



# CYBERBULLYING

The dangers of technology, social media, sexting and child pornography



**Be #ScreenSmart**

A guide for parents, teachers and learners by AfriForum's anti-bullying division and Private Prosecutions Unit, Solidarity Helping Hand, SECI (SAPS), the University of Johannesburg and Unisa



## AUTHORS

Part 1: Leandie Bräsler (AfriForum), with help from SECI

Part 2: Adv. Phyllis Vorster (AfriForum's Private Prosecutions Unit)

Part 3: Yolandi Singleton (Ons Sentrum, Solidarity Helping Hand)

Part 4: Prof. Basie von Solms (University of Johannesburg) and Prof. Elmarie Kritzingers (University of South Africa)

#SEXTING

#TECHNOLOGY

#HARASSMENT #APPS

#VERBAL #BULLYING

#PHYSICAL #EMOTIONAL

#CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

#SOCIAL MEDIA

#CYBERBULLYING

# CONTENT

<b>PREFACE</b>	5
<b>PART 1: CYBERBULLYING IN SCHOOLS</b>	6
1.1 DEFINITION OF CYBERBULLYING	6
1.2 WHERE DOES CYBERBULLYING OCCUR?	7
1.3 STATISTICS ON CYBERBULLYING IN SOUTH AFRICA	7
1.4 SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD IS A VICTIM OF CYBERBULLYING	7
1.5 SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD IS A CYBERBULLY	7
1.6 HOW CAN YOU AS A PARENT ACT PROACTIVELY TO TEACH YOUR CHILD CERTAIN SKILLS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING?	8
1.7 CONCERNS THAT ACCOMPANY CYBERBULLYING	8
1.8 DIGITAL AWARENESS FOR PARENTS	9
1.9 SOCIAL MEDIA AND APP USAGE AMONG CHILDREN	9
1.9.1 POPULAR APPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS THAT CHILDREN USE	9
1.10 OTHER IMPORTANT CYBER PHENOMENA THAT PARENTS AND TEACHERS SHOULD BE AWARE OF	17
1.10.1 WHAT IS SEXTING AND WHAT SHOULD PARENTS KNOW?	17
1.10.2 CHILD PORNOGRAPHY	17
1.10.3 ANIME CARTOONS THAT PORTRAY CHILDREN IN A SEXUAL WAY	18
1.11 THE RISKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND APPS	18
1.12 CYBERBULLYING TACTICS	18
1.13 HOW TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING	19
1.13.1 WARNING SIGNS THAT A CHILD IS BEING BULLIED OR IS THE BULLY	19
1.13.2 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN CYBERBULLYING OCCURS?	19
1.13.3 HINTS FOR PARENTS	20
<b>PART 2: WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?</b>	22
2.1 INTRODUCTION	22
2.2 THE RIGHTS OF EDUCATORS	22
2.3 CONDUCT OF LEARNERS	23
2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LAW	23
2.4.1 CYBERCRIMES ACT 19 OF 2020	23
2.4.2 THE FILMS AND PUBLICATIONS ACT 65 OF 1996	24
2.5 RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS	24
<b>PART 3: ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS</b>	25
3.1 SET AN EXAMPLE	25
3.2 COMMUNICATION	25
3.3 TERMS, CONDITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	26
3.4 BEHAVIOUR ON SOCIAL MEDIA	26
3.5 IMPACT OF THE USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY	27
3.6 WHAT TO DO WHEN CHILDREN ENGAGE IN PORNOGRAPHY?	27
3.6.1 PARENTS AND TEACHERS	27
3.7 WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND OUT ABOUT OR COME ACROSS A CHILD WHO WATCHES, IS IN POSSESSION OF, DISSEMINATES OR PRODUCES PORNOGRAPHY?	28
3.7.1 PARENTS	28
3.7.2 TEACHERS/THE SCHOOL SYSTEM	28
3.8 POSSIBLE SIGNS OF EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY	29
<b>PART 4: CYBERSPACE AND CYBERSECURITY</b>	30
4.1 BE AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF CYBERBULLYING!	30
4.2 OUR DIGITAL LIVES – IN CYBERSPACE	30
4.3 FOR LEARNERS	30
4.4 ACTIVITY:	32





## PREFACE

Technology is developing every day. The same is true of children's ability to bully. Bullying, which was once confined to the school grounds or the school bus, has since extended to include bullying through technology and on social media. This is known as cyberbullying. Children's need to communicate with their friends is still the same; however, the ways in which they choose to communicate with one another has changed considerably. From an early age, children are asking for electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets or games. It does not stop there, however, because they also want access to certain social media platforms to play online games or to share personal information. There are many benefits to the internet and social media, but there are also just as many dangers and cons – especially when it comes to our children and their safety.

When online bullying occurs, your child may feel that they are being attacked from all sides. This may have long-term effects in three areas:

- » spiritual (upset; ashamed; afraid; angry; trauma)
- » emotional (ashamed; losing interest in things that you like)
- » physical (tiredness; symptoms like headache and abdominal pain)

The purpose of this guide is to empower parents and teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to curb cyberbullying, as well as to make them more aware of the dangers that technology such as social media and the internet pose to children. The guide comprises four parts that each focuses on a different aspect of cyberbullying:

- » Part 1 offers a broad discussion of cyberbullying, child pornography and sexting. It informs parents and teachers about the dangers of the internet and social media platforms. We also show parents and teachers how to act proactively when they find out that children are subjected to cyberbullying and what to do to prevent cyberbullying in general. This part also contains a table with information on the different smartphone apps that are currently popular among children, as well as how these work and what dangers they pose to children. We encourage parents to familiarise themselves thoroughly with these apps in order to protect their children. We also explain which apps parents can download to be able to protect their children as far as possible against cyberbullying, child pornography and sexting.
- » Part 2 explains the legal aspects of cyberbullying to parents and teachers. We focus especially on two laws, namely the Cyber Crime Act 19 of 2020 and the Films and Publications Act 65 of 1996. It is important for parents and teachers to familiarise themselves with these acts in our bid to put a stop to cyberbullying and any form of sexting and child pornography.
- » Part 3 of the guide teaches parents and teachers to handle situations in which a child is confronted with the negative aspects of social media, namely cyberbullies, child pornography and sexting. We provide parents and teachers with advice on what to do when it seems that children are confronted with or are still involved in these internet evils.
- » Part 4 covers cyber space and cyber security. This part is specifically aimed at learners and focuses on the digital footprint, cyber risks and threats, and online privacy. It also includes an activity that learners can complete.

Visit [www.teenboelie.co.za](http://www.teenboelie.co.za) for more information about AfriForum's anti-bullying campaign.

### Leandie Bräsler

Manager for Youth Leadership – AfriForum  
[leandie.brasler@afriforum.co.za](mailto:leandie.brasler@afriforum.co.za)



# PART 1: CYBERBULLYING IN SCHOOLS

By Leandie Bräsler

Bullying is harmful or aggressive behaviour that occurs incessantly and continuously, and that is specifically aimed at a learner who has less authority and self-confidence than the attacker (or bully). Olweus identifies three characteristics of bullying:<sup>1</sup>

- » aggressive actions that aim to hurt other children
- » a repetition of this behaviour over a period
- » an imbalance in power that leaves victims helpless and not being able to defend themselves effectively against the aggressive behaviour.

Bullying can take on many forms:

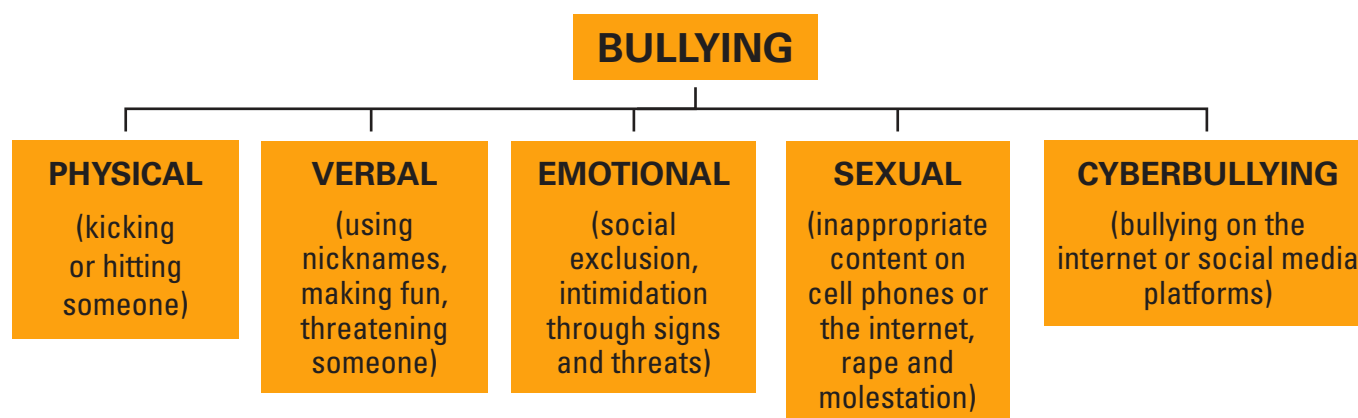


Figure 1: Forms of bullying

## 1.1 DEFINITION OF CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying can be seen as the deliberate and aggressive behaviour of an individual or a group, by making use of electronic devices as communication media. This type of behaviour also occurs incessantly and continuously and is focused on victims with less authority or who cannot easily defend themselves.<sup>2</sup> Cyberbullying is bullying that occur on digital devices such as computers, tablets and cell phones through text messages, SMSs and apps, or online via online games or social media platforms where other people can see this content, participate in the discussions or share it with others.<sup>3</sup>

When *cyberbullying* as overarching term is considered, all the other forms of bullying mentioned above can also fall under cyberbullying:

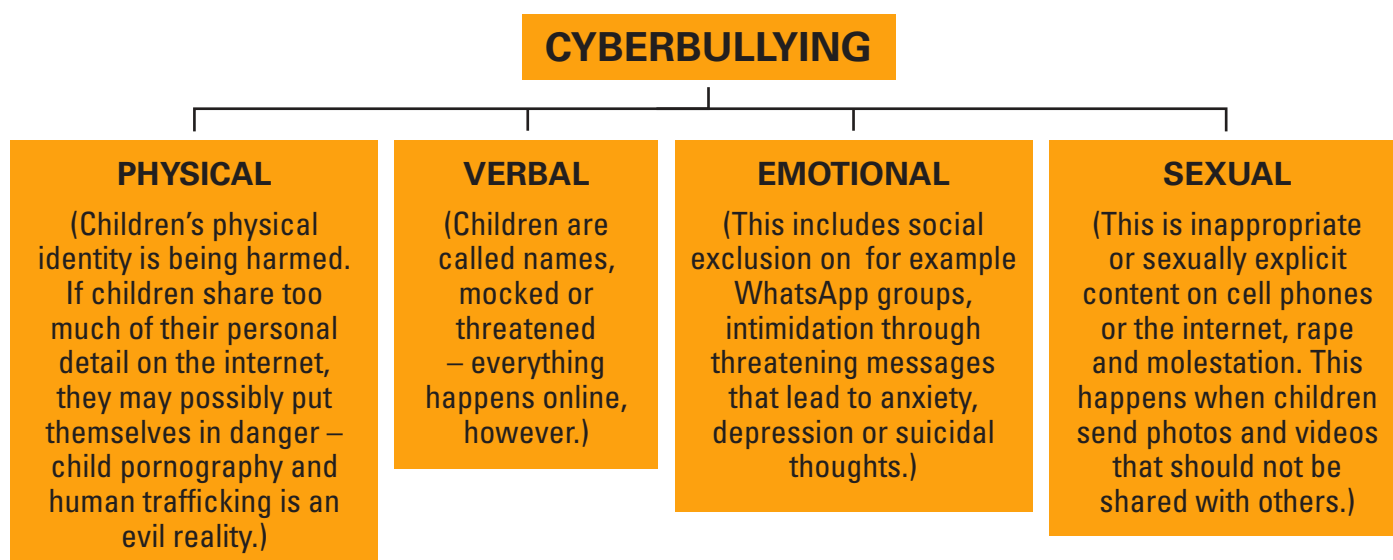


Figure 2: The different forms of cyberbullying

<sup>1</sup> Olweus, D.A. 2010. Bullying in schools: fact and intervention. In *Kriminalistik* 64(6), pp. 1–29. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228654357\\_Bullying\\_in\\_schools\\_facts\\_and\\_intervention](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228654357_Bullying_in_schools_facts_and_intervention). Accessed on 4 May 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Menesini, E. & Nocentini, A. 2009. Cyberbullying: Definition and measurement: Some critical considerations. In *Journal of Psychology* 217(4), pp. 230–232. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238307912\\_Cyberbullying\\_Definition\\_and\\_Measurement\\_Some\\_Critical\\_Considerations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238307912_Cyberbullying_Definition_and_Measurement_Some_Critical_Considerations). Accessed on 26 April 2023.

