

Most children will encounter nasty behavior at some point in their digital lives. For some children, this experience may only be a blip that is easily forgotten, while, for others, it can have deep, long-lasting effects. For parents, the key is to stay involved in your child's life - both online and off - so you can step in and offer help if necessary. With guidance from parents and educators, children can learn how to dodge the drama and stand up for others.

Review these six tips to help you prepare your child:

Define your terms.

Make sure children understand what cyberbullying is: repeated and unwanted mean or hurtful words or behaviors that occur online (e.g., texts, social media posts, online chat.).

Check in about online life.

Just like you'd ask your children about their sleep, exercise, and eating, stay on top of their online life. Who are they chatting with? How do people treat each other in the games and on the websites they're using?

Role-play.

If children feel like they might have trouble removing themselves from digital drama, experiment with some different ways they can make a graceful exit. For example, talk through words they can use or discuss ways they can steer conversations in positive directions.

Encourage upstanding behavior.

Let children know that supporting a friend or acquaintance who is being bullied can make a big difference. If they feel safe confronting the bully, they should. If not, a private message to the victim can be enough to help someone through a tough time. Speaking up against hate speech is also important.

Take breaks.

If you notice your child is getting pulled into digital drama, help him or her take a break. It's great if he or she can determine for him or herself when to step back, but he or she might need some help setting limits. Putting devices to bed at a specific time and insisting on breaks for mealtimes and face-to-face connection can help children recharge.

Review worst-case steps.

Walk through, with your child, what to do if your child is being bullied online. First, step away. Ignoring a bully can be very effective. If the bullying continues, take screenshots or print out evidence. Then, block the person. If it gets worse, report the behavior to a trusted adult. Talk about who those people are, and make sure your child has their contact information.

