

# Tips for Handling Bullying When We're Always Online

COVID-19 has sparked a big shift that has resulted in many people flocking to online social spaces. While there are many benefits to the internet, there are always risks, with bullying and unkindness chief among them. Being kind to others and ourselves has always been paramount, but it's especially important now.

## 1. Respect others

The same rules apply now as they did before the pandemic—treat others the way you want to be treated.

- Let kindness always be your guide.
- Help kids learn how to pause before replying, sharing, or doing anything hastily. Encourage them to take a breath or walk away from the screen for a while before responding.
- Remind kids that the things we post online are never truly private, even if we use privacy settings. Anyone we're connected to can share the things we do or say online.



## 2. Respect others' rules

Some kids might not be allowed to use certain apps or be permitted to use them at the same times as others.

- Every family has their own rules and values, and kids should not use this against others.
- Encourage empathy. Remind kids to think about how they would feel if the situation were reversed, where they were the one unable to participate in the activity.

## 3. Take action

If someone is being unkind to you or someone you know, you can:

- Agree to disagree. Different opinions are okay. Not everything needs to be an argument.
- Ignore them. Turn your attention to someone or something else.
- Block or mute the person on the app, if this is available.
- Report them. Many apps allow you to report a specific post, person, or group. See the [Cyberbullying Research Center](#) for a comprehensive, up-to-date list of where to report.
- Support others who are being hurt. Say something kind and encourage them to ignore, block, or report.
- Spread kindness. Check-in on others, give a compliment, or tell them you miss them. If we all did this, the internet could be a more positive place.



## 4. Be kind to yourself

Self-care practices include breaking from the glowing screens of devices.

- Encourage kids to unplug for a while.
- Remind kids that their value is not equal to the number of likes, follows, or comments they receive on their own posts.
- Help kids become resilient. It's an important skill that kids can develop so that someone else's unkindness does not have to knock them down. The Cyberbullying Research Center has great advice on how to do this with their [ABC method](#). This is a simple framework to help kids reframe the Adversity (A), their Belief (B) about why it happened, and the Consequence (C) of it. A friend who does not respond to their text may not be mad at them, and they don't need to be sad about it. They could instead consider that their friend is busy and can choose to reach out to them again later.
- Consider [books and movies](#) as another way to help teach empathy and resilience.

## 5. Be prepared

The hope is that a child never has to encounter cyberbullying, but if it does happen, be prepared by asking yourself the following questions:

- What would you do if they were bullied?
- What would you do if they bullied another?

These are not normal times; things have changed forever. However, one thing that hasn't changed is the importance of how we treat others and ourselves, and how we teach kids to act and react in difficult times.