<sup>3</sup> StopBullying.gov. 2023. *How to prevent cyberbullying: A guide for parents, caregivers, and youth*. Available at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Cyberbullying%20Guide%20Final%20508.pdf>. Accessed on 28 March 2023.

## 1.2 WHERE DOES CYBERBULLYING OCCUR?

Cyberbullying is different from traditional forms of bullying in that it does not only happen on the school playground or the school bus,<sup>4</sup> but also a variety of places in the cyber space, of which the most common places are:<sup>5</sup>

- » online platforms, message boards or chat rooms (like WhatsApp groups)
- » text messages and messages on apps that are used on cell phones or tablets
- » online games and communities
- » social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat
- » emails
- » direct messages, instant messages and online chat rooms on the internet

## 1.3 STATISTICS ON CYBERBULLYING IN SOUTH AFRICA

- » Worldwide, South Africa is ranked fourth highest in terms of cyberbullying.<sup>6</sup>
- » According to a 2018 study by the marketing group Ipsos, more than half (54%) of South African parents know that their child or children in their community are victims of cyberbullying.<sup>7</sup> This is only statistics of parents who know – it can be much higher, since parents do not necessarily know that their child is a victim of bullying.
- » This means that children no longer leave the bully at the school when they go home. These days, the bully goes home with them in the form of a cell phone, computer or online games. Bullying is constant and incessant.

## 1.4 SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD IS A VICTIM OF CYBERBULLYING

- » You witness changes in their behaviour. Children who were more socially interactive in the past are now more depressed or anxious, and they avoid social events with family and friends.
- » They start hiding their cell phone or change the passwords of their social media accounts so that parents no longer have access to these.
- » Their marks drop and academically they do not perform as before.
- » They look anxious or scared when they receive messages.
- » They start avoiding any form of social interaction.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.5 SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD IS A CYBERBULLY<sup>9</sup>

- » Children act secretive.
- » They have more than one email or social media platform account.
- » They complain about recent victims of cyberbullying.
- » They fight with friends.
- » They yield to group pressure and become part of the cyberbullying circle.
- » They behave aggressively when you question them about the use of social media and cyberbullying.
- » In general, they behave more aggressively.

<sup>4</sup> End Cyberbullying Organisation. 2022. *Where does cyberbullying commonly occur?* Available at <https://endcyberbullying.org/where-does-cyberbullying-commonly-occur/>. Accessed on 24 March 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Crocker, L.J. 2018. *Where does cyberbullying happen?* Available at <https://learnsafe.com/where-does-cyberbullying-happen/>. Accessed on 27 March 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Foxcroft, M. 2020. *Wingu Academy: The devastating effects of cyberbullying in South Africa*. Available at <https://wingu-academy.com/the-devastating-effects-of-cyberbullying-in-south-africa/>. Accessed on 25 March 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Ipsos. 2018. *Global views on cyberbullying*. Available at <https://www.ipsos.com/en/global-views-cyberbullying>. Accessed on 28 February 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Reach Out. 2023. *Cyberbullying and teenagers*. Available at <https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issues/cyberbullying-and-teenagers>. Accessed on 5 April 2023.

<sup>9</sup> The Cybersmile Foundation. 2022. *Is my child a cyberbully?* Available at <https://www.cybersmile.org/advice-help/category/is-my-child-a-cyberbully>. Accessed on 24 March 2023.

## 1.6 HOW CAN YOU AS A PARENT ACT PROACTIVELY TO TEACH YOUR CHILD CERTAIN SKILLS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING?

- » **Motivate openness and honesty.** Encourage your child to talk to you or a teacher if they are scared so that they can get help and perspective on the other person's behaviour, which will help curb bullying. Children can easily feel emotionally trapped, and it is therefore necessary for them to speak to an adult whom they trust.
- » **Develop social and emotional skills.** When these types of skills are acquired and developed, children can cope better with bullying. It is important to teach children to be empathetic, because, according to Carolyn Zahn-Waxler, a research scientist in psychology and psychiatry from the University of Wisconsin, empathy is a skill that can be acquired and developed – even from a very early age. It promotes emotional welfare and helps children to solve problems, manage conflict and promote relationships. Download our anti-bullying guide (only available in Afrikaans) at <https://afriforum.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Teenboeliegids.pdf> to learn about activities that will help your child to acquire empathy.
- » **Distance yourself from the bullying event.** Empower your child by giving them firm but friendly phrases to use when they are being bullied. They can also use humour to defuse a tense situation. It will also boost their self-confidence. Another option is to simply ignore the bully. They can use plain language, for example by saying to the bully: "Enough now! Please stop it!" Remember to tell them to maintain eye contact and act with self-confidence. If possible, they can walk away from the situation and ignore the bully to prevent a fight.
- » **Know where to go to.** Help children to identify a specific place or person to go to when they feel scared, for example the school office, a teacher or the school's counsellor or psychologist.<sup>10</sup> It should be an adult whom they can trust. Your child should know it is important to tell someone about it, because it means that they are standing up for themselves.
- » **Block the bully.** Teach your children to block the bully when they receive nasty messages.
- » **Do not react.** When children are angry or hurt by bullying messages, it is easy to react in the moment and say or do something that they may later come to regret. Cyberbullies want to provoke reaction, so do not show them that their plans have worked.
- » **Keep the proof.** When the harassment continues, your child can take screenshots of the messages and store or print it. It is important to keep record of the proof when the bullying continues.<sup>11</sup>

More information is discussed comprehensively in part 3 of this guide.

## 1.7 CONCERNS THAT ACCOMPANY CYBERBULLYING

By making use of digital platforms or social media, your photos, content, comments and postings can be seen by friends and contacts, but also by strangers. A type of permanent public record of a person's behaviour, activities and opinions – also called a digital footprint – is created through the type of content that the person shares online, whether it is personal information or nasty, negative information that may hurt another person. This digital footprint becomes the lens through which someone views you or your child as a person – it becomes your or your child's online reputation. We will expand in part 4 of the guide on what a digital footprint is. As soon as something is online, it means that anyone can see it, whether it is their school, future employer, university and college, or clubs – anyone who goes to the trouble of searching for this information; now, as well as in the future. Cyberbullying can harm the online reputation of anyone who is involved. This means that not only the victim suffers from the bullying, but also the bully and anyone else who participates. Certain concerns include the following:

- » **It is permanent.** Most information that is shared online or electronically is open to the public and permanent if the information is not reported or removed. Where in the past children could leave their bullies at school, these bullies now follow them to their homes, because it happens online and this information is available everywhere. A negative online reputation can not only have an impact on the bully as well as the victims during future applications at university or for employment, but also on other parts of their lives.
- » **It is incessant.** It is very difficult for a child to experience a sense of relief when they are subjected to cyberbullying, because digital devices and the internet make it possible to communicate continuously and incessantly. Access is 24/7.
- » **It is difficult to observe.** Compared with ordinary bullying, it is much more difficult to observe cyberbullying, precisely because parents and teachers cannot necessarily see or hear when cyberbullying happens. Many children also do not necessarily tell their parents or teachers that they are being cyberbullied, because they might feel embarrassed or ashamed. They might also feel that a parent or teacher's involvement can exacerbate the situation. However, if you find out that your child is a target, it is serious enough to get involved.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore important for parents and teachers to familiarise themselves with the latest technology and apps that children use. We will discuss the most popular apps in section 1.9.1.

<sup>10</sup> Alive to Thrive. 2022. *Bullying and cyberbullying: Be proactive*. Available at <https://learn.alivetothrive.com/lesson/bullying-be-proactive/#footnote-1>. Accessed on 17 June 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Child Mind Institute. 2022. *How to help kids deal with cyberbullying: Empowering them with information and strategies to protect themselves*. Available at <https://childmind.org/article/help-kids-deal-cyberbullying/>. Accessed on 11 April 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Child Mind Institute. 2022. *How to help kids deal with cyberbullying: Empowering them with information and strategies to protect themselves*. Available at <https://childmind.org/article/help-kids-deal-cyberbullying/>. Accessed on 22 March 2023.



## 1.8 DIGITAL AWARENESS FOR PARENTS

The digital world is constantly changing and developing, and it abounds with new devices, apps and social media platforms. Children and teenagers are also the first to try out or use these new apps. There are negative consequences when these apps are not used correctly, however, because although the internet offers many benefits, it also has a negative side. Hate messages, negative content and cyberbullying can happen online and can be bad for children – this includes the bullies as well as their victims! There are also some legal aspects that apply, which we will touch on in part 2. Such behaviour can influence their online reputation and may later have more negative consequences, for example failed university or employment applications.

Although parents sometimes feel that they should wrap their children in cotton wool to protect them, it is actually impossible to monitor all your child's activities. There are indeed a few things that parents can do to protect their children against harmful digital behaviour and cyberbullying:

- » Review or (re)activate your child's location on their phone as well as the privacy settings. As a parent, you should have access to your child's phone or computer, because it is your responsibility to protect them against digital predators and cyberbullies.
- » Keep abreast of the latest social media platforms, apps and digital chatting terminology that children use.
- » Lay down rules to ensure the correct and appropriate online behaviour and the correct use of apps and content.
- » If you are worried that your child is subjected to cyberbullying or is bullying other children online, you must monitor their social media accounts, internet history and apps. Even if you are not too concerned, it is still essential that you monitor these platforms to prevent your child being targeted by cyber predators.
- » Follow or be friends with your child on their social media profiles, or have another trustworthy adult check in on their accounts.
- » Make sure that you know your child's log-in details (sign-in name and password) for their email and social media accounts. You must be able to access these any time during the day to see what they are up to. Remember: It is your right as parent, and it is their privilege to use the internet.

## 1.9 SOCIAL MEDIA AND APP USAGE AMONG CHILDREN


Social media platforms and apps have many benefits for children, such as being able to talk to their friends, share their feelings and express their creativity. Although it is good to know that the internet and social media platforms may make a positive contribution to children's lives, parents should be aware of the possible dangers that this may pose to children – cyberbullying can happen very easily. There are many different platforms and apps available that children may use for free to meet other people and post or share information anonymously.

Parents are sometimes unaware of the apps and social media platforms that children are using regularly, or of the risks that these apps and platforms pose. Cyberbullying can be concealed in many ways on these online platforms and apps, for example through online calls, videos and chat messages that disappear or simply do not appear on the cell phone, tablet, computer or online text message logs.

### 1.9.1 POPULAR APPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS THAT CHILDREN USE



We summarise in table 1 below the latest and most popular social media platforms and apps that children use, as well as the dangers that these may pose.

Table 1: The latest social media platforms and apps that are popular among children

App	What does it entail?	Dangers that it may pose
	Instagram is a network where users can post photos and videos to build networks, as well as via other social networks like Facebook (Meta Business Suite – a one-stop app where you can simultaneously manage all your activities on Facebook and Instagram).	There are various possible dangers to children, e.g., cyberbullying, catfishing, stalking, body image issues and low self-esteem. Children must set their profiles to private so that strangers are unable to see their postings. Sensitive information that are unsuitable for children should be blocked and undesirable interactions with other users be limited. <sup>13</sup> Facebook's own internal research shows that Instagram may have a negative impact on children's psychological health, for example an increase in anxiety, a negative impact on their self-esteem, and depression. <sup>14</sup>



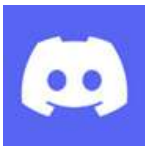
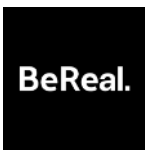

<sup>13</sup> Siddiqui, M. 2023. *Is Instagram safe for kids? What parents need to know*. Available at <https://vpnoverview.com/internet-safety/kids-online/is-instagram-safe-for-kids/>. Accessed on 22 March 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Qustodio. 2022. *Is BeReal safe for kids? App safety guide for parents*. Available at <https://www.qustodio.com/en/blog/is-bereal-safe-for-kids/>. Accessed on 22 March 2023.

