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A PARENT TIP SHEET ON CYBER and TEXT BULLYING
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Cyber Bullying:

Cyber bullying is online bullying, either by email, Facebook, or on any website. It can consist of threats of violence, hate speech, harassment, extortion, psychological abuse (including inappropriate sexual comments or pictures).

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

- A child under age 13 should not be involved on Facebook, and should be carefully monitored after age 13 if a parent chooses to allow them to join.
- Parents should set the strictest privacy settings and require full parental Facebook access as a “friend”.
- Parents should actively monitor their child’s time spent on Facebook and tell the child if they feel uncomfortable with any encounter online, they need to know it’s ok to talk to you about it.
- Advise your child never to share personal information on Facebook (birthdate, address, telephone number, etc.).
- Privacy studies on teens have shown that over 40% had accepted “friend requests” from strangers. Tell your child that it is NOT ok to befriend strangers on Facebook.

Text Bullying:

Text bullying is sending mean, untrue or hurtful messages to or about someone using cell phone text messaging. This can include “sexting”, sending or forwarding sexually suggestive texts or pictures to or about someone.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

- Although many parents wait until a child is in high school, it is a parental decision to determine when a child is mature enough to have a cell phone.
- Consider having a cell phone contract with your child that forbids text bullying, including forwarding mean messages. You can limit the times when your child uses the cell phone, such as requiring them to give you the cell phone at night. Include in the contract the parental right to investigate whom the child is texting and what they are texting about.
- If a child uses their cell phone irresponsibly, cell phone privileges should be taken away or severely limited.
- Encourage your child to think before texting and not to send a message they wouldn’t want everyone to see since it could be forwarded.
- Tell your child not to accept calls from anyone they do not know.
- Tell your child not to let anyone else use their phone to send texts.
- Tell your child if they are ever the target of a mean text, they should not respond to it but should save it and report it to you. Tell them you will not punish them by taking away their cell phone if they are a target.
- Help your child block numbers that are sending hurtful texts, or contact the cell company.
- If texts are sexual or threatening, you may need to contact the police, who can trace it and take legal action.