**Tips for parents**

¦¦ **Start early.** Experts recommend

discussing good online behaviour

from when children are 6 or 7

years old.

¦¦ **Establish rules** around where,

when and how your child can use

the internet and mobile phone.

Online communications should

be as respectful and courteous

as face-to-face conversations.

Cyberbullying is as harmful as

offline abuse.

¦¦ **Keep technology out in the open if**

**possible.** The safest place to have

internet access is in an open family

area, not in the child's bedroom.

Kids who are online or receiving

text messages late at night are

definitely not getting enough sleep

to cope academically or socially.

¦¦ **Consider a technology curfew.**

Recharge phones and laptops in

the kitchen overnight. If there

are computers in the bedroom,

make sure they're turned off at an

agreed time.

¦¦ **Educate your child** about the

permanent nature of things posted

online. Offensive comments and

photos they put on the internet

can be viewed years later by

teachers, prospective employers,

friends and family.

¦¦ **Familiarise yourself** with social

media your child uses. If possible,

have them accept you as a Facebook

etc online friend, so you can read

what they – and their friends – are

publishing. If they're worried about

their privacy, remind them the

World Wide Web isn't private.

¦¦ **Take cyberbullying seriously.** Really

listen to your child and discuss the

situation with them. Find out the

entire sequence of events so you

can understand both sides of the

story – whether your child was the

victim or the bully.

¦¦ **Remember nice kids also**

**cyberbully.** The combination of

being anonymous online, how

quickly messages can be sent

(faster than kids think through

consequences) and how easy it is to

forward an unkind message from

one person to the other all make

online bullying an easy pitfall for

any child.

¦¦ **Don't overreact.** Kids also fear

parents will make the situation

worse – and we often do,

unintentionally. Your child also

needs to learn resilience and that

hurt feelings are an unavoidable

part of life. Bullying is not.

¦¦ **Stop – take a breath** and

consider if the offending

comment was intentional or

just poor communication.

Misunderstandings happen

easily online.

¦¦ **Report any abuse** to your child's

mobile phone provider, or the

website if you think it's warranted.

(Facebook, MySpace and Bebo all

have information on their sites

about reporting abuse.)

¦¦ **Get your child to take a break from**

**the interactions and gain a little**

**perspective.** Online bullying can

seem relentless because it can be

reread 24/7, comments can fly thick

and fast and it can genuinely seem

like the world is against them.

This is why a technology curfew

can also give you or their friends

a chance to counteract the abuse

with some positive comments.

¦¦ **Make it safe for your child to tell**

you or another adult about

being bullied – they won't if

they believe you'll respond by

restricting their access to the

computer or mobile phone.

¦¦ **Tell your school principal** if

you feel the behaviour is

intentional and you fear it's likely

to continue. (Friends break up

and make up regularly, bullying

has the specific intention of

harming or harassing someone.)

¦¦ **Keep the evidence.** You don't want

your child rereading it, but you may

want to print it out, screen save it or

send it to your own email account

before deleting abusive messages.

\*(Police advise however that if it's

something they are going to be

asked to investigate, the original

message is the best evidence.)