<p>WhatsApp</p> 	<p>This is an app where private messages can be sent, including text messages, photos, videos, locations and contact details.</p>	<p>WhatsApp has an age restriction of 16 years. It is therefore important that parents know what happens on children's WhatsApp accounts. Anyone who has your child's number and also uses WhatsApp has access to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» your child's status;</li> <li>» the "Last seen" option, which shows when last your child was on WhatsApp;</li> <li>» the "Online" option, which shows when your child was last online or is currently using the app; and</li> <li>» the "Read receipt" function, which allows users to see whether messages have been sent, received or read.</li> </ul> <p>Use the privacy settings on the app to control who sees this information about your children. WhatsApp also allows for certain privacy functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» End-to-end encryptions: This means that only people who are part of the chat can read or listen to these messages. The privacy of these messages is better, although it also means that the message cannot be monitored for illegal activities.</li> <li>» Disappearing messages: This optional function lets messages disappear after 24 hours, seven days or 90 days, depending on the setting. Messages can still be stored or forwarded before they disappear. You can also take screen shots before they disappear.</li> <li>» View once: With this option, all photos and videos disappear after it has been opened. Such photos and videos cannot be stored, forwarded or shared. You can still see when it was opened (if your "Read receipt" setting is activated). The photo or video will expire after 14 days if it is left unopened.</li> <li>» Live location: You can share your current location with others with this function. You can stop at any time to share your location, but your last updated location will still be visible to the recipients.<sup>15</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Chatroulette</p>  <p>Chatroulette</p>	<p>There are more than 20 different Chatroulette chat websites that allow users to connect immediately via a video or webcam. These apps link users immediately and randomly.</p>	<p>Web rooms have an inherent danger: You can meet anyone anywhere in the world and chat to them or encounter any type of information through these live broadcasts. These include any inappropriate adult content of a sexual nature or pornography. Children are not emotionally ready to see this type of information. Children can also give lots of personal information via this app to predators, e.g., the school uniforms that they wear or the background on the camera. This information makes it easy for people to abduct children.<sup>16</sup></p>

<sup>15</sup> NSPCC. 2023. *Is WhatsApp safe for my child?* Available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-01-12-is-whatsapp-safe-for-my-child/>. Accessed on 11 April 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Internet Safety Statistics. 2022. *Chatroulette: Dangers parents need to be aware of.* Available at <https://www.internetsafetystatistics.com/chatroulette-dangers-parents-need-to-be-aware-of/>. Accessed on 20 April 2023.

<p>TikTok</p> 	<p>This app allows users to make their own videos in which they chat, dance, sing or lip sync.</p>	<p>TikTok is not considered a safe app for children and should not be used without parental supervision. According to the app conditions, users must be 13 years or older to use the app. TikTok has many risks for your child, e.g., contacting strangers, sharing personal information or partaking in dangerous challenges that may harm children physically and emotionally.<sup>17</sup></p>
<p>Facebook and Facebook Live</p> 	<p>These are some of the most useful social media platforms that are accessible on most devices.</p>	<p>Although children no longer really use Facebook, it still poses certain dangers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» identity theft</li> <li>» cyber hackers</li> <li>» personal information that can be obtained and shared, e.g., in which school the child is.</li> </ul> <p>Children have been exposed to suicide and sexual assaults during live videos, which resulted in trauma.</p>
<p>Discord</p> 	<p>This is an internet protocol that allows users to send private messages via videos to other users, or to start or participate in chat room discussions that are either private or open to the public. The app is especially popular among gamers, who chat with one another while playing games on X-Box, their computers or PlayStation.</p>	<p>Anyone older than 13 years may use Discord. The risk is that children may chat to someone who does not have their best interests at heart and who wants to hurt them. Children can be bullied or abused. Users on Discord can pretend to be someone else.<sup>18</sup></p>
<p>BeReal</p> 	<p>This is a social media app that requires users to post unedited photos of themselves at least once a day. Compared to other apps like TikTok, Instagram or Snapchat, BeReal sounds more refreshed, because it encourages people to enjoy real life without any form of pretence. Users are also not interested in getting thousands of followers or becoming influencers with brands.</p>	<p>Users must be 13 years or older to use the app. When making a public posting on the app, anyone can see who they are, where they are and what they like. When your child takes and posts daily photos, it is easy for predators in the cyber world to compile an accurate profile of your child, e.g., their routine or behaviour.<sup>19</sup></p>
<p>Calculator%</p> 	<p>This is a vault or secret app that appears harmless, but the app can hide your child's photos, videos, other apps, documents and internet history. The app requires a password for access. It also has a secret camera that uses the device's camera to take photos or videos and storing these in the secret gallery.</p>	<p>There are many risks associated with this app:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <b>Cyberbullying.</b> When children have a secret app on their phone that hides information, parents will not know if their child is a victim of cyberbullying. Parents will also not know if their child is bullying other children.</li> <li>» <b>What happens online is permanent.</b> Few children grasp the fact that their online actions can have a long-term or even permanent influence on their lives. Negative content, photos that cause harm and personal information can be found online long after it was published. It is then visible to predators or future employers.<sup>20</sup></li> <li>» <b>Online predators.</b> People who are online are not always who they say they are. It is very easy for catfishes to groom children sexually by using an online persona.</li> </ul>






<sup>17</sup> Bhargavi, P. 2023. *Is TikTok safe for kids? What parents need to know.* Available at [https://www.momjunction.com/articles/tik-tok-for-kids-safety-risks-right-age\\_00785215/#:~:text=TikTok%20is%20not%20considered%20safe,challenges%2C%20and%20sharing%20personal%20data](https://www.momjunction.com/articles/tik-tok-for-kids-safety-risks-right-age_00785215/#:~:text=TikTok%20is%20not%20considered%20safe,challenges%2C%20and%20sharing%20personal%20data). Accessed on 27 March 2023.

<sup>18</sup> NCPCC. 2023. *Should I let my child use Discord?* Available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/should-i-let-my-child-use-discord/>. Accessed on 8 April 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Qustodio. 2022. *Is BeReal safe for kids? App safety guide for parents.* Available at <https://www.qustodio.com/en/blog/is-bereal-safe-for-kids/>. Accessed on 11 April 2023.

<sup>20</sup> He's-extraordinary. 2022. *Online safety: make sure this calculator isn't on your child's device.* Available at <https://hes-extraordinary.com/online-safety-secret-calculator-vault>. Accessed on 10 March 2023.



<p>Omegle</p> 	<p>This is an app that links users to strangers in an anonymous, one-on-one chat room.</p>	<p>Omegle is unsafe for teenagers and children. Children talk virtually to strangers. Online predators frequent this app and can convince children to chat further on other platforms like WhatsApp or Instagram. Omegle can expose children to inappropriate behaviour, such as flashing (which is against the law) or even suicide attempts, which can traumatise them. It is important to block this app on your child's phone, because it poses endless dangers to children.<sup>21</sup></p>
<p>Snapchat</p>  <p><b>Snapchat</b></p>	<p>Snapchat is a photo messaging app that allows users to share photos and short videos that are meant to be deleted soon after it was made or sent.</p>	<p>This app is suited to children 16 years and older. Children should realise, however, that the information that they store or share with others will never disappear. It is important to have this discussion with your child. Children also need a person's approval before they can share that person's picture. If you ever see that your child is anxious when they use this app, it is time to intervene because your child is possibly confronted with cyberbullying or inappropriate content. It is also easy to add friends on Snapchat. Children may have many "friends", but they do not really know these "friends". Snapchat may collect information from children, e.g., their behaviour inside and outside the app. Snapchat also interacts with third parties with whom they may share children's information.<sup>22</sup></p>
<p>SnapMaps</p> 	<p>SnapMaps uses a device such as a cell phone's GPS to show users on a virtual map that is visible to other SnapMaps users.</p>	<p>SnapMaps only shares children's location with their friends. This location is updated whenever the child opens the app.<sup>23</sup></p>
<p>Tumblr</p> 	<p>This is a social network to post short blogs and media.</p>	<p>It is unsafe for children to use Tumblr because it can expose them to cyberbullying and adult content.<sup>24</sup></p>
<p>Twitch</p> 	<p>Twitch is a platform that allows live streaming for children who play games or to chat with one another.</p>	<p>Users must be 13 years or older to use this app. It is calculated that about 500 000 predators are online every day.<sup>25</sup> These predators manipulate and groom children to do certain things, like dancing, showing their bodies to these predators or to partake in explicit actions. Some predators even pay children a small fee to get them to do things that they do not necessarily want to do.<sup>26</sup></p>

<sup>21</sup> Cruz, B. & Turner, G. 2023. *What is Omegle? What parents need to know*. Available at <https://www.security.org/digital-safety/is-omegle-safe/#:~:text=No%2C%20Omegle%20isn't%20safe,and%20many%20others%20like%20it>. Accessed on 10 March 2023.







<sup>22</sup> Common Sense Media. 2023. *Parents' ultimate guide to Snapchat*. Available at <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/parents-ultimate-guide-to-snapchat#%20Snapchat%20safe%20for%20tweens%20and%20teens?>. Accessed on 9 March 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Screentime. 2022. *SnapMaps: The Good, The Bad and How Snapchat Parental Controls Work*. Available at <https://screentimelabs.com/blog/snapmap-parental-controls/>. Accessed on 10 March 2023.

<sup>24</sup> AirDroid. 2022. *What is Tumblr? What parents should be aware of*. Available at [tumblr/#:~:text=However%2C%20Tumblr%20is%20unsafe%20for,this%20article%20has%20been%20helpful](https://tumblr/#:~:text=However%2C%20Tumblr%20is%20unsafe%20for,this%20article%20has%20been%20helpful). Accessed on 9 March 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Child Crime Prevention & Safety Center. 2022. *Children and grooming / Online predators*. Available at <https://childsafety.losangelescriminallawyer.pro/children-and-grooming-online-predators.html#:~:text=There%20are%20an%20estimated%20500%2C000,ages%20of%2012%20and%2015>. Accessed on 3 May 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Howard, T. 2022. *What parents need to know about Twitch*. Available at <https://www.parents.com/news/what-parents-need-to-know-about-twitch/>. Accessed on 26 March 2023.

<p>Twitter</p> 	<p>Twitter is a micro blog app where users can read, send or reply to tweets, or send short messages to one another.</p>	<p>Any stranger can follow children on Twitter. Make sure that your child's Twitter profile is set to private. Cyberbullying can happen when your child reposts someone else's post. This may cause your child's profile to be seen by many people from all over the world – and the comments are not always pleasant. It is important to protect your child against this by acting proactively. Also make sure that your child's location is removed so that strangers cannot locate them. Direct messages (DMs) are also possible, and strangers may message your child directly. Make sure that your child's profile is set up in such a way that strangers cannot contact them.<sup>27</sup></p>
<p>Whisper</p> 	<p>This social media platform is anonymous and allows users to post and share photos and videos.</p>	<p>Because the app is anonymous, it is the perfect playground for predators. Children use the app for example to express their explicit sexual thoughts and emotional distress. This information is enough for sex predators to identify and manipulate vulnerable children. Predators can then send messages to children to obtain more information, which makes it even more dangerous for your child.<sup>28</sup></p>
<p>WeChat</p> 	<p>WeChat is an app that allows users to chat to friends and to look up people locally as well as worldwide to chat to them.</p>	<p>WeChat allows children to chat to strangers who are in their vicinity. When your child posts to the Moments function, anyone in the vicinity can see the posting. If the privacy settings are deactivated, any person in the world has access to your child's videos, photos and contacts.<sup>29</sup></p>
<p>Amino</p> 	<p>This is an app that allows users to form online communities, chat and create groups that share the same interests.</p>	<p>Your child can find inappropriate content on this app, e.g., sexually explicit messages that are not meant for their eyes. It is important to set boundaries because you are helping to form your child's identity.<sup>30</sup></p>
<p>Askfm</p> 	<p>It is a social network app that allows users to ask other people questions, which happens anonymously.</p>	<p>Askfm is harmful to children because anyone can ask them any question. Although this app does allow users to block other users, it may sometimes be too late because your child could already have been asked questions of a sexual nature, or they could have been bullied. Askfm has no control mechanisms for parents.<sup>31</sup></p>
<p>Facebook Messenger Kids</p> 	<p>This is a message platform and app for children.</p>	<p>This app was designed for children between 6 and twelve years old. It is indeed safer than other apps as it has better security functions. Parents also have complete control over the app and can protect their children, although no app is ever safe from online predators.<sup>32</sup></p>

<sup>27</sup> Bark, 2020. *Is Twitter safe for kids? 6 things parents need to know*. Available at <https://www.bark.us/blog/twitter-monitoring-7-things-parents-need-to-know/>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, T. 2022. *Parents tips: Is Whisper safe for kids to use?* Available at <https://famisafer.wondershare.com/app-review/is-whisper-safe-to-use.html>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Smart Social. 2018. *WeChat App: What parents need to know*. Available at <https://smartsocial.com/post/wechat-app>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Protect Young Eyes. 2020. *Amino*. Available at <https://protectyouneyes.com/apps/amino-parental-controls/>. Accessed on 11 April 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Evolve Treatment Centers. 2023. *Should I be concerned? My teen is on Askfm*. Available at <https://evolvvetreatment.com/blog/teens-askfm/#:~:text=Ways%20to%20Stay%20Safe%20on%20ASKfm&text=Your%20child%20is%20also%20the,anyone%20can%20report%20inappropriate%20content>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Evans, M. 2018. *Safety first! The pros and cons of Facebook Messenger Kids*. Available at <https://www.defendyoungminds.com/post/pros-cons-facebook-messenger-kids>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

