

From cyber-bullies, to protecting your digital reputation, online safety is a constant challenge in today's high tech world.

They insult, threaten, swear and gossip online. Cyber-bullies have developed into another threat for young people next to drugs and alcohol. The plethora of 24/7 online chat rooms, IM and social networking sites provides a far reaching platform for cyber-bullies and while it is a digital form of abuse it can result in unwanted physical and mental medical conditions.

Safeguarding our children is paramount and mainly, the internet is a place for positive communication, information, education and entertainment. However, it can also expose children to age-inappropriate content and risky social behaviour and e-Safety should be a topic of discussion for every Australian family with primary and high school aged children. **Gitta Johnston and Eva Fraser, Directors of Minimum Harm School Programs will lead a special community, parent and student Cyber-Sanity information presentation at the German International School Sydney on Tuesday 27 November at 7.30pm.** The interactive discussion will navigate parents through the pros and cons of the internet and help prepare children to be cyber responsible and cyber ready.

Boasting over 20 years experience in youth issues, Gitta and Eva conduct school programs about internet safety, and will bring parents up to speed and possibly one step ahead of their e-savvy children. The duo will arm parents with the latest information, discuss the dangers of the internet including cyber-bullying and review solutions to help parents maintain cyber sanity in the home environment. "The Internet now belongs in our children's lives, but as parents, we have to closely monitor and supervise their usage. I always suggest parents should engage their children in open communication and set rules for internet use, however, never be too strict with punishment over breaking internet usage rules, as children will only become secretive," says Eva.

"Children also need to learn about safe online behaviour and be mindful of what they are commenting on, posting or uploading. They should be aware of the consequences of their own digital footprint and understand that a digital footprint can travel the world over and in some cases can never be deleted. That's why we tell them: always think twice before you post or send a message. Treat others with respect and if you wouldn't make a comment directly to someone in person then don't post it, comment on it or upload it online," comments Gitta Johnston.

The presentation will encourage parents to sit with their children while they are online and become familiar with the sites and games their children are visiting and playing. It is also good online practice for parents to help children sign up to be members of social networking sites and ensure all security settings are activated adequately. Another cyber aware tip for parents is to become Facebook friends with their children, as they can view what is posted on their child's wall first hand. If a topic that is considered out of bounds is posted, parents can immediately address the situation and have an open discussion regarding the issue.

Erhard Seifert, Principal for German International School Sydney is encouraging not only his students and their parents to attend the presentation but also the wider community and explains "As the internet can virtually take children anywhere in the world, there are online risks for children and the school needs to be at the forefront, ensuring we provide students and parents with the tools to tackle internet pitfalls. Cyber-bullying will be a focus topic of the presentation and will offer parents guidelines on safe online practices, prevention of cyber bullying and how to recognise the warning signs if their child is being bullied. We believe the Cyber-Sanity presentation will empower both parents and children, resulting in them making informed decisions while online and becoming cyber responsible".

CYBER-Sanity ~ Cost: \$5 or \$10 per family

Date: Tuesday 27th of November at 7.30 pm

Location: German International School Sydney, 33 Myoora Road, Terrey Hills.

RSVP: www.germanschoolsydney.com, email: culture@germanschoolsydney.com or phone 02 9485 1900

For more information, photos or to arrange an interview with Eva Fraser, Gitta Johnston or Erhard Seifert please contact:

Christine Stani, CMS Publicity on: 02 9644 9988 or 0433 127 245

Be informed, be prepared - the following key statistics are alarming and have been sourced from Australian Kids Helpline – www.kidshelp.com.au

- **7-10% of students aged Year 4 to 9 report being cyber-bullied in Australia.[1]. Other studies recorded the overall incidence of cyber-bullying to be around 20% of young people.[2]**
- **Girls have been found to experience cyberbullying slightly more often than boys[3]**
- [1&3] Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L. & Thomas, L. (2009) Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS). Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.
- [2] As cited in Campbell, M. (2007) Cyber bullying and young people: Treatment principles not simplistic advice. Paper of the week 23rd February 2007. <http://www.scientist-practitioner.com>

Minimum Harm's cyber safety tips for parents:

- Computers should be housed in a common area of the house in full view of entire family.
- Start setting rules as early as possible. For teenagers you can even develop a family contract about online behaviour that both children and parents sign.
- Educate – children need to be aware of online risks and how to prevent them.
- Have an open communication about cyber safety, but also supervise (e.g. check the browser history, be your child's friend on Facebook, install Internet Filter Software)
- Keep iPhones, iPods and iPads out of kids' rooms at night. Cyber-bullying can happen 24/7.

Minimum Harm's cyber safety tips for kids:

- STOP & think before you send a text message or posting a comment online.
- Never meet "online friends" without your parent's permission and without them attending.
- Advise parent, teacher or family member if you find somebody approaching you inappropriately online.
- Always seek permission before tagging a friend online and don't share your password with friends.
- Never reveal personal information like your address, phone, school or age and never post inappropriate pictures.
- Always respect others the same way you would like to be respected.
- Remember that everything that you post on the Internet stays there and leaves a digital footprint. Even if you delete a photo, others might have passed it on. It can have a massive impact in your later life when applying for a job for example.
- Be careful with pop ups, it can be spam or a possible computer virus.
- Always ask permission from parent, teacher or adult before downloading data.

Minimum Harm's tips on how to impede a cyber-bully:

- Share your feelings. Talk to parents, family member, teacher or friend
- Immediately block the person.
- Collect the evidence. Save messages or take a photo of your phone before you delete them.
- Report abuse to the provider or website, report serious threats to the police.
- Ignore the bullying. Don't reply as this fuels them on.

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