

# Tips & Trends

## Girls' Ministries—Staying in Touch

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### Launch Your Counterattack on Cyberbullying

The National Crime Prevention Council's definition of cyber-bullying is "when the Internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person."

If you think your child is immune from such activity, think again! When you look at the stats in the Trends box below, it's clear this is a phenomenon that isn't going away anytime soon. So launching your own counterattack means getting your own education!

My 25-year-old daughter is a high-school English teacher in a fairly reputable school district in Oklahoma. A few weeks ago, she received an inappropriate text message from a number she did not recognize. After investigation (school officials did get involved), the student thought he was texting another girl with whom he had fought. He had purchased the cell phone from a fellow female student over the summer. The young lady sold the phone and left all the old information on the SIM card. She had entered my daughter's number by her last name only which happened to match the first name of the student with whom he had fought. Imagine his embarrassment when the truth came out and he had to tell his parents! (Rule #5 on the "Top Ten Cell Phone Use Tips for Teens" discusses SIM cards; forethought about numbers might have prevented this situation.)

#### Ten Tips for Parents

The Cyberbullying Research Center ([www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)) recommends that parents review the tips listed here to protect their children from being a victim of cyberbully-

ing (Hinduja, S. and Patchin, J. W. "Cyberbullying research."):

1. Establish that rules for interacting with people in real life apply to online and cell phone behavior.
2. Check to see if your school has an Internet Safety Educational program that covers not only online sexual predators, but also internet harassment.
3. Talk with your children about the consequences of misusing technology, including damaging reputation and legal issues.
4. Model appropriate online and wireless behavior—don't text while driving or use inappropriate language in emails.
5. Monitor, monitor, monitor! Know where your child is going online through supervision. Be the POS (parent over shoulder).
6. Use filtering/monitoring software. Remember, nothing is

100% secured but you have to start somewhere.

7. Know the warning signs—both withdrawing and obsessing about internet use should alert you that something abnormal is taking place.
8. Use a contract that spells out what is appropriate use for all technology.
9. Have ongoing conversations with your children so they know they can come to you when they feel uncomfortable with any situation.
10. Teach your children to respect the dignity of others.

To find some great links on this subject and for filtering info, visit [www.nationalcoalition.org/link.asp](http://www.nationalcoalition.org/link.asp).

For downloadable copies of the two lists mentioned here (and others), visit [www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us) (Cyberbullying Research Center).

#### TRENDS

Current statistics about teen online activity are staggering.

- 61% of teens ages 12-17 have access to a laptop or desktop computer.
- 71% of teens have a cell phone.
- 80% of students said they knew of cyberbullying cases.
- 94% admitted cyberbullying had happened to them, but they did not tell an adult.

In September 2006, ABC News reported on a survey prepared by I-Safe.Org. This 2004 survey of 1,500 students who were then between

grades 4-8 reported:

- 42% of kids have been bullied while online. One in four have had it happen more than once.
- 35% of kids have been threatened online. Nearly one in five say it happened more than once.
- 21% have received mean or threatening e-mails, etc.
- 58% admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. It has happened more than once to four out of ten.
- 58% have not told their parents or an adult about something mean or hurtful that happened to them online.