Houseparty 	Houseparty is a social network and group video app on which users can chat by way of other social media networks like Facebook.	Because this app is in real time and immediate, it can pose certain risks to children because they can see inappropriate content. Chats are neither monitored, nor moderated, and there is nothing to prevent users from engaging in bullying, graphic content or offensive language. Therefore, there is a risk that your child can stumble upon sexual violence or abuse, can be bullied or can see upsetting content. Some children may even use this app to share inappropriate content or to engage in sexting. It is also possible for other adults (including predators) to try and chat to your child. There is nothing to prevent users from sending private videos or text messages, or from taking screen grabs. <sup>33</sup>
Kik 	Kik is a message app that allows users of all ages to contact other users anonymously.	This app allows users to talk to strangers. Online predators are looking to lure children into traps and often request sexually explicit material. As soon as messages, photos or videos are deleted, these items cannot be recovered. This makes it difficult to monitor children's activities on their phones or to report and prosecute online predators. Children may also be exposed to sexual and other content that are unfit for children. Sexual grooming happens when children are sexually stimulated so that they take sexually explicit photos and videos of themselves. 57% of Kik users are between 13 and 24 years old, while their parents probably do not even know that the app exists. There is no privacy policy available on the app to protect your child. <sup>34</sup>
Reddit 	Reddit is a website that evaluates websites and discussion points, and stores social news.	It is important to grasp the dangers that Reddit poses to children, because it is an app that was specifically developed for adults. Risks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» bullying</li> <li>» sexual, adult, inappropriate or violent content</li> <li>» online predators</li> <li>» dangerous online challenges</li> <li>» inaccurate information<sup>35</sup></li> </ul>
Roblox 	Roblox is an online gaming platform with free multi-player games that were designed by users. Roblox allows users to chat to each other and to join groups.	This app poses four core risks to children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» cyberbullying</li> <li>» to be contacted by unknown adults with bad intentions</li> <li>» overspending in the Roblox catalogue</li> <li>» exposure to adult content that is inappropriate or sexual in nature<sup>36</sup></li> </ul>





<sup>33</sup> WebWatcher. 2020. *What parents should know about the Houseparty app*. Available at <https://www.webwatcher.com/what-parents-should-know-about-the-house-party-app/>. Accessed on 11 April 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Bhattacharya, A. 2022. *Kik parental control: Hidden dangers that parents often ignore*. Available at <https://famisafe.wondershare.com/tips/kik-parental-control-and-hidden-dangers.html>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Troutner, A. 2022. *Is Reddit safe? Tips for parents to keep teens safer online*. Available at <https://vpnoverview.com/internet-safety/kids-online/is-reddit-safe/#:~:text=Inappropriate%20content,-Young%20and%20vulnerable&text=Most%20teens%20are%20not%20prepared,keep%20out%20all%20such%20posts>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Family Zone. 2023. *Roblox: What parents need to know about this popular gaming platform*. Available at <https://www.familyzone.com/anz/families/blog/roblox-parents-review>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.




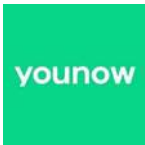


<p>Sarahah</p> 	<p>This is an anonymous message app.</p>	<p>This app is graded for children of 17 years and older, although most users are between 12 and 17 years old. Anyone can send messages to these children, including strangers, and these messages can be completely inappropriate. This is why your child's profile should be set to private. Your child can also be groomed by another anonymous person (e.g., an adult) by sending illegal content.<sup>37</sup></p>
<p>Telegram</p> 	<p>Telegram is an app that allows users to send messages, photos, videos and documents, and to make calls and delete text messages by way of a timer.</p>	<p>Your child can be exposed to strangers as well as inappropriate information such as pornography, violent posts or upsetting posts that are unfit for children. Anyone can add your child to any group if the privacy settings are inactive. Everyone in the group can then see your child's profile picture, while they can also receive private messages from anyone in the group. The app uses the user's cell phone number, and anyone can therefore see this number in the user's profile. It is therefore important to activate the privacy settings.<sup>38</sup></p>
<p>YouTube</p> 	<p>This is the well-known platform where users can publish or share videos.</p>	<p>YouTube has lots of inappropriate content. There is much to learn on YouTube and the variety of information is without end. These include educational videos, for example on how to bake a cake or make jewellery. Although such content is harmless, there is also content that is unfit for children. However, you can approve the content that your child may watch. In 2018 YouTube introduced a trustworthy channel where you can select and approve videos that are fit for your child. Unfortunately, YouTube can hamper the preschool child's development. According to Dr Brandon Smith, an assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins Medical Centre in Baltimore, excessive exposure to low-quality content can contribute to poorer language development in children. Low-quality videos include content that shows children playing with toys or opening presents, which perpetuates the "I want it" culture.<sup>39</sup></p>
<p>Line</p> 	<p>This is a message app that allows users to leave voice notes, make free calls and send messages. Users can delete messages by making use of a timer.</p>	<p>Line poses the following risks to your children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» cyberbullying, where children spread gossip and belittle or threaten one another</li> <li>» exposure to adult or sexual content that is unfit for children</li> </ul> <p>Social media can hurt a child's self-esteem, and the same can be said for the Line app. Children try to imitate the lifestyles of social media influencers but cannot necessarily keep up with this type of lifestyle. They also do not get that many followers or likes, which causes them to have low self-esteem.<sup>40</sup></p>

<sup>37</sup> KeepnTrack. 2020. *Sarahah: Dangerous to students?* Available at <https://www.keepntrack.com/sarahah-dangerous-to-students/>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Safes. 2022. *Is Telegram safe for kids?* Available at <https://www.safes.so/blogs/is-telegram-safe-for-kids/>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Fabiam-Weber, N. 2022. *9 red flags of YouTube for kids and tips for safer viewing.* Available at <https://www.care.com/c/how-youtube-affects-kids/>. Accessed on 11 April 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Jones, T. 2022. *Line app review for parents: meet dangerous people.* Available at <https://famisafe.wondershare.com/app-review/line-chat-app-review.html>. Accessed on 13 April 2023.

<p>LiveMe</p> 	<p>It is an app to broadcast live videos and to watch other users' videos.</p>	<p>This app poses many dangers to children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» adult, sexual and inappropriate content</li> <li>» spending money on virtual gifts</li> <li>» encouragement to chase after popularity and fame</li> <li>» cyberbullying</li> <li>» chats with strangers and videos that are being broadcast live<sup>41</sup></li> </ul>
<p>YouNow</p> 	<p>This is an app that allows teenagers to broadcast themselves via live video. They can watch videos, react to live videos and chat to others.</p>	<p>There are many risks that this app poses to children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» There is a possibility of bullying, as the videos are broadcast live.</li> <li>» Children may stumble upon sensitive, sexually explicit or inappropriate material, because the videos are broadcast live. Parents should be aware of the unpredictable nature of live videos because it makes it difficult to monitor.</li> <li>» Children are sometimes prone to giving out their personal information to other users, e.g., their name, surname, contact number or location.</li> <li>» Some children do not realise how much information even a short video can divulge of themselves. This includes details of the background or even school uniforms, which makes it easy for other users to identify their school.<sup>42</sup></li> </ul>
<p>YUBO (previously YELLOW)</p> 	<p>Yubo is an app that is also referred to as "the Tinder for teenagers". Users swipe left or right to either reject or accept other user profiles.</p>	<p>There are some dangers that parents must be aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Children can be contacted by strangers. Some adults pretend to be children.</li> <li>» There is a risk of cyberbullying, hate speech and exploitation when videos are broadcast live.</li> <li>» Children may stumble upon inappropriate content that is not meant for their eyes.</li> <li>» Yubo can steal children's time because they cannot yet manage their own time. When children spend too much time on social media, it can distract their attention and disrupt their sleeping patterns.</li> <li>» Children can be exposed to cyberbullying or a form of peer pressure that may further lead to emotional wellbeing issues.</li> <li>» As with many other social media apps, Yubo can be addictive, because children are scared that they may be missing out. Without social media, children feel cut off from the rest of the world.<sup>43</sup></li> </ul>
<p>OnlyFans</p> 	<p>This app is definitely not meant for children younger than 18 years (also according to the app's policy), even though children do use it. People buy access to content (i.e., photos, videos and live broadcasts) through monthly membership fees. Content is created mostly by models, fitness models, public figures and YouTubers in a bid to make money. It is also popular among adult content creators.</p>	<p>What makes this app so dangerous is that it not only exposes children to pornography, but it also allows children to take photos and make videos that they can themselves sell on this platform. It is concerning and also illegal, as it amounts to child pornography. Children should under no circumstances have this app on their phones.<sup>44</sup></p>

<sup>41</sup> National Online Safety. 2022. *Live.Me: A parent's guide*. Available at <https://www.churchlanepriamary.org.uk/media/e%20safety%20poster/Liveme-Parent-Guide.pdf>. Accessed on 14 April 2023.

<sup>42</sup> WebWise.ie. 2023. *Explained: What is YouNow?* Available at <https://www.webwise.ie/parents/explained-younow/>. Accessed on 13 April 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Mobicip. 2022. *Everything parents need to know about Yubo*. Available at <https://www.mobicip.com/blog/everything-parents-need-know-about-yubo-tinder-teens-app>. Accessed on 12 April 2023.

<sup>44</sup> InternetMatters.org. 2022. *What is OnlyFans? What parents need to know*. Available at <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-onlyfans-what-parents-need-to-know/>. Accessed on 17 April 2023.

## 1.10 OTHER IMPORTANT CYBER PHENOMENA THAT PARENTS AND TEACHERS SHOULD BE AWARE OF

Apart from cyberbullying there are also other cyber phenomena that parents and teachers should take note of because it can land their children in tremendous trouble as it is illegal. These phenomena include sexting, child pornography and anime cartoons that portray children in any sexual manner.

### 1.10.1 WHAT IS SEXTING AND WHAT SHOULD PARENTS KNOW?

Sexting is when children send or receive sexually explicit messages, photos or videos by way of cell phones, computers or any other digital device. It is a common phenomenon among children: Some studies show that 60% of teenagers participate in sexting,<sup>45</sup> although some teenagers believe that up to 90% of their friends participate in sexting.<sup>46</sup> These figures point to the fact that sexting is perceived by teenagers as normal behaviour and that it promotes or increases sexual behaviour among teenagers.

The dangers that sexting pose to children is the fact that a digital file is created; they leave a digital footprint, in other words. When digital media is created and shared (this includes photos, messages and videos) children no longer have control over the content and how it is disseminated. Another concern about sexting is the concept of true identity. Technology allows users to hide their true identity; this includes their age, gender and true intentions or meaning. This may cause a child to unknowingly talk to an adult or another child in the school, whose intentions are not necessarily pure.<sup>47</sup>

Sexting that includes children is illegal and may be detrimental to children on a psychological level, which includes sex addiction and psychological health problems. Sexting can also have certain legal implications because children do not realise that sharing these types of messages, photos and videos are tantamount to child pornography. Children can also be victims of bullying and feel compelled to send sexual photos, videos and messages, which can also have a negative impact on their relationship with their friends.<sup>48</sup>

### 1.10.2 CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Child pornography is clearly defined in section 1 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007:

"[C]hild pornography means any image, however created, or any description or presentation of a person, real or simulated, who is, or who is depicted or described or presented as being, under the age of 18 years, of an explicit or sexual nature, whether such image or description or presentation is intended to stimulate erotic or aesthetic feelings or not, including any such image or description of such person –

- a. engaged in an act that constitutes a sexual offence;
- b. engaged in an act of sexual penetration;
- c. engaged in an act of sexual violation;
- d. engaged in an act of self-masturbation;
- e. displaying the genital organs of such person in a state of arousal or stimulation;
- f. unduly displaying the genital organs or anus of such person;
- g. displaying any form of stimulation of a sexual nature of such person's breasts;
- h. engaged in sexually suggestive or lewd acts;
- i. engaged in or as the subject of sadistic or masochistic acts of a sexual nature;
- j. engaged in any conduct or activity characteristically associated with sexual intercourse;
- k. showing or describing such person –
  - i. participating in, or assisting or facilitating another person to participate in; or
  - ii. being in the presence of another person who commits or in any other manner being involved in, any act contemplated in paragraphs (a) to (j); or
- l. showing or describing the body, or parts of the body, of such person in a manner or in circumstances which, within the context, violate or offend the sexual integrity or dignity of that person or any category of persons under 18 or is capable of being used for the purposes of violating or offending the sexual integrity or dignity of that person, any person or group or categories of persons [.]

