



HOW CAN WE KEEP SAFE ONLINE?



If anything bad happens online, we need to report it or talk about it.

What are we talking about?

Most of the time the messages, posts, tweets and images we send and receive on our phones, tablets and other devices let us share fun stuff. But sometimes bad things can happen online: like cyberbullying, identity fraud, or inappropriate communication.

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology like shared texts, emails, online posts, images, messages or videos to embarrass, threaten or harm another. It can range from spreading rumours to encouraging violence (see our separate sheet on cyberbullying).

Identity fraud is when someone pretends to be us by using our login/password details – maybe to post nasty messages, perhaps to spend our money. It generally happens without our permission or knowledge.

Inappropriate communication is anything from someone sending violent or sexual messages or posts that upset us to blackmail and stalking (= unwanted attention). It could be a suggestion that we meet up and do something with them in real life, perhaps something that doesn't feel right or safe.

What can we do if we've been sent something nasty on a mobile or online?

If we've received a nasty call, been sent an upsetting message or image, or seen one on another person's device, there are some practical things we (or our caregivers) can do:

- Tell someone, preferably an adult, what's happening, that we're upset by it, or think it's not right. If we'd rather not talk to friends, family or school we can contact Netsafe, Kidsline, What's Up, or Youthline for confidential support and advice.
- Text back the sender/caller and tell them to stop; or turn off our phone.
- Change our phone number, mute, block or unfriend people we are worried about, and alter our online profile or privacy details so they're more secure; most providers offer online help with these settings.
- If it's cyberbullying, see our factsheet on What can I do if I'm being bullied online?
- Gather evidence of the activity: save messages, take screen shots or photos, record dates and urls, or print emails.
- Maybe take a short break from some or all social media; we all have the right to be online, but sometimes "disappearing" for a bit is the safest and wisest thing to do.
- Report what's happened to our internet or mobile provider – they may be able take down or block certain numbers, users or sites that break their code of conduct.
- If what's happening is really serious or scary, consider telling the Police.



What can we do to protect ourselves online?

- Choose carefully with whom we share our mobile, personal and online details and any messages or posts: one US study found 17% of all so-called “private” emails/texts were shared – often with more than one person.
- Set our privacy settings to protect what can be shared on social networks like Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat; organisations like Netsafe and Sticks ‘n Stones also have great advice on how to do this and how to report things like bullying.
- Never share our passwords or logins.
- Never join in cyberbullying or trolling – what goes around often comes around.
- Respect the age limits on websites and games → they are there for a good reason.
- Think before posting an image of ourselves; be cautious if someone asks us for one.
- Never agree to meet anyone we’ve “met” online anywhere alone in real life, unless we know exactly who they are and that we’ll be safe with them. The same goes for giving them our contact details (address, phone etc.), however much they ask.



USEFUL LINKS

- Facebook <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/adjusting-your-privacy-settings-on-facebook/>
- Kidline http://www.kidline.org.nz/Home_312.aspx
- Netsafe <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/aboutnetsafe/>
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner <https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/social-media-services-safety-centres>
- Snapchat <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/a/privacy-settings>
- Sticks ‘n Stones <http://www.sticksnstones.co.nz/our-project/>
- Twitter <https://support.twitter.com/articles/20169886>
- What’s Up? <http://www.whatsup.co.nz/>
- Youthline <https://www.youthline.co.nz/contact-us/>



REFERENCES

- Women and Children’s Health Network, 16 October 2017. “Mobile Phones are Great ... Aren’t They?”. Retrieved from: <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=288&id=2701> 15 November 2017.
- Netsafe, 29 October 2017. “Help with Online Harassment, Bullying and Abuse”. Retrieved from: <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/hdc/> 15 November 2017.
- Sticks ‘n Stones, n.d. “Dealing with Bullying”. <http://www.sticksnstones.co.nz/youth/dealing-with-bullying/> 1 November 2017.