

## **Cyberbullying, its impact on young minds and how can Counselling help**

As the digital world has occupied most of our space and time now. We must realise that there are pros and cons of the virtual world.

As teenagers and youths using the digital technologies, video games at a rapid pace be it I pad, personal computers and laptops we also need to be mindful of the disadvantages of the digital technology.

Now at a very early age children are already using social media accounts like Facebook, snapchat, twitter and Instagram. Some teens and youths are into excessive gaming and device use.

### **What is Cyberbullying and where does it happen?**

Cyberbullying is a form of harassment which happens using electronic means. It has become very common now among teenagers.

Cyberbullying can happen in these platforms, messages, emails by sending or posting false information which could cause humiliation.

Recently in the news article in channel news Asia the horrors of cyberbullying came true when a 20-year-old committed suicide due to relentless cyberbullying. It was because of a video posted online which got some hateful messages. She felt let down about the things said to her. She also felt angry, hurt, and humiliated by these messages.

(<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/cyber-bullying-getting-worse-even-covid-19-thivya-suicide-12788682>)

Let's take a moment and think what must have gone wrong and what can help in these kinds of situations.

Most importantly how can we ensure that the impact on Cyberbullying is not worsened in future.

### ***Let's see why Teenagers and young adults are more prone to Cyberaddiction and eventually Cyberbullying.***

This age is particularly tender, and they are reactive to external stressors and environment easily.

Erik Erikson, a prominent psychologist in 1950 developed a psychosocial development theory of how our personality develops in 8 stages. Each stage of development can have a positive or a negative impact on our personality.

According to the theory, the development stage teenagers fall into is known as the Identify vs Role confusion.

Teenagers look for building their identity in the teenage years by exploring their beliefs and values. He has also pointed out that they are becoming independent and want to fit into the society. If they are not able form their own identity it leads to is role confusion which is how to place oneself in a certain manner.

This can also lead to a lot of experimenting with new things. The other manifestations could be creating different avatars on social media or exercising that sense of power in online gaming.

The sense to look for an identity can often have other effects like the risk of getting influenced and wanting to imitate and show how they can influence power and authority.

The rational side of the brain which is responsible for executive functioning also gets fully developed by adulthood. Therefore, one must be mindful of the fact that they constantly need a coach/guide who can guide them.

**So how can Counselling help in Cyberaddiction which eventually can lead teenagers/young adults to fall into traps of cyberbullying.**

In my previous experience of counselling youths, I have analysed these parameters to be the most important:

- Often excessive device usage or social media usage it is a result of lack of emotional control and impulses. If the emotions are deep rooted, counselling can deep dive into these underlying emotions and root causes
- Counselling can be helpful in creating more self-awareness, help them identify and manage their emotions
- They can learn ways of channelizing their energy in productive ways which is also alternative ways of spending the energy or desires of using digital technologies
- Counselling can also help the youth in learning how to think flexibly and not in a rigid manner

The other ways counselling can help is by preventive measures like psycho educating parents in parenting styles and appropriate ways of managing their children when they are addicted to excessive gaming and device use.

*In case of any counselling issues related to Cyberaddiction and excessive gaming or device usage please directly pm me or mail on*

shriya@holisticpsychotherapy.sg

One of the main issue is Cyber bullying and one needs to be mindful of it.

Some of the ways that can be helpful are

1. Limit the time spent on social media
2. Blocking the person who is bullying
3. Seek out for help from parents and counsellors
4. Always verify websites/information on google to read if there have been any scams before
5. Distract yourself