<sup>45</sup> Miller, A.I. 2018. Jamaica Observer. Worrying trends and hopeful signs. Available at <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/worrying-trends-and-hopeful-signs/>. Accessed on 5 April 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Schleifer, J.J. 2021. What is sexting and is it common among teens? Available at <https://www.lifespan.org/lifespan-living/what-sexting-and-it-common-among-teens>. Accessed on 5 April 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Schleifer, J.J. 2021. *Lifespan: Delivering life with care. What is sexting and is it common among teens?* Available at <https://www.lifespan.org/lifespan-living/what-sexting-and-it-common-among-teens>. Accessed on 4 April 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Canopy. 2023. *Sexting: The impacts and consequences on young people*. Available at <https://canopy.us/2023/03/07/sexting-the-impacts-consequences-on-young-people/>. Accessed on 3 April 2023



### 1.10.3 ANIME CARTOONS THAT PORTRAY CHILDREN IN A SEXUAL WAY

Anime cartoons that portray children in any sexual or explicit way (i.e., child pornography) are illegal!

#### What may teachers do?

If a teacher suspects or notices inappropriate content such as pornography, child pornography or sexting on a child's phone, the teacher may confiscate the child's phone. Remember to set the child's phone to flight mode, put it inside an envelope and write the child's full name and cell phone password on the outside of the envelope. Phone the SAPS and hand it to them so that they can investigate the matter further.

## 1.11 THE RISKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND APPS

Although social media has many benefits for us, it is important to consider the risks that it may pose to your child:

- » Content can hurt someone or be harmful and wrong.
- » Social media platforms and apps that include users of all ages allow adults to communicate with your child.
- » Social media platforms and apps can allow all types of content to be posted and shared.
- » Apps that allow for videos to be broadcast live can be used to expose your child to violence, harmful behaviour, bullying and even suicide attempts.
- » Telephone calls made via apps that allow telephone calls may not show up in a cell phone's call logs, which means that you may not necessarily know with whom your child is talking.
- » The screening of harmful content on websites may differ. This means that there could possibly be inappropriate content on certain websites without you actually looking for it. These include things that your child may see unexpectedly and that is not meant for their eyes.
- » Social media platforms and apps can be used to share adult and harmful content.
- » There are social media platforms and apps that have no moderator for messages, groups and forums, which means that all types of information (also those unfit for children) can be shared (without being monitored).
- » Apps use different privacy settings, which means that you can choose who can see your profile and has access to your postings. Many users do not know how to use these privacy settings effectively. It is important that you familiarise yourself with the different apps and the different privacy settings so that you can protect your child.
- » Some apps that show your location can be used to obtain personal information such as your location, where you live and how old you are. This can be very dangerous, because human trafficking can also occur in this way.

It is important that you are familiar with the latest technology, social media platforms and apps that children are using. If you familiarise yourself with the most important security measures and important information about online games, apps and platforms that your child wants to use or is already using, you can make an informed decision about when and how your child may use these.

## 1.12 CYBERBULLYING TACTICS

It is important to understand how children become cyberbullying victims and how they are bullied. This will help to identify it easier and to act immediately. Cyberbullying tactics that occur frequently include:

- » threatening to hurt someone or commit suicide
- » pretending to be someone else online with the aim of tempting someone or posting personal or false information about someone
- » creating a nasty and mean website about someone
- » commenting and disseminating gossip that hurts or humiliates someone
- » posting photos or videos that hurt or humiliate someone
- » posting nasty or hateful comments, names or content about someone's personal characteristics, race or religion
- » using a form of online harassment – also called “doxing” (an abbreviation of the word “document”) – to threaten, take revenge on or violate someone's privacy by sharing personal information (cell phone numbers, addresses, credit card information, personal information and links to their social media profiles) with the public

Cyberbullying can happen in many different ways. Together with all the factors that pose a risk to children, cyberbullying can also lead to suicide-related problems. Cyberbullying is also ongoing, which increases the probability of depression and anxiety in children. Children are not emotionally ready for what happens to them if they are subjected to bullying. Some forms of

cyberbullying are also forms of harassment, which then leads to criminal behaviour. By intervening correctly, the problem can be solved positively and harmful and negative outcomes can be prevented. When cyberbullying is not curbed, it can harm children's psychological wellness in the long term. Bullying can have a negative impact on everyone who is involved, bully and victim alike. These are a few examples of different cyberbullying tactics:<sup>49</sup>

- » false accusations and lies
- » false profiles and identities (also called a "sockpuppet")
- » bullying because the person is seen as "different"
- » "doxing" during online games
- » sharing nude photos and child pornography
- » bullying because children can be dared economically
- » encouraging children to hurt themselves or to commit suicide
- » bullying due to jealousy

## 1.13 HOW TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

Children can be part of cyberbullying in many ways. They can be the victim, the witness to the bullying or the bully. Adults, like teachers and parents, are not always up to date with all the apps and social media platforms that children use. The more digital platforms children use, the more opportunities there are to be exposed to cyberbullying.

### 1.13.1 WARNING SIGNS THAT A CHILD IS BEING BULLIED OR IS THE BULLY

Warning signs that point to cyberbullying on a child's cell phone or any other digital device include:

- » emotional reaction to what happens on the digital device, including laughing, being upset or rage
- » closing or creating new social media profiles
- » isolating from friends, other people and social activities
- » depression
- » a noticeable increase or decrease in the use of cell phones, social media or text messages
- » avoiding discussions about what they are doing on their phones, or hiding the screens or cell phones when other people are in the vicinity
- » avoiding social interactions with others, which they once enjoyed

### 1.13.2 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN CYBERBULLYING OCCURS?

If you or your child's teachers notice any signs that your child is involved in cyberbullying, you must take steps to investigate your child's digital behaviour. Cyberbullying is but one form of bullying and adults should follow the same approach to curb cyberbullying: Support the child who is being bullied. Address the bullies and show them that cyberbullying will not be taken lightly; it is a serious matter. When you suspect that your child is involved in cyberbullying, you can take the following steps:

- » **Take notice:** Observe and take note when there is a change in your child's behaviour or mood. Try to find out what the possible reasons could be and whether this change occurs when they are on their computers or cell phones.
- » **Talk:** Ask your child questions so that you can find out what is happening, how the cyberbullying started and who are involved.
- » **Document and keep record:** Keep record of how, where and when the bullying happens. Where possible, you can take screen grabs of harmful posts and keep these as proof. The most laws and policies take into consideration that bullying is ongoing – to keep record of it will help you to document everything.
- » **Report:** Most schools and social media platforms have clear policies and reporting processes that are or must be in place. Schools must have codes of conduct and bullying policies that must be read and understood by parents, learners and teachers in a bid to curb bullying. It is very important to adhere to these codes of conduct – if not, disciplinary action must be taken.
- » **Support:** Trustworthy adults, friends and mentors can sometimes intervene publicly to influence the situation in a positive way. Public intervention may mean that positive comments are made about the person who is being bullied to steer the discussion in a positive direction. It is also important to reach out to the victim as well as the bully to air your concerns. If possible, it is important to determine whether the involved parties need professional help from counsellors or psychologists.

<sup>49</sup> StopBullying.gov. 2021. *How to prevent cyberbullying: A guide for parents, caregivers, and youth*. Available at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Cyberbullying%20Guide%20Final%20508.pdf>. Accessed on 22 March 2023.





### 1.13.3 HINTS FOR PARENTS

It is important for parents to talk to their children about appropriate digital behaviour and content. Parents are there to build trust through open and honest discussions. They must work on the communication and trust relationships between them and their children, as their children will feel comfortable about mentioning unpleasant events to them. These discussions create the opportunity to discuss the expectations and values of your family's digital behaviour, which includes the sharing of certain content and the types of apps that are allowed.



Make sure that you talk regularly to your child about the cyberworld, as this will allow you to identify any possible risks. This means that you can check their cell phones, computers and any other digital devices at any time during the day. If your child uses passwords, you must know what these passwords are – it is your duty to protect your children, because they are still minors. Carefully explain the reasoning behind your actions to your child: You look after their welfare and it encourages an open, honest relationship. It is important to listen to their concerns and that you express your perspective. The idea behind an open and honest relationship with your child is for them to speak to you when they feel scared or uncertain about something, rather than to go looking for advice from other children in the school who may help them to jump out of the frying-pan into the fire.

***Remember: It is a child's privilege to have a cell phone – not a right!***

Download the following apps to help monitor you child's cell phone to keep them safe:

App	Function
 Google Family Link	Google's Family Link will help you to keep abreast of your child's online life while making use of Android or ChromeOS apps.
 The best all-in-one app control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Keep your child safe online; ensure that your child's digital activities are balanced and risk free.</li><li>» Supervise as you wish. You can filter websites, set time limits, block apps, get reports and much more.</li><li>» Build positive digital habits and help your child to build a healthy relationship with technology.<sup>50</sup></li></ul>
 The best app to filter websites with	This app filters out inappropriate and dangerous apps to keep your children safe. Visit <a href="https://www.dnsfilter.com/features/dns-filtering">https://www.dnsfilter.com/features/dns-filtering</a> for more information.
 The best app to manage website access	Visit <a href="https://arcai.com/">https://arcai.com/</a> for more information.

<sup>50</sup> Qustodio. 2023. *Qustodio: the all-in-one parental control and digital wellbeing solution*. Available at [https://www.qustodio.com/en/?source=aw&utm\\_source=awin&utm\\_medium=1039603&utm\\_campaign=Online+World+Media&utm\\_term=Contextual+Targeting&awc=7874\\_1681992655\\_c7cd180825dd06e19c91dc04123842ec&utm\\_content=text](https://www.qustodio.com/en/?source=aw&utm_source=awin&utm_medium=1039603&utm_campaign=Online+World+Media&utm_term=Contextual+Targeting&awc=7874_1681992655_c7cd180825dd06e19c91dc04123842ec&utm_content=text). Accessed on 17 April 2023.

<p>ReThink</p>  <p>A good anti-bullying app</p>	<p>Visit ReThink's website at <a href="https://www.rethinkwords.com/">https://www.rethinkwords.com/</a> for more information.</p>
<p>FamilyTime</p>  <p>This app can also be used by schools.</p>	<p>You can monitor and control your child's cell phone activities like internet usage, location, blocked apps, phone usage patterns and much more. Visit <a href="https://familytime.io/">https://familytime.io/</a> for more information.</p>





## PART 2: WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

by Advocate Phyllis Vorster

*“Flirting, boasting, gossiping, teasing, hanging out, confessing: all that classic teen stuff has always happened ... It’s just that it used to happen behind the bike sheds, or via tightly folded notes pressed urgently into sweating hands in the corridor between lessons. Social networking sites and mobile phones have simply facilitated the whole business, a gazillion times over.”*  
– John Henley in *The Guardian*

I am not a pedagogue or a psychologist, but as a prosecutor I always keep the following words by Andrew Levkoff in mind: “... not once have I ever seen a coin, whether grimy copper or bright gold, that had but one side.”

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

My daughter is once again hiding in her bedroom behind a closed door. She never manages to attend hockey practice anymore. Her cell phone is switched off. I do not know what is going on; she is weepy and does not want to talk about it. The teacher ascribes the cause of the change in her personality to her home circumstances, while the parents in turn blame the teacher – because nobody really knows what is causing all of this.

Many parents can identify with such scenarios, and we keep looking at anything but the trauma that can be caused by cyberbullying – the invisible and ever-present “enemy”.

In addition, there is the concern that the criminal justice system is failing women and children.

Experience has shown that the President, the Minister of Justice, the SAPD, the National Prosecuting Authority as well as the courts only pay lip service to their commitment to prioritise gender-based violence and sexual offences against minors or to deal with these matters in a way they deserve.

Educators are confronted on a daily basis with a variety of diverse occurrences which necessitate the application of the law in schools. Cyberbullying is by far the most prevalent of these and probably the most difficult one to deal with. We have developed efficient strategies against bullying, but these cyberbullies are invisible. As with any form of misconduct, this kind of bullying is addressed by taking disciplinary steps against the offender. It is common practice to focus on sanctions as a deterrent, but I am of the opinion that the predictability of the legal outcome is the only true deterrent and preventative measure that can have an efficient and lasting impact on misconduct.

These occurrences require disciplinary action, and the only efficient way to react to these matters is to ensure that the law is steadfast and predictable. If the legal outcome is predictable, it will serve as a sufficient deterrent. If a crime is committed, it will be prosecuted, and the guilty party will be apprehended and punished. The behaviour will stop since there are predictable consequences. This will also prevent false accusations, and the principle of deterrence will be enforced on prospective offenders, because a predictable sanction has a deterrent effect.

