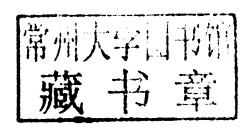


BARBARA C. TROLLEY
CONSTANCE HANEL

CYBER KIDS, CYBER BULLYING, CYBER BALANCE



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CYBER KIDS, CYBER BULLYING, CYBER BALANCE

I sincerely want to thank my husband Ron and my children Ally, Nick, Zack, Hannah, and Sarah, without whose support I could not have completed this book. Their continuous patience, day-to-day assistance, and belief in me have meant the world to me.

Barbara C. Trolley

I would like to dedicate this book to my husband Scott and daughter Madison for their patience, support, and continuous guidance as I spent countless hours at our computer.

Constance Hanel

We would like to dedicate this book to all the children and youth who are technology consumers and their families. Technology is a precious gift to be treasured and respected.

Preface

hen we began our work in the area of cyber bullying approximately five years ago, our major emphasis was on the education of schools and families regarding the nature of what this term entailed. Terms like "cyber bullying" and "blackberries" were known only to an isolated minority. Responders were left somewhat paralyzed as they navigated these uncharted waters, and this behavior seemed prevalent mostly at the middle school to early high school levels. While a lot has changed since the inception of our original work, certain areas of need persist. Positive modifications include an increased understanding of what cyber bullying is, and a better grasp of appropriate school policies and legal responses. Negative changes consist of a broader age net caught in cyber bullying acts, technological advances that have increased cyber bullying, and the diversity of means used to accomplish this type of social cruelty. Areas that seem to have stayed stagnant are the lack of attention on intervention as an adjunct to, or in place of, disciplinary responses, and a focus on education as a proactive, preventative approach to technological misuse.

It would be unheard of to send children off to school for the first time without some type of orientation as to the expectations and guidelines associated with such academic study. Nor would most parents send their children to visit families and friends without some discussion of proper behavior. Can we not demand that similar guiding principles be applied to the preparation of children with regard to their introduction to the cyber world? While it is true that schools now have Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) concerning proper computer usage on school grounds, and that students are required to sign an agreement to properly use technology on school premises, are these steps enough? We would argue the answer is "no." While these doubtless are important first steps, and they are absolutely necessary, in themselves they are not sufficient. Moving beyond the focus of cyber bullying in our first book, Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools: A Resource Guide for Counselors, Educators, and

Parents (booklocker.com, 2006), our intent in this publication is to provide a more comprehensive picture of technology use by children and youth, including an emphasis on education, prevention, and balance.

Throughout this book, you will come across what we refer to as "Cyber Stories." These are actual stories that have been collected over the years of our experience with technology and youth. Some of the Cyber Stories have been collected from our own personal experience with our families and friends, or during presentations; others come from students; and some have been taken directly from the news media. In order to maintain privacy, names have been changed unless the material was directly quoted from the news. These Cyber Stories are designed to create awareness as to the potential side effects of technology, allowing you, the reader, to customize and design how you and your family will maintain cyber balance.

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youth. Lead author of prior books on school counseling and cyber bullying, as well as numerous professional articles in the area of rehabilitation and grief counseling, she is the creator and editor of the *New York State School Counseling Journal*. Dr. Trolley and her co-author of this book have spent the last four years conducting countless workshops and media presentations on cyber bullying at the local, state, and national levels. Before coming to the academic world, she spent almost a decade working as a therapist and administrator, addressing child and family issues, especially around child abuse and grief. Dr. Trolley is the mother of five children, ranging from elementary to college age.



Constance Hanel received her MSED from St. Bonaventure New York and has a BA in industrial organizational psychology. Currently, she is working as a school counselor and skills coach for youth K–12. Her background as a prevention specialist was focused on working with children at risk on alternative skill building. She mentors youth in leadership roles and is the co-creator of Operation Kids—Real Life Learning, a

youth leadership program. As a professional guest speaker on cyber bullying and cyber balance, she has presented workshops for various organizations, educational forums, and parenting groups. Constance has also co-authored two additional books on cyber bullying and cyber balance.

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PART I Cyber Kids

In this first section of the book, we will explore cyber kids and what that term means in today's world of expanding technology. If you are reading this book, chances are you have been touched directly or indirectly by technology in a negative way. Whether you know someone, have read something, or have heard about a tragedy in the media concerning technology, you have or will be personally touched.

The following areas are addressed in this section:

- Overview of technology
- Statistical differences in technology use
- How technology sets the stage for cyber bullying
- · Real life examples

"Welcome to My World"

Technology and Youth

uch like the sensation of the Industrial Revolution, there has been a "revolution" of sorts in the technological world. VHS and tape cassette recorders, as well as analog televisions, are now considered antiquated as new digital advances continue to explode. Ingle (2005) describes our society as being transformed by "cyber-reality," and claims we are approaching a paperless world. Weis (2004) further defines this as "digital or ICT literacy" as "using digital technology, communication tools, and networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to function in a knowledge society" (p. 14).

To understand cyber bullying and what it means to be a cyber kid, it is important to understand how technology has blossomed into our daily lives, infusing its growth at all levels. Technology brings tremendous opportunities and the ability to connect the world in a more intimate way with the capacity to send information on a super highway to all ends of the earth. In 2005, it was estimated that 79 percent of Americans spend time online, averaging 13.3 hours a week (www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Centerfor-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf). In a survey conducted by the National Public Radio (NPR), the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government (National Public Radio & Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000), the "love affair" between Americans and high technology was highlighted. In this study, it was found that almost all Americans under sixty have used a computer and are enthusiastic about technology, and that children were even more enthusiastic and comfortable with computers. One study revealed that Internet use rose

from two million youth in 1995 to seventy-seven million in 2005 (www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i_safety/i_intro.htm).

