Cyber Violence: Safety Planning

Cyber violence is the use of technologies (computers, cellphones, social networking or other devices) that is used to bully, harass, stalk, threaten or intimidate. Often this behavior is a form of verbal or emotional abuse perpetrated online.

If you or someone you know is being attacked via technology, here are some things you can do to reduce the impact of these attacks:

- ✓ Do not respond to abusive texts, messages, emails, comments, etc.
- ✓ Create a folder in your email account for storing abusive messages. Putting the messages "out of sight" can help reduce anxiety. Do not delete the messages in case you decide to report harassing messages in future.
- ✓ Create a new email account that only your trusted family/friends know about.
- ✓ Use your privacy settings. Find out how to keep your content as private as possible on the sites you use. Check these privacy settings often, because they can change.
- ✓ Protect yourself by keeping your passwords private. Don't share them with anyone.
- ✓ Log out of online accounts when not using them. Saving passwords in form fields within web sites or your web browser, and staying logged on when you walk away from your computer or cellphone can present an opportunity for someone to pretend they're you online.
- ✓ Call customer care for your cellphone service provider and ask about blocking an abusive texter/caller.
- ✓ Do not answer calls from unknown numbers.
- ✓ If you have a voicemail option, do not make a personalized voice recording. Instead, allow the automated message to keep your identity protected.
- ✓ Consider getting a second cellphone and give the number only to close friends and family. Give the number to only one person at a time and keep a careful log of who you've given it to and when. Keep your old cellphone as a source of evidence if you ever choose to report.
- ✓ Disable GPS or location devices on your smart phone. This is usually done in the settings application.
- ✓ When you update your Facebook or Twitter, make sure it stays general. Avoid saying things like: "I'm out at the Tim Hortons on Martin Street having a coffee". Instead, you can write: "Enjoying my cup of coffee".
- ✓ Put some contacts on "limited access" to your Facebook account.

- ✓ Delete your Facebook account: log into your Facebook and search "how to permanently delete your Facebook account" and start a new account that does not identify you.
- ✓ Search your own name in every major search engine frequently, including in an image search. If any personal information or photo comes up that might be used to hurt you, try to have it removed.
- ✓ Report the online bullying to the social media site it happened on, whether that's Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, or any other site. They have policies against abuse, and whoever violates those policies will likely get notified and prevented from using that site.
- ✓ If you have already shared a photo that you would like to have removed, visit **needhelpnow.ca** for practical steps you can take, including how to contact popular websites, to get your picture/video off the Internet.
- ✓ If you know a child (under 18) who has been involved in a self/peer exploitation (sexting) incident that involves things like threats, intimidation, blackmail, etc., you can send in a report to **Cybertip.ca**, Canada's tipline for reporting concerns about child sexual exploitation on the Internet. Information that is reported to Cybertip.ca may be **shared with police and/or child welfare** as set out in the policies at Cybertip.ca.
- ✓ Use other tools for self-expression (a journal, a personal web/page/blog) where you have more control over comments or your privacy.
- ✓ Balance your online life with in-person relationships and activities. Spending time blogging, updating your profile, and e-mailing can take up a lot of time.
- ✓ For those who really don't want to limit their internet use, or want to have a completely open public profile, consider:
  - o Having more than one online profile—whether professional, personal, or for an area of interest, like a hobby or volunteer work
  - o Using different email addresses, screen names, and blogs for each profile
  - o Do not link your real name (or sensitive personal information such as your address, phone numbers, or photos) with other profiles that you create

REMEMBER! Communication should always be respectful -- whether in person, online or by phone. It is never okay for someone to do or say anything that makes you feel bad, lowers your self-esteem or manipulates you. It's important to know and exercise your "digital rights":

> **You have the right to turn off your phone without your partner/friend getting upset or angry**
>
> **You have the right to say no to *sexting*, or sending pictures or information digitally to your partner/friend that you are not comfortable with**
>
> **You have the right to keep your logins and passwords private**
>
> **You have the right to control your own privacy settings**
>
> **You have the right to feel safe and respected in your relationships/friendships, online or off**
>
> *Exercising these rights and feeling safe are important aspects of every healthy relationship.*