### 2.2 THE RIGHTS OF EDUCATORS

The tendency to elevate children’s rights to being more important than educators’ rights is worrying. Sensation seeking and media manipulation undermine the important role played by educators in the lives of learners – a role they should indeed play. It is fair to say that education is the profession that underlies all other professions.

The school principal and the school management (including the governing body) are responsible for creating an environment in which efficient education can take place. They are responsible for the wellbeing of the teacher corps. To be a teacher means to have a profession, a vocation – it is not just a phase in the life of an educator. Learners eventually leave the school environment, but teachers remain at the school for years to come. The community also has a duty of responsibility towards their educators.

Of course, it is a generally accepted fact that learners have rights, but we should not forget that educators have rights, too. The impact teachers have on their learners can never be overestimated. The discipline, commitment and sacrifices exhibited by teachers are difficult to describe but play a fundamental role in the development of children. This specific aspect has grown in importance over time, although modern perception might be that it is of lesser importance.

I am not asserting that learners’ rights do not matter, but rather that there should be a balance between the rights of learners and that of educators. We do not want to educate our learners with the thought that “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (George Orwell).

**According to current legislation, educators have among others the following rights:**

- » the **Constitution**
  - the right to equality (article 9)
  - the right to human dignity (article 10)
  - the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion (article 15)
  - the right to freedom of association (article 18)
  - the right to fair labour practices (article 23)
  - the right to just administrative action (article 33)
- » the **Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998**, which deals with the rendering of services and the conduct of educators at the workplace
- » the **Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995**, which grants educators the right to strike
- » the **South African Schools Act 84 of 1996**, which deals with the functioning of public schools, the introduction of safety measures, and how the conduct of learners must be directed in agreement with the code of conduct and disciplinary code
- » the **Criminal Procedures Act 51 of 1977**, which allows for the right to silence and the right to legal representation

## 2.3 CONDUCT OF LEARNERS

Unsolicited and unfair conduct by learners (sometimes even constituting punishable acts) can cause irreparable damage to educators in their personal as well as professional lives. Inadequate support and ignorance about their rights can even lead to the destruction of their careers.

I will briefly discuss the following here:

- » false accusations by learners against educators
- » fear or ignorance about one's rights as an educator
- » the abuse and dangers of social media

A school's code of conduct is of extreme importance. The code of conduct should be published, and parents and learners should take note of its content. The code of conduct must be signed by learners as well as their parents, in order for them to accept liability for any form of misconduct and the possible consequences thereof.

In terms of article 7 of the Children's Act 75 of 2008, children younger than 12 years of age are not criminally liable. Criminal capacity in children aged between 12 and 14 must be proven. Children older than 14 years are regarded as having criminal capacity. Although children under the age of 14 are not criminally liable, there is no prohibition against instituting disciplinary steps against them.

The consistent application of the disciplinary code and code of conduct, which should lead to the same results every time, is extremely important. The governing body and the principal must unflinchingly strive towards the same objective, and the principal must be able to rely on the support of the governing body. Every disciplinary hearing should be fair and any serious offences must be dealt with in terms of article 9 of the South African Schools Act.

## 2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LAW

It is very important for parents and children alike to take note of the real terms and stipulations set out in the legislation dealing with cybercrime. The aim of the legislation is to declare the sending or publishing of harmful electronic content in the form of messages or pictures to be a crime, and the punishments as set out in these laws indicate the seriousness of these kinds of offences. Two statutes deal with social media, namely the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 as well as the Films and Publications Act 65 of 1996.

### 2.4.1 CYBERCRIMES ACT 19 OF 2020

The definitions as set out in this Act explain the following concepts:

- » "Public" in terms of any text messages means the sending of messages or pictures to a designated receiver, as well as storing electronic communication in a place where it can be downloaded or copied.
- » A "group of persons" refers to characteristics which allow a person to be identified as an individual or as a member of a group. These characteristics are not limited in terms of, for example, race, gender, pregnancy state, marital state, ethnic or social origin, sexual preference, age, handicap, religion or language.
- » A "related person" refers to any member of the family or household, or to someone in a close relationship with another person.
- » "Intimate picture/image" refers to the depiction of a person who is naked, or depicting such a person's genitals, anal area or breasts where there had been a reasonable expectation of privacy during the making of the image/picture, in a way which affects the dignity of said person, or for sexual exploitation.
- » Finally, the concept of "violence" refers to physically harming another person.

In cases where a person, through the medium of electronic communication, incites someone or threatens to cause damage to property or to use violence against another person or group of persons, such a person is guilty of an offence. The same applies to cases where a person publicly sends or publishes text messages or intimate images with the aim of identifying the person in such communications – regardless of whether the person's face is depicted in the image or not.

## 2.4.2 THE FILMS AND PUBLICATIONS ACT 65 OF 1996

Under this Act no person is allowed to show a private photo or video of a sexual nature without permission if the intention is to cause harm or damage – even when the person concerned has given permission for the taking of said photo or video. The circulation of images where nakedness is shown, e.g., images of genitals or the anal area, is an offence, and children as well as adults can be charged, even if the image concerned is a depiction of the person circulating the image. If the person in the image is unidentifiable, the proposed fine can be as high as R150 000 or a prison sentence of two years; if the person is identifiable, this is increased to a fine of R300 000 or a prison sentence of four years.

## 2.5 RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Educators seem to be defenceless against false accusations by children. For this reason, it is important to empower them by drawing their attention to the following resources that they can use to protect themselves.

- » Educators should be aware of the fact that they are entitled to record any discussion or conversation in which they participate personally. You do not need permission from anyone, and the recording is not illegal.
- » Closed-circuit video cameras protect the learner as well as the educator. Although the installation of such systems is rather expensive, it could prevent injustice or resolve such matters in future.
- » The slogan of the Liverpool soccer team should always be kept in mind: "Never walk alone." Always ensure that a witness is present in cases where the potential exists for a contentious discussion or occurrence.

### **Aristoteles said the following in this regard:**

For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice. For unrighteousness is most pernicious when possessed of weapons, and man is born possessing weapons for the use of wisdom and virtue, which it is possible to employ entirely for the opposite ends. Hence when devoid of virtue man is the most unholy and savage of animals, and the worst in regard to sexual indulgence and gluttony. Justice on the other hand is an element of the state; for judicial procedure, which means the decision of what is just, is the regulation of the political partnership.



## PART 3: ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

by Yolandi Singleton

### 3.1 SET AN EXAMPLE

Our lives have changed in such a way that you can conduct almost any official or administrative matters on a cell phone. You can order food, make payments online, play online games, find information, communicate with others, manage a business and use many other applications. The consequence of this is that children learn first-hand from the adults in their life how dependent one can become on this gadget and that a lot of time is continuously allowed for its use. It is important to strive for a balance in cell phone use to not create the impression with children that its use can replace personal social interaction.

### 3.2 COMMUNICATION

- » ***A stable relationship between parent and child as well as mutual trust is a prerequisite for discussions on social media and other contentious matters.***

Your child will just not listen to you or another adult when a close relationship is lacking between you. Take note of the fact that children will pay far more attention to what you are saying within a stable relationship. For this reason, you as a parent should invest in your relationship with your child by spending quality time with them. When a close connection is lacking, your child will perceive any discussion with you on a serious topic as a sermon.

- » ***Put yourself in the living environment of your child***

Children are growing up with social media and their curiosity is stimulated by things shown on any kind of screen, since this provides for children's need for social interaction. The problem is of course that not everything that is shown on screens will contribute to the development of someone's social skills or emotional intelligence. However, you should have an understanding of the fact that in spite of this, children do get satisfaction from what they see on screens since this releases dopamine in their bodies. Dopamine is a chemical substance that is released in the brain when a person experiences pleasure. When a child watches something on a screen, their brain releases dopamine, and they experience excitement when the notification sound of a cell phone can be heard. There are children, and even some adults, who believe that they can sustain close friendships by just communicating via a cell phone. However, one should remember that the possibility for misunderstanding is far greater when the one person cannot see the other person's nonverbal behaviour.

- » ***Engage in a discussion, not a scolding session***

When, as a parent, you are of the opinion that your child spends too much time on a cell phone or other digital device, you should avoid the temptation to scold or manipulate them regarding this behaviour. For example, do not say that you are lonely because your child is on their cell phone all the time. In order to prevent excessive screen time, there first has to be a conversation before you make a cell phone available to your child. Sit down together and talk calmly, explaining that your comments and contributions are well intended and are not aimed at stealing your child's enjoyment. Speak about the necessity to maintain a balance in one's life.

- » ***Do not use strong facial expressions or a forceful tone of voice***

As soon as you intend to engage in any serious discussion, it has a greater chance of success when you show an open and accessible face and calm tone of voice. This opens the door for your child to ask further questions and engage with you. When you appear or sound cross and tense, your child will not have the confidence to ask difficult questions. In other words, do not look utterly surprised, shocked or judgemental, since this may indicate to your child that you are not able to engage in difficult conversations. For that reason, they may rather choose to talk to their friends.

- » ***Emphasise the positive as well as the negative aspects***

Children should be informed of the advantages as well as the disadvantages of using any digital devices. For instance, you could tell them that social media can enhance marketing for a business, or it can be used to disseminate positive messages that could inspire others. Their use could facilitate research for school assignments or enable them to listen to their favourite music via platforms such as Spotify. Unfortunately, it can also lead to families neglecting each other or even to addiction to the digital environment.

- » ***Teach your child to lead a balanced life***

Teach your child to pay attention to all aspects of their life. This includes their physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual development. As soon as they are old enough to comprehend, talk to them and tell them that it is important to spend time to keep themselves and their bodies healthy, e.g., by engaging in the following:

- » exercise (physical)
- » engaging in something they enjoy, e.g., colouring in or reading (emotional)
- » spending time with friends by talking or doing something which is fun together (social)
- » teaching themselves something new, e.g., from a book (intellectual)
- » reading their Bible and spending time with God (spiritual)

- » ***Welcome any questions about the use of technology***

Ensure that your door is open for your child to ask any questions about digital devices. Promise your child from the beginning that you will not judge them and that they can ask you anything. If you do not know the answer, promise your child that you will find out and come back to them with an answer.



### 3.3 TERMS, CONDITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

» ***A child is not really prepared to handle all content available on a cell phone***

As time passes, more and more content is available on digital devices to which users are exposed. The content now available on the internet is extensive and there are few limitations to access. Keeping in mind children's developing brain, you must realise that they are not able to absorb any more advanced content or to understand and correctly interpret such content. For this reason, their access and exposure to content must be filtered.

» ***Do not just hand a cell phone to a child***

Children do not usually buy their own cell phones until the age of at least 16, when they can start working and earn their own money. Even if a child receives pocket money, it is still your money that you are giving to them. When your child does chores in and around the home and receives monetary compensation for doing so, you must explain that they are not allowed to buy digital devices with the money that they are saving up. Children need guidance in respect of any device – for that reason, the device must belong to you as a parent in order for you to control access to content. Before children are given a cell phone or any other digital device – even as a gift – it is necessary to have a serious discussion about its use, including the advantages and disadvantages (as set out above) and the dangers involved, as well as a conversation about a balanced life. Furthermore, when allowing your child to play a game on your phone or watch a video, make sure that it is not possible for any inappropriate pop-up messages to appear, for instance those showing sexual content.

» ***Set rules and limits before you hand a cell phone to or it is used by a child***

Thoroughly explain what acceptable use is (e.g., when the cell phone is allowed to be used) in order to exclude any misunderstandings and for everyone to understand what is expected of them. Children should know sooner rather than later under which conditions digital devices may be used.

» ***Make it clear from the beginning that screen time will be limited***

It is better to explain even before your child receives a personal cell phone that there are set times for its use, and only on condition that home chores and school homework have been completed. The use of the phone is a privilege, not a right.

» ***Teach your child how to use social media in a responsible manner***

Children should realise the advantages of social media – not only the fact that you can entice followers and fans, but also that it offers the opportunity to disseminate positive messages. Have a heart-to-heart talk with your child in which you mention that you are aware of the negative content that is available on the internet and that you expect your child to remember the family's value system when using social media.

### 3.4 BEHAVIOUR ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Parents should discuss with their children how one can assert oneself on social media. A prerequisite is an initial conversation on the family's values since this will determine the direction of the discussion. Parents have to lay down a value system for their family. In the case of children who are older than 10 years they can be invited to think of ideas to be added to the family's value system. You can use the following questions as a guideline to start the conversation:

- » What is it that you are communicating to the public?
- » Which pictures or memes do you share?
- » What is the image that you create out there of yourself, your family and your circle of friends?
- » Does it reflect your value system?

As we all know, there is an unlimited amount of content available on the internet. However, this content does not always contain factual information. For instance, it has happened that untrue content caused real mass hysteria among the public. For this reason, children should be taught to share content in a judicious way. You can use the following criteria to help children develop an awareness for sharing or reading content:

- » Is the content based on facts?
- » Is there any credible evidence to support this information?
- » Is the content just a rumour?
- » Is the content simply someone's opinion?

