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## What is Adult Cyberbullying?

Thoughts of cyberbullying most often focus on children. Rarely, however, does the focus fall on adults – either as cyberbullies or as cyberbullying victims. But adults are both!

Cyberbullying is substantially similar to what is commonly thought of as bullying – except that it occurs online. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines cyberbullying rather succinctly:

*Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else... Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.*

### How bad is it?

A recent study of adult internet users revealed that more than one third of respondents stopped, reduced, or in some other manner, changed their online activity because of cyber bullying. And more than one quarter were victims of, what they self-described as, severe online harassment.

A different study indicated about 15 percent of participants had been cyberbullied. While young adults were the most cyberbullied group, adults over 45 years old were not immune. Approximately one in five victims was in that age group.

### Who is the Cyberbully?

In the workplace, of adults who self-categorized as victims of cyberbullying, about three fourths reported being cyberbullied by colleagues and almost one third reported being bullied by a manager. Though not exactly cyberbullies, many online scammers use similar bullying techniques to cajole and coerce people into doing things they might otherwise not do.

Bullies of all types have certain traits in common. Often, they are emotionally immature, underperforming egotist. Sometimes they feel powerless and compensate for their feelings of insignificance by aggression, passive and active. Sometimes bullies seek to enhance their status by criticizing and trivializing others.

### Effects of Cyberbullying

The effects of cyberbullying that adults feel are very similar to those that children feel. Among the immediate effects can be depression, insomnia, decreased self-esteem, social withdrawal, increased feelings of anger and irritability. Long term effects can be angry outbursts, substance abuse.



**Report a crime to U.S. Army  
Criminal Investigation Division**

**Major Cybercrime Unit**

**27130 Telegraph Road  
Quantico, Virginia 22134**

**Email**

**MCU Web Page**

**CID LOOK OUT**  
**ON POINT FOR THE ARMY**

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**"DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE"**

In extreme cases, victims passively ideate suicide (I wish I was dead.) and actively ideate suicide (I wish I was dead, and this is how I'm going to do it.). In the most extreme cases, a suicidal act is successfully completed. Perhaps most egregious, however, is when the bully chides the victim into attempting or committing suicide.

Also, bullying motivated by bias toward a protected class (race, color, religion or national origin) might run afoul of the [federal Hate Crime Laws](#).

## What to do?

First and foremost – do not strike back! Do not engage. Do remain calm. The bully feeds off your reactions. Do not allow the bully the satisfaction of your reaction. Moreover, responding puts you on the same level as the bully and you could be subjected to similar sanctions if the situation deteriorates to that point.

Evaluate the relationship you have and want to have with the bully. You are not required to maintain a relationship with every internet friend. Do not underestimate the power of the unfriend button and do not be afraid to use it. The decision is reversible if things become civil.

If the person is a relative or someone with whom you want to maintain a relationship, try direct and respectful communication. The person might not know you feel you are being bullied or offended.

Block the cyberbully. Either in your contact list, rules settings for your inbox, or the settings for social media sites. If you can identify the website your cyberbully is operating from, look on that site for contact information, specifically an abuse reporting contact, and report the behavior. The cyberbully's actions might run afoul of that site's user agreement and the cyberbully might be subject to sanctions.

Keep logs, screenshots and images of everything that happens, every message and every contact.

If the bullying is happening at work, is work related or involves a coworker, follow your employer's policies and recommendations. If in doubt about where to start, check first with your Human Resources office.

If the bully threatens violence, against person or property, contact your responsible law enforcement agency.

## Additional Resources

For information about computer security and other computer-related scams, we encourage readers to visit the MCU [Cybercrime Prevention Flyer website](#) for the latest crime prevention flyers.

[Bullying is Not Just a Kid Problem](#) – Cyberbullying Research Center

[Adult Cyberbullying is More Common than You Think](#) – Psychology Today

[The Psychology of Cyberbullying](#) – Verywell Mind

[Are You a Bully](#) – Stomp Out Bullying

[Adult Cyberbullying is No Laughing Matter](#) – McAfee

[Cyberbullying Impact: It Kills People](#) – ABC 7, WKBW TV, Buffalo, NY

[All the Latest Cyberbullying Statistics and What They Mean in 2021](#) – Broadband Search

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