



TERM 04 TOPIC

Parents Newsletter

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MOBILE PHONE ETIQUETTE AND HOW TO DEAL WITH UNKIND AND HURTFUL CONTENT

If your child has a mobile phone, texting friends or exchanging online content is part of their lives now. However, this online communication can have a dark side and can become sour, hurtful, rude, mean... even if that wasn't the intention. Therefore, talking to your children about mobile phone and online etiquette is a must.

To start with, discuss with your child some of the following text messaging rules:

1. **Don't text/message in front of others.** "Phubbing" is chatting/texting with another friend while you are spending time with a different friend. Many children do this, but it is rude and can hurt feelings.
2. **Think before you text/message somebody, especially if you fought with them and you feel angry.** Advise your child to calm down first and to try and resolve things face-to-face not via phone or social media.
3. **Think about context.** Text messages and other online content often get misunderstood because there isn't enough context: facial expression is not visible; tone of voice can't be heard... leading to misunderstandings and hurt feelings.
4. **Think what content is appropriate to be shared in this way.** Delivering bad news or having long and complicated conversations via text messages can be a recipe for disaster with plenty of opportunities for misunderstanding.
5. **Take responsibility for the content that you are sharing.** Ask yourself: "Is this kind? Will it hurt or upset anybody? How would I feel if somebody did this to me?" If the answers aren't acceptable, then don't send it.

How to help your child manage unkind content and cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. It can be more difficult to cope with because, unlike bullying offline, it can follow the child wherever they go.

According to NSPCC, cyberbullying includes: sending threatening/abusive messages; creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos; online shaming; excluding someone from online games, chats and activities; encouraging somebody to self-harm; voting for or against someone in abusive online polls; sexting; trolling; setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child; creating fake accounts to embarrass a child; and pressuring a child to send sexual images or engage in sexual conversations.



If your child receives unkind content or if they are subjected to cyberbullying, here are some ways you can help them deal with it:

- **Talk to them:** Try to keep calm and listen without judging. Your child might feel scared and ashamed. They also might worry about what will happen if they tell anyone. You can talk about any experiences you might have had with this to help them feel less alone.
- **Make sure you let your child know it isn't their fault:** appreciate them for being courageous, doing the right thing and talking to you about this. Remind them that they are not alone and that you'll be there to support them.
- **Validate feelings: allow all the feelings to come out.** You can encourage them to talk, write, draw, act out... Make sure they don't feel judged but encouraged.
- **Encourage your child not to respond to unkind content:** process feelings with your child but advise them not to respond to messages they might have received as that is more likely to inflame the situation.
- **Keep talking:** remember to check in with your child regularly. It might be worth setting up some dedicated worry time – just 5-10 minutes where a child can write down (or draw) their worries.
- **Keep records:** if it is possible, screen shoot the inappropriate and unkind content and keep it safe. These screenshots can be used as evidence if needs be.
- **Let them know who to ask for help:** if your child isn't comfortable with talking to you, suggest that they talk with another adult they trust.
- **Focus on building confidence and self-esteem:** cyberbullying can lead your child to experience loss of confidence and low self-esteem. Help them find things that make them feel good. Encourage them to try new things, take on some responsibilities at home with housework and make independent decisions.
- **Talk to your child's school:** let the school know especially if the perpetrators belong to the same school. Schools have policies and procedures in place to deal with this. Just make sure that your child knows your plans and that you do it in a way that they are comfortable with.

Finally, don't stop your child from using the internet or their phone as this might make them feel as if they are being punished and could stop them from telling you what's happening.