Children should be made aware of the fact that there is a significant difference between facts, rumours and opinions. When it is uncertain whether the information is based on facts, they should resist the temptation to read, believe or disseminate such content.

## 3.5 IMPACT OF THE USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY

Once again, it is important to remember to encourage children to maintain a healthy balance in their life. Remind children often that everyone's life consists of several aspects. The use of digital devices seldom if ever contributes any positive results to the general development of a person. It does indeed provide entertainment, which is a positive outcome since it can help people relax. However, life does not just consist of being permanently entertained; there is a time and place for everything. Try to remember that the aim is not to keep children completely away from digital devices, but to encourage them to use these within limits and judiciously. The following negative consequences may occur due to excessive use of digital devices:

### » **Poor social skills**

Continuous and excessive use of digital devices combined with limited direct interaction with other people can lead to a weakened ability to communicate, including the inability to read nonverbal signs correctly within communication as a whole. In a large number of online games there is verbal interaction with others, but not to such a degree that communication skills can be mastered. An important part of communication is to be physically in the presence of another person and to interpret nonverbal signs such as body language correctly. Simply hearing another person's voice may open the door to confusion. Furthermore, such distant communication negatively impacts on many children's speaking skills since they communicate less by way of speaking due to the use of digital devices.

### » **Addiction**

The release of dopamine during the use of most digital devices can easily lead to addiction. In such cases people develop an unhealthy relationship with their digital devices. It is also the reason why children overreact when digital devices are taken from them, especially when no communication has taken place beforehand on the conditions of using such devices.

### » **Relationships suffer**

Due to the resulting poor social skills as well as potential addiction it becomes clear that relationships with significant others are one of the first aspects that are negatively affected. Most people engaged in any kind of relationship take exception when they are of the opinion that a cell phone or games being played are regarded as more important than spending time with them. No relationship can grow without direct interaction and communication. Relationships that are started via digital devices and are continued in this way, run the risk to be confronted by huge misunderstandings at a later stage. For this reason, it is important for you as a parent to ensure that you are well informed about the life experiences of your child and show a real interest in their world. Be present and put away the devices when quality time is spent together. It is unfortunately true that children tend to engage in pornography more easily when they do not experience a close bond with their nearest and dearest.

## 3.6 WHAT TO DO WHEN CHILDREN ENGAGE IN PORNOGRAPHY?

### 3.6.1 PARENTS AND TEACHERS

#### **Some golden rules:**

1. First calm down before you react. When the child notices that you are hysterical, it will create the impression with the child that you cannot deal with difficult situations and that you will not be able to support them through challenging times.
2. The resulting damage is greater when you confront the child immediately.
3. When you label the behaviour as "demonic", the behaviour will just be continued behind your back. Rather use the explanation that it does not fit in with the family's value system.
4. Do not confront the child with the behaviour in front of other people.
5. Take control of your facial expressions indicating shame or humiliation, as well as your tone of voice. If you do not feel equipped to address the issue, rather wait until you feel ready, or ask an expert for guidance.
6. Consider that exposure to pornography may also lead to inappropriate sexual play involving friends and playmates, as well as masturbation.

#### **Additional golden rules for parents:**

1. Question yourself whether a proper value system is in place in your family and whether your child is aware of this system. When this is not the case, take actual steps to put such a system into place.
2. Talk with your child on this issue privately – calmly and in the security of your home.
3. Do not involve the school when it did not happen at the school premises, not even when the children involved know each other from school. However, you could approach the school to come into contact with the other child's (or children's) parents to discuss the matter separately with them.

## 3.7 WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND OUT ABOUT OR COME ACROSS A CHILD WHO WATCHES, IS IN POSSESSION OF, DISSEMINATES OR PRODUCES PORNOGRAPHY?

### 3.7.1 PARENTS

You absolutely must follow these steps in the order given:

1. **First calm down.** Resist the temptation to react strongly and immediately.
2. **Assure the child that you do not judge them, think bad of them or are cross with them.** Here you have to carefully watch your facial expression and tone of voice.
3. **Normalise the behaviour.** This does not imply that you condone the behaviour or encourage it. You are simply indicating that it is normal to be curious about the human body and everything connected with it. You could use the following statement: "I noticed/heard that you have been watching photos and videos with sexual content. I want you to know that I understand that this can be exciting and that you are curious about these things."
4. **Take the child to a separate room where you can talk in private.** You could use the following sentence: "Come, let's go to another room where we can quietly talk this over between us."
5. **Once again assure the child that you do not judge them, think bad of them or are cross with them.** Mention to the child that you do think it is important to discuss the matter. Inform the child that you are aware of the content that they watched, produced, downloaded or disseminated via the digital device. In the case of masturbation you can indicate that you are aware of the fact that the child has played with their genitalia.
6. **Open the door for questions:**  
"Is there anything you would like to ask me about this?"  
"Is there something that you wonder about? Anything about what exactly you heard or saw?"  
"Do not be afraid to ask; we can try to do our best."  
Do not think that you have to reply immediately when you do not know the answer yourself. When you do not know the answer, acknowledge this and promise that you will find out.
7. **Define limits**  
"Although it might be interesting and exciting to watch, produce, possess or distribute pornography, it is not something we should share with other people. Our bodies are private, and we should respect the privacy of the bodies of other people, even though they themselves may not respect their own bodies. In any case, there are laws about this which make it very clear that you can be punished for this behaviour and even charged criminally. Many people have been caught already. Instead, when you wonder about any matter of a sexual nature, rather come to me to talk it over. I promise I won't get angry or judge you; I just want you to understand everything clearly."

**NB: If your child continues with this behaviour and is almost obsessive about this – even after you set limits as explained above – you have reason for concern and should get professional help.**

### 3.7.2 TEACHERS/THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Schools are able to discuss pornography and the legal aspects involved as part of Life Orientation or any other platform available. Since this is an increasing problem at schools, it can also be included in the school's disciplinary code or code of conduct. It is necessary, however, to compile an action plan or protocol on how these issues will be dealt with uniformly throughout the school, particularly since it involves legal aspects that should be taken into account. It is recommended to make use of the expertise of a professional such as a social worker in drawing up such an action plan or protocol.

It is important to see any pornography incident involving minor children in the right context. For this reason, it is extremely important to involve social workers in cases where children are caught with pornographic material. Unfortunately, children who are sexually abused suddenly tend to show a heightened interest in sexual content since they have experienced sexual stimulation. Pornography is often used by sex offenders as part of their grooming process towards the child; with the ultimate goal of having sexual relations with the child at a later stage.

**What you should do when you find child pornography on a learner's cell phone**

1. **First calm down.** Avoid the temptation to react immediately and in an overpowering way.
2. **Confiscate the cell phone.** Explain to the child that possessing such content is against the school's regulations and value system, and that the matter must be dealt with by a social worker and possibly also the SAPD. Explain that the school has a duty to report the matter since it is a criminal offence.
3. **Contact the parents.** Inform the parents that pornographic material was found in their child's possession and make an appointment to discuss this with them. The parents should also be informed that the matter will be handed over to a social worker and the SAPD for further investigation in light of the legal aspects involved.
4. **Follow up on the investigation with the social worker.** Get information on the nature of the case and the expected time frame so that information resulting from the investigation can be considered during the disciplinary hearing to be held at the school.

5. **Consult with the social worker and the SAPD about further action.** Continue with arrangements for a disciplinary hearing. Follow up with the social worker and the SAPD to assist in determining whether the case should follow the route of child protection services and whether any disciplinary steps should be put into place.
6. **Evaluate the seriousness of the case together with the social worker and the SAPD in order to decide on possible temporary suspension of the child or whether the child should be referred to a social worker or psychologist for therapy.** In cases where the pornographic material has resulted in sexual acts and especially violent acts taking place on the school premises, it should be considered to temporarily suspend the alleged offender, especially if the child does not show any remorse. However, this should only be done on condition that the child and their family are counselled by a social worker or psychologist. If the child shows remorse and does not constitute a direct danger to the other learners on the school's premises, they can remain on the school premises under the supervision of a social worker or psychologist.
7. **Ensure that the child is taught new skills by way of the intervention of the social worker or psychologist for the child to be better able to withstand the temptation of pornography.** The parents should be involved in this as well and should assist the child in working through this. They should also acquire recommendations on how to handle their child in future.

### 3.8 POSSIBLE SIGNS OF EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY

(Please note that these signs could also be an indication of sexual abuse or similar traumatic experiences!)

- » continuous and determined touching of other children's genitals
- » continuous peeping or interest in pornography
- » any form of penetration with a sexual organ or orally, aimed at the genitals of another (including another person, doll or animal)
- » continued and determined sexual play or masturbation, even when limits have been spelled out by parents or teacher
- » sexual play with another child up to two years older or three years younger
- » heightened interest in sexual topics, or sexually aggressive behaviour
- » age-inappropriate sexual knowledge
- » obsessive masturbation
- » the occurrence of sexual foreplay by using dolls or other objects, including animals

**NB: When these signs are noticed in a child, you should get professional advice from a social worker or psychologist, who can advise parents or refer the child for therapy.**





## PART 4: CYBERSPACE AND CYBERSECURITY

by Prof. Basie von Solms and Prof. Elmarie Kritzinger

### 4.1 BE AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF CYBERBULLYING!

Since our own school days all of us are used to the concept of bullies and people being bullied. However, the development of digital social networks has elevated bullying to a new level: cyberbullying. Now you don't just trip up someone else on the school grounds – you send a message or video to this person that in some way or another impairs the other person's dignity: you threaten or intimidate that person, or embarrass that person. It is far easier to do than physically tripping up someone, for it seems it can be done anonymously, and the perpetrator accepts that no-one will know who sent it (although this is untrue!). However, in South Africa legislation has been passed in the past few years that can cause a lot of trouble for such cyberbullies (and their parents). The new legislation accepts that any child between the ages of 11 and 18 can be held legally accountable for such behaviour.

Furthermore, forensic cyber science has developed so fast that it is not so complicated anymore to trace the guilty party, which can then result in legal action – either against the child involved, or against its parents, or against both parents and child.

Parents of children who fell victim to cyberbullying can take legal action by instituting a civil case on behalf of the child, for instance for *crimen injuria*, harassment or hate speech, depending on the situation. Cyberbullies who are found guilty could possibly be burdened with a criminal record that will be a millstone around their necks for the rest of their life.

Parents, grandparents, teachers and everyone in a position of authority should all assist in conveying the message clearly: If you participate in cyberbullying in any way at all, you will regret it, for you can be saddled with a criminal record for the rest of your life, which can close many doors for you.

Do not take a chance – you will be caught!

### 4.2 OUR DIGITAL LIVES – IN CYBERSPACE

Nowadays technology is intricately linked to everyday life. We are increasingly using the internet (the digital environment) for work, to educate ourselves and to socialise. For many of us cyberspace is not a luxury anymore, but a necessity. Cyberspace is part of children's lives as well, and all parents should ensure that their children understand the working of cyberspace and the consequences of something going wrong. It is important for all cyber users to know how to protect themselves and their personal information. For this reason, they must be aware of all possible dangers when using digital devices such as computers and cell phones.

We are quickly becoming the cyber generation.

The objective of raising awareness for cybersecurity is to inform all cyber users (parents, learners and educators) of the potential dangers when accessing the internet on their cell phones or computers. We are hoping that this information will make South Africans more aware of cybersecurity and will assist in a better understanding and safer use of the technology. School children in particular can easily be digitally bullied. This can happen 24 hours a day, seven days a week – and often parents have no idea that their children are being intimidated. This cyber outrage is worsening day by day and children increasingly suffer as a result. Parents have to teach their children that the same rules in terms of which one behaves courteously towards others in everyday life also apply to online interaction. Cyber intimidation and cyberbullying can leave children extremely vulnerable and feeling lonely. Parents should be involved, talk to their children and be aware of what is happening in their children's digital space.

Feel free to also visit our website [www.cyberaware.co.za](http://www.cyberaware.co.za) for more information.

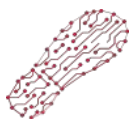
### 4.3 FOR LEARNERS

It is important to remain safe in cyberspace! How do we ensure this?

We have to know what is meant by the following three concepts:<sup>51</sup>

#### 1. Digital footprint

Every single time when you decide to become active in cyberspace you leave behind a data trail or digital footprint of your activities. This really means that every online activity you ever engage in will remain there forever. This includes all information on the internet about you, for example:



- » photos or pictures of you;
- » social media profiles, and
- » any information you post on social media or websites.

