage. Your support can make a real difference.

Someone is being awful to me online.

It can be hard to hear that your child is being hurt online. They may feel embarrassed, upset, or unsure of what to do next. Your calm support helps them feel safer and more in control.

1 Start with a conversation.

- Give your child time and space to talk. Listen without interrupting or jumping to fix it.
- Thank them for telling you.
- Keep the focus on support, not blame. Let them know you're on their side.

2 Work out what happened.

- Get a clear picture of what happened, who was involved, where it's happening, and how long it has been going on.
- **Save the right information,** such as screenshots, including dates and usernames, if possible.

Do not download, copy, or forward nude or sexual images of a minor to collect evidence. Instead, contact the appropriate reporting help (see page 2).

3 Choose the next step together.

- Report the content on the app, platform, or game.
- Limit contact by blocking or muting accounts.
- Avoid retaliation. Responding can make things worse.
- Involve additional adults such as a school, coach, or trusted family member if the behavior continues or feels serious.

You don't have to solve everything in one conversation.

Keep the door open

Even when things feel tough, your ongoing support helps your child feel safer, more confident, and more willing to come to you.

Is this drama—or something more?

Kids will have conflicts online, and not every unkind comment is cyberbullying. At the same time, repeated, targeted, or severe behavior can be harmful. You don't need to label it before getting help—if it's causing distress or affecting your child's well-being, it's worth taking seriously.

Common examples include:

- Group-chat pile-ons and exclusion
- Hurtful comments, rumors, or sharing private information
- Impersonation or fake accounts
- Harassment in online games
- Harmful AI-altered photos, videos, or audio

What if my child is watching it happen?



Seeing others being hurt online can be upsetting. Encourage your child to be kind, avoid joining in, and tell a trusted adult. Speaking up or reporting can make a real difference.

What if my child joined in?



Sometimes kids say or do things online that hurt others, even if they didn't mean to. Use it as a learning moment. Talk about the impact of their actions, help them take responsibility, and discuss how to make a better choice next time.

Not sure how to bring it up?

Keep it casual. Regular conversations about their online life make it easier for your child to come to you when something feels wrong.

Try a few conversation starters:

> "How are things going with your friends online these days?"

> "Is there anything online that's felt really hard or uncomfortable lately?"

A note from Scott

Behind every screen is a real person. Choose words that protect dignity, and speak up safely when someone is being hurt. Your support, guidance, and willingness to have these conversations can make a real difference in your child's life.

Scott Driscoll
President / Founder
Internet Safety Concepts

A little extra help

Here are trusted resources for different situations.

Immediate danger
Call 911 if your child is in immediate danger.

Crisis support
Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.

Report online abuse
NCMEC CyberTipline: report.cybertip.org
Take It Down (explicit images): takeitdown.ncmec.org
StopBullying.gov: stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying