

# Social Media-The Power of Words and Cyberbullying



Hello AMS parents and guardians!

Many of our children are now increasingly involved in numerous areas of social media. There are some wonderful and exciting opportunities for our kids with these connections. There are also, some significant and complex challenges—one of the most frightening and destructive is cyberbullying.

Our middle school students are still very young and will continue to need lots of support and guidance around using and navigating social media safely and responsibly. Please learn as much as you can about this topic and discuss your thoughts and expectations repeatedly with your children. [Commonsensemedia.org](http://Commonsensemedia.org) is a fantastic resource for parents and educators for suggestions for healthy, age appropriate guidelines with social media use.

## Social Media-The Power of our Words

**How are written conversations different in social media than in-person conversations?**

- \*No facial expressions
- \*No tone of voice
- \*No idea who else is present and contributing
- \*They last forever, not for a brief moment
- \*They can be shared with anyone, even people you hardly know or have never met
- \*When we are not face-to-face, we do not feel as responsible for a person's feelings

**So-we always have to consider these questions when communicating online:**

- \*Could your message/photo be hurtful to someone? Think about how it will make them feel and if you feel totally comfortable with this.
- \*Did you make sure you really understood someone's message clearly before responding in an angry manner?
- \*How would you feel if your message/photo is shared with people you hardly know?
- \*Do you feel ok if your message/photo is shared and people can see it for months or years?

## Cyberbullying

**How does it feel to be bullied?**

Humiliating, scary, sad, hopeless, angry, helpless....

### **How is cyberbullying different from in person bullying?**

- \*Kids may use more hurtful and extreme language online than offline.
- \*Cyberbullying can happen anytime, whereas regular bullying usually stops when kids go home.
- \*Cyberbullying can be very public. Posts can spread rapidly and to a large, invisible audience.
- \*Cyberbullies sometimes act anonymously, whereas with traditional bullying it is usually clear who the bully is.
- \*In-person bullying can cause physical and emotional harm, whereas cyberbullying causes only emotional harm.
- \*The age and size of a person are often less important with cyberbullying because people are not face-to-face.

### **How should you respond if you feel you are being cyberbullied?**

- \***Don't respond or retaliate**-If you are angry and reply-then you might say mean things. Cyberbullies often just want to get a reaction out of you.
- \***Block the bully**-If you get mean messages online, take the person who sent you the messages off your friend list.
- \***Save and print bullying messages**-If bullying continues, save the messages. These can be important evidence to show your parents, teachers or the police if it doesn't stop.
- \***Talk to a friend**-When someone makes you feel bad, it can help to talk the situation over with a friend.
- \***Tell a trusted adult**-Telling an adult, like a parent, family member, teacher or coach-is tattling—it is standing up for yourself!

### **Helpful Tips for talking to your tween:**

- \*Listen with focus
- \*Ask specific questions
- \*Try not to judge or correct
- \*Repeat what you heard
- \*Acknowledge feelings
- \*Set thoughtful limits and boundaries

Thank you for your care and support!