A digital footprint can come in handy, for example, to trace your friends online or to meet new friends in cyberspace. In the same way you leave footprints in the sand when walking on the beach, you leave a trail when using cyberspace. However, footprints in cyberspace stay there forever and will be visible to others. This means that you can easily become a target for cybercriminals or cyberbullies. Pressing just one button can provide you with a lot of information from the internet!

<sup>51</sup> Kritzinger, E. 2022. *Kuberveiligheid bewustheidsgids: Deel van die stel kuberveiligheidbewustheidhulpmiddels vir leerders*. Pretoria: Unisa.

**Very important:** You should always be aware of your digital footprint! It is important to keep this footprint clean. When you do not attend to this, strangers can collect lots of information about you and in this way can come to know you without ever having met you. You should make sure that any information you publish on the internet cannot be used to your disadvantage.

## 2. Cyber risks and threats

There is a large number of people who use cyberspace without ever being aware of the threats and risks that they might face in doing so. This makes them easy targets for cybercriminals and cyberbullies.

A **risk** is created whenever someone is exposed to danger. When you move around in cyberspace, you are always running the risk of becoming a victim of cybercriminals and cyberbullies. Although using the internet can have many negative consequences, there are also a lot of positive experiences to be found. We must just be careful and ensure that we use the internet responsibly. We cannot simply be afraid and stop living our lives whenever we encounter danger. By acknowledging risks and protecting ourselves, it is possible for us to move around safely in cyberspace. We also have to ask our parents or another adult whom we trust for help and to keep an eye on our social media profiles. Examples of dangers in cyberspace are free product offers or free content, which often are just traps for introducing an internet virus or giving access to a cybercriminal.

A **threat** refers to a situation where there is a chance of something happening which can be detrimental to you in several ways. Such behaviour is exhibited on purpose and is aimed at hurting you; it is never unintentional. It is important to remember the following: You are in control! You can choose to be cybersmart, or you can allow yourself to be placed in dangerous situations by ignoring warning signs or security measures. An example of a possible threat is to set your default privacy setting to “public”. This means everyone can have a look at your profile – also strangers! It also creates the perfect opportunity for cyberbullies and cybercriminals to collect your personal information, and it allows you to be targeted by sexual predators.

## 3. Online privacy

Ask yourself the following questions: Would you tell a stranger every detail of your deepest secrets and dreams? Would you give a stranger your personal information such as your ID number or residential address?

Of course, the answer is NO! Why not? Because that would be dangerous! Then why would you share such personal information online? That is never a good idea.

When your personal information floats around in cyberspace, you will be the perfect target for cyberbullies and cybercriminals. Protect yourself by using your own security key (such as a strong password) that is so complicated that only you and your parents will be in control of your safety!

Decide that your information is classified.

Cyber criminals sell your information or use it for criminal purposes.

Keep your password a secret (even from your friends).

Protect your information and watch out for malware.

“Free content” and “free websites” are usually traps.

Do not open e-mails when you do not know the sender.



## 4.4 ACTIVITY:<sup>52</sup>


1. Cut out the square.
2. Fold one corner diagonally to the corner opposite it to form a triangle.
3. Open up the square and fold the other corner diagonally to the corner opposite it to form a similar triangle.
4. Open up the square again and turn it over so that the white section is on top.
5. Fold the four corners towards the middle of the square.
6. Turn the square over.
7. Fold the four corners towards the middle of the smaller square.
8. Turn it over again and fold the four small squares diagonally in half.
9. Open up the pockets formed from the small squares and insert two index fingers and two thumbs into the four pockets. Push up the pockets towards the middle with the inserted fingers to operate the little soothsayer tool.




<sup>52</sup> Kritzinger, E. & Von Solms, B. 2022. *Werkboek vir die bewustheid van kubersekuriteit*. Johannesburg: Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie Bond vir Kubersekuriteit.

<sup>53</sup> Kritzinger, E. & Von Solms, B. 2022. *Werkboek vir die bewustheid van kubersekuriteit*. Johannesburg: Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie Bond vir Kubersekuriteit.



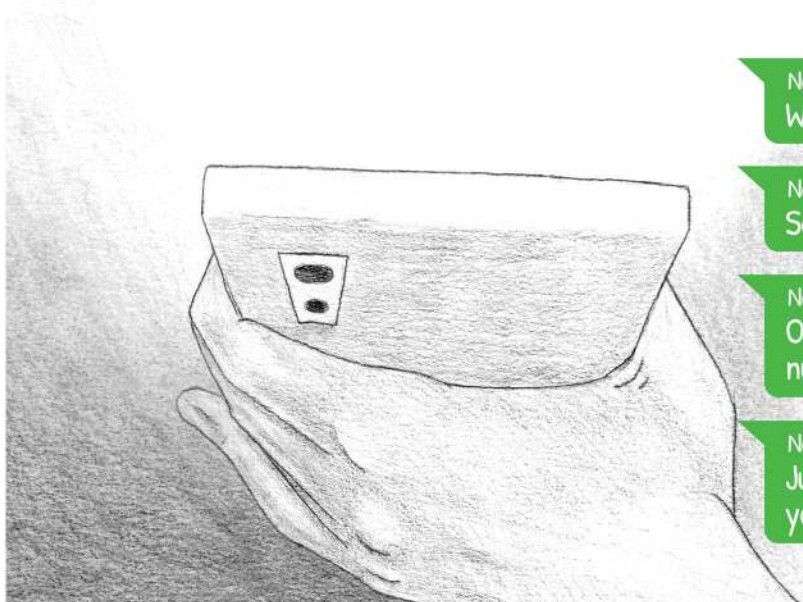


How about eating,  
my child?



Samantha:  
You look like a tart with a  
pineapple head and frizzy hair!

Natasha:  
Don't hurt yourself.  
I can help.



Natasha:  
Wow! You look so cool!


Klara:  
That's not what everyone is saying!

Natasha:  
So, what do they say?

Klara:  
I have a pineapple head with frizzy hair!

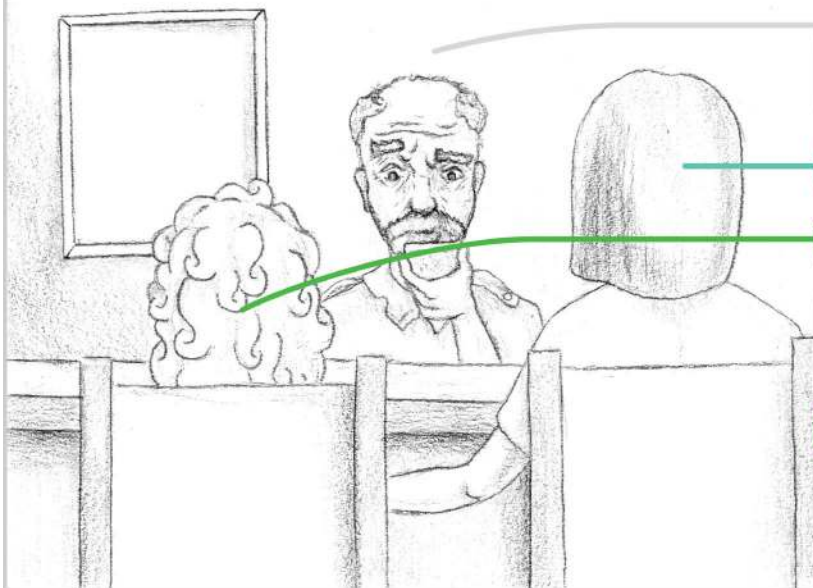
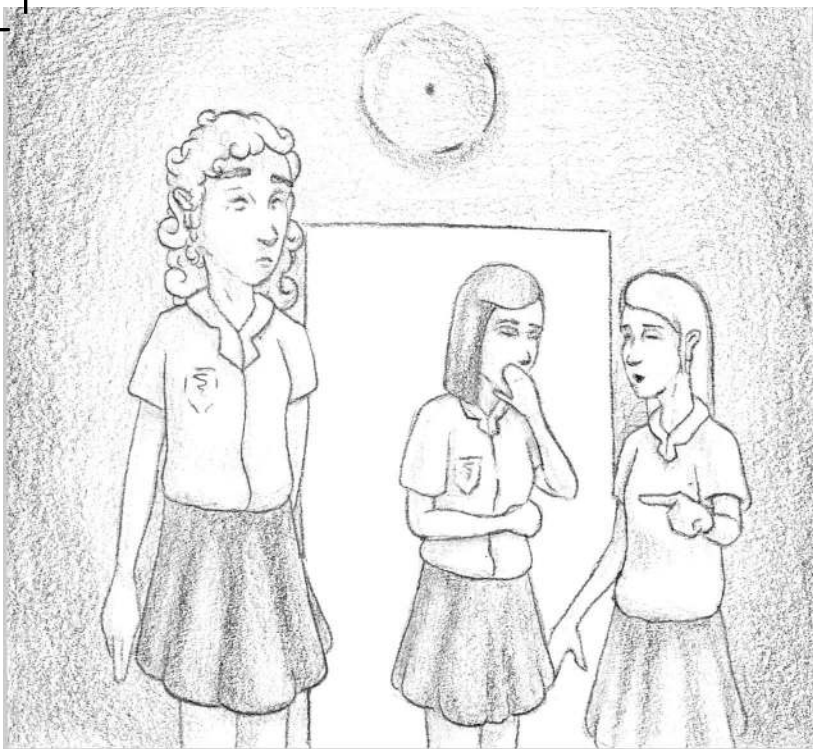
Natasha:  
O, they are just jealous. Send me your  
number, then i'll show you a few things.

Natasha:  
Just show a few gorgeous bits and  
you're almost Miss World!



Natasha:  
Wow! Take that pole and dance, cool kid!  
Now the world can see what beauty  
really is! And you can also become a  
model.





Yes, we'll catch him, but these photos are already all over all the networks.

Unfortunately, that is what happens if you chat to strangers.

But it was a girl who wanted to help!

That's what he wanted you to think. It was a cunning child molester who hid behind her.

Maybe I should go to another school!

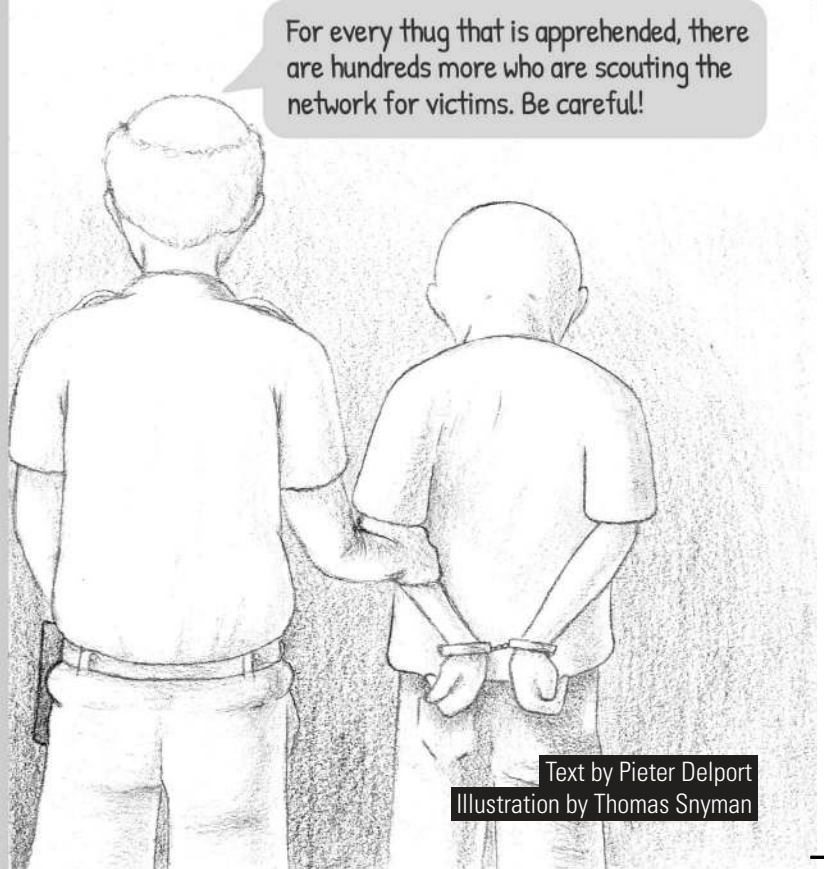
It's not going to help. Your face is all over the networks.



I must take your phone as part of the investigation.

You acted correctly by getting help. We will do what we can.

Photos and information are disseminated across networks in a matter of minutes. And it cannot be deleted. Always remember: IF SOMETHING SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT ISN'T TRUE. Protect your privacy, because once it's gone, you can't get it back.



For every thug that is apprehended, there are hundreds more who are scouting the network for victims. Be careful!

Text by Pieter Delpont  
Illustration by Thomas Snyman





