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Cyberbullying: a term that makes parents worry and young people roll their eyes. We've spent much of the last two years looking at the issue but are we any closer to a solution? In this issue of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter, we'll have another look at cyberbullying and the progress being towards eradicating this behaviour.

There are many approaches to dealing with the cyberbullying which are being promoted around the world and here in Australia. Evaluations of these approaches are few and far between but there are some which show some real promise. From our research and experience, we think a great approach to combating cyberbullying is to lay a SNARE: [Social Norms](#), [Avoidance](#), [Resilience](#) and [Education](#).

Social Norms

Social norms theory relates to bridging the gap between actual and perceived norms of peer groups to decrease the occurrence of problem behaviours and has been used to address adolescent health concerns such as substance abuse and underage drinking (Wesley et al, 2011). Recently, this approach has been used to address bullying and holds some promise for cyberbullying as well.

When you think about it, if you were to tell a group of young people and cyberbullying is rife and that "everyone's doing it", you may be unintentionally telling them to join in this behaviour to avoid social isolation. Social norms approaches to cyberbullying would highlight to young people that cyberbullying is not that common (only 7-10% of children, Cross et al, 2009). This could affect cyberbullying in three ways:

- Those who cyberbully with the belief that they are behaving like everyone else would see that they are not engaging in 'normal' behaviour
- Those who would cyberbully because they feel a false majority peer pressure would be less inclined to join in cyberbullying
- Bystanders may have more confidence in speaking out against cyberbullying as they realise they are the majority

Avoidance

A truly preventive solution to cyberbullying is to avoid it

Time2Talk

This section provides some useful conversation starters for talking with young people about their use of technology.

How common do you think cyberbullying is?

Do you think about the possible consequences of what you share online before you post it?

Who are your online contacts?

What would you do if you were being cyberbullied?

Who do you think should be responsible for preventing cyberbullying?

Resilience

Most definitions of cyberbullying refer to a pattern of behaviour or repeated acts of harassment, not one-off incidents. We need to avoid labelling every inappropriate digital communication as cyberbullying and help young people to develop the resilience required to overcome adverse events. These are skills which will serve them for life after school as well, with some research suggesting that 3.5% of the workforce experience workplace bullying in Australia (ACT Government, 2004).

Resilience is the ability to overcome obstacles and continue working positively towards the achievement of life goals. With children, this relates to overcoming challenges in such a way that allows them to continue to develop into healthy and safe individuals.

Cyberbullying is just one of the challenges which young people may face; knowing how to overcome this is an

altogether. Avoiding cyberbullying involves a combination of privacy, relationship and reputation management techniques. Young people need to feel empowered to control the information they share online by understanding privacy policies and settings which can be used to their advantage.

They also need to exercise caution with who they allow to access their personal information, otherwise known as online contacts or friends. This means only accepting friend requests from people they know and trust to have their best interests in mind. This is not always an easy thing for young people to do as they have often been raised to “be friends with everyone” and “play nicely”.

Finally, they need to manage their reputation by thinking before sharing any content online. Once something is shared online, you have little control over who sees it and what they do with it. Content shared recklessly could potentially provide ammunition for cyberbullying.

invaluable tool.

Education

This is, perhaps, the catch-all element to combating cyberbullying. It is a call-to-action for everyone to educate themselves on all forms of bullying, how to prevent them, how to deal with them, and how to avoid contributing to them. It requires parents, children and young people, teachers, government, industry, law enforcement and the community at large to think about their actions and how they affect others.

Cyberbullying wasn't invented by young people; it has developed from broader community behaviours and attitudes. The solution must, therefore, involve the broader community as well.