

Bombshell Study Finds Cyberbullying Leads to PTSD-Like Symptoms in Youth

Stand for the Silent is putting cyberbullying mental health outcomes in the spotlight.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- June is National PTSD Month, making it a great time to spotlight this mental health condition. While many are familiar with adults who suffer from the condition, there is a new eye-opening research study reporting that youth who experience cyberbullying can end up with PTSD-like symptoms. Considering the widespread issue that cyberbullying is, this is something everyone should be aware of so they can help prevent and address it.



Photo courtesy of Stand For The Silent

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*Kirk Smalley, co-founder of
Stand for the Silent*

“We all know that cyberbullying is a problem, but we likely didn't realize just how damaging it is until this study put things into perspective,” says Kirk Smalley, co-founder of [Stand for the Silent](#). “This is alarming and needs to be addressed immediately.”

The study, published in the May 2025 issue of the journal BMC Public Health, analyzed data collected from nearly 2,700 students in US middle and high schools. The students were all English-speaking and ranged in age from 13 to 17. The nationally represented sample inquired about the impact that cyberbullying has on the nation's youth.

The researchers reported finding a strong positive relationship between PTSD symptoms in those who have experience with cyberbullying. They report that exclusion and rejection are as

harmful as overt threats in terms of inducing trauma and that gossip and malicious comments are as detrimental as targeting someone based on their identity.

They report that trauma results from "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being." Cyberbullying, they report, is strongly and consistently linked with poor outcomes later in life. Those who are subjected to bullying often experience anxiety, depression, mental disorders, emotional and psychological struggles, physical health problems, and academic issues. Bullying victims also have more suicidal ideation.

Considering the large number of our youth with access to social media and the means to be cyberbullied, this is a serious issue that has a vast impact. According to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), social media plays a significant role in teen life today, and 90% of teens ages 13-17 use social media. They report that teens are online almost nine hours daily, not including homework time.

AACAP points out that social media is not all bad, as there are some benefits, such as staying connected to friends, meeting new people with shared interests, sharing work and music, and expressing oneself. However, the potential risks are real, and people must know them. In today's world, being online is not something that will go away or that parents can completely shield their kids from. We have to take steps to provide them with guidelines that will help keep them safer, and those who work around youth should be aware of the issue and how to prevent and address it.

Some guidelines to keep in mind when it comes to youth and cyberbullying:

Have age-appropriate discussions about the dangers and how they can protect themselves. Young people should know not to share personal information, exercise caution about what they

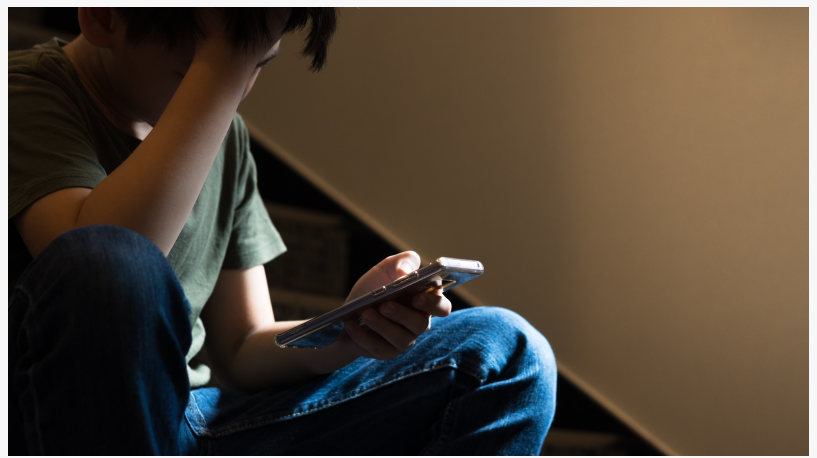


Photo courtesy of Stand For The Silent



Kirk Smalley, co-founder of Stand for the Silent

follow and are exposed to, and how to identify risky things, including scams.

Establishing some rules about when it's okay to use their devices is always a good idea. There are times and places when it's acceptable and times when the device needs to be put away so that it doesn't take someone's attention that should be given elsewhere.

Adults need to lead by example when going online and using social media. Millions of adults bully and belittle others online daily, which sets the example for youth. Be the example of how kids should be online and when devices should be used.

Teach youth healthy boundaries regarding social media, texting, and using cyber technology. Discuss why they must avoid certain things online and the importance of not participating in cyberbullying.

Parents can monitor their teens' online activities to see what they share and who they follow. They can also limit which apps they can download and use, which will help establish boundaries.

Discuss with youth what they should do if they encounter cyberbullying, and get them help if they have been cyberbullied. Addressing the issue right away will go a long way toward helping them process it more healthily.

Those who work with youth can help teach them about dangers and risks and how to protect themselves. They can also step in when an issue arises and ensure that it is addressed properly.

"Simply saying you will not let your kids go online or use social media isn't the answer," added Smalley. "We have to raise awareness about the issue, and all work together to help address the issue. Addressing this as a community is the only way it will protect our youth."

Stand for the Silent travels the country, giving presentations about bullying to schools, providing bullying prevention, giving out scholarships, offering intervention strategies, and more. Those interested in getting involved can start a chapter of the group in their area, obtain a free K-2 bullying prevention curriculum or [cyberbullying handbook for parents](#), host a presentation at their school, introduce the How All Started video, and donate to help support the cause. To get more information, visit the site at: <https://standforthesilent.org/>

About Stand for the Silent

Started in 2010, Stand for the Silent is an organization on a mission to help eliminate bullying nationwide. Kirk and Laura Smalley founded the group after their child took his own life due to bullying. They offer free resources for parents and educators and travel to schools to host presentations. They have been to over 6,700 schools and spoken with more than 4.50 million students. To get more information, visit the site at: <https://standforthesilent.org/>

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