With this great expansion of our world comes some responsibility and self-reflection to ensure that we, as a community raising children, practice what we preach, as well as teach respect for technology. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we are raising cyber kids who are technologically savvy and keeping in step with technology's rapid expansion. Cyber is defined with words that include computers and information, while cyber space speaks of virtual reality. In this book, we have coined the phrase "cyber kids," and define this group as "youth who take information in and put information out using technology-based communication." Here is the start of our journey to understand how technology sets the stage for cyber bullying, and how cyber balance is the key to protecting our youth and exposing the hidden traps within this technology-based world. To provide some idea of the size of this issue, Netlingo reports that four million youth are posting content to the Web every day, and fifteen million are instant messaging (www.netlingo.com/statistics.cfm).

Next, we would like to explore some of the different forms technology and cyber communication have taken on over the past few years. Many new technological terms have become household words. Therefore, it is important for those of us who have not grown up in this technological era have some sense of their meaning .

Instant messaging. This started out being the latest fastest way for people to communicate using e-mail and chat rooms. People can type in their thoughts, ideas, opinions, or gossip and have it instantly appear on another person's screen. This allows for fast back-and-forth "conversations" to be held over the Internet. The biggest difference between an actual face-to-face conversation and instant messaging is impulsiveness and documentation. This form of communication allows the other parties to record, distribute, and even alter what you have said. Impulsive remarks often occur, as senders may not think before hitting the "send" button. Unlike getting your feelings out by writing a letter and then ripping it up, senders often regret not moderating what they have said via the Internet.

Blogging. A weblog is a Web site that contains dated text entries in reverse chronological order (the most recent first) about a particular topic. Blogs serve many purposes, from online newsletters to personal journals, to "ranting and raving." Written by one person or a group of contributors, entries contain commentary and links to other Web sites, and images and videos as well as a search facility may be included (www.answers.com/topic/blog).

Chat rooms. The term "chat room' is used primarily by mass media to describe any form of synchronous conferencing—occasionally even asynchronous conferencing. The term can thus mean any technology ranging from real-time online chat over instant messaging and online

forums to fully immersive graphical social environments (http://en .wikipedia.org/wiki/Chat_room).

Sexting. Sexting is the act of engaging in sexual activity via cell phone or computer, includes the exchange of nude photographs and videos (http://im.about.com/od/glossary/g/sexting.htm).

Text messaging. Also known as "texting," this is the use of abbreviated terminology while typing messages to another party. Since technological lingo and abbreviations are frequently used, text content may be hidden to those who are less technologically savvy, such as parents. The table below shows a small sample of texting "lingo."

Sample Terminology

Sample Text	Meaning
B4YNKI	Before you know it
[I will] BRB	I will be right back
CYT	See you tomorrow
POS	Parent over shoulder
TDTM	Talk dirty to me
TTFN	Ta ta for now
URYY4M	You are too wise for me
WYCM	Will you call me

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Many Web sites exist that detail this new type of language. For a more comprehensive list of terminology, readers may go to www.netlingo.com.

Twitter. Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users' updates, known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length, which are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have subscribed to them (known as followers). Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow anybody to access them. Users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter Web site, Short Message Service (SMS), or external applications. The service is free to use over the Internet, but using SMS may incur phone service provider fees (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter).

While these forms of communication may seem fast and convenient, they are not without their problems. While many of these challenges are further detailed in Part II, a few examples are offered here to put the readers in touch with the scope of the issues that have arisen. The use of such an abbreviated language chips away at our youth's communication skills creating new areas of concern for our cyber kid generation. How will the quality of our language and ability to use face-to-face communication be compromised as technology and our dependence on it grow? In addition, unlike schoolyard bullies, cyber bullies can remain anonymous and reach an endless number of targets with the click of a button. Old-fashioned "playing doctor" has taken on a serious new meaning, and breakup revenges have a threatening new face in the form of sexting. These images leave lasting footprints that are difficult to erase.

Parents, educators, and the legal system are racing to keep pace with the new challenges of technology, while both our youth and technology itself seem to stay just a few steps ahead. An additional pocket of concern is presented as the legal system works to make existing laws fit these new "crimes."

CYBER STORY

There was a recent story in the media of a young high school girl who began instant messaging a potential "boyfriend" online. The two never actually met in person, but continued to exchange information over the Internet. As the story unfolded in the press, you learned that there never was an actual young man but rather a mother and daughter posing as the potential suitor. The mother and daughter believed that this young girl was spreading information about their son/brother and decided to try to trick her into revealing information to support their claim. Because of the anonymity of the Internet, this young girl receiving the e-mails had no idea she was conversing with the neighbors down the street.

After continued exchanges, the mother and daughter decided it was time to break off the communication. What happened next shocked the community and left a family devastated. Instead of simply breaking the communication off, the two sent final e-mails cyber bullying the young girl with put downs, including comments that she shouldn't be living. Shortly after the last e-mail was received, the young girl successfully committed suicide, believing she had been rejected by her new "boyfriend," and not the neighbors down the street.

The parents of the young girl tried to press charges but, according to the state's attorney general, no law on the books matched the injustice that had occurred and so charges could not be filed. However, the girl's parents continued to pursue legal action at the federal level. The outcome has yet to be determined. Members of the family that was responsible for the cyber bullying reported that it had become impossible to function within the community, which was outraged by their actions.

Source: www.meganmeierfoundation.org/story.