What is cyber abuse?

Cyber abuse is online behaviour that is reasonably likely to have a seriously threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating effect on a person. It is behaviour that threatens to hurt a person socially, psychologically or even physically.

Cyber abuse can have a devastating impact. It can affect a person's wellbeing, mental healthy, confidence, relationships and sense of safety. It can also lead to a person stepping back from public conversations or self-censoring out of fear for their privacy and safety.

Cyber abuse can quickly intensify in scale and nature. It can also feel deeply personal. It is important to remember that cyber abuse is not about you; it reflects on the person who is abusing you.

Key

Preserve evidence

Block unwanted contact

Report to us
esafety.gov.au/iba

Don't respond/ignore

Report to the social media platform
esafety.gov.au/report-to-social-media

Seek support
esafety.gov.au/support

Review and update
your social media privacy and security settings

You can alter the context of the discussion
with constructive comments or positive messaging

If you are at risk of immediate harm, call Triple Zero (000)

Responding to cyber abuse

Trolling

I have received sustained severe abuse or harassment, including physical threats, stalking and/or sexual harassment.

Image-based abuse

Someone is sharing or threatening to share intimate images of me without my consent.

Sextortion

Someone is using my intimate images to blackmail me.

Impersonation/Fake account

A fake social media account has been set up in my name.

Doxing

My personal details have been shared or publicised online. It may result in offensive comments and unwanted calls or visits from strangers.

Responding to cyber abuse

Deep fake/Morph/FaceSwap

My face has been morphed into another person's body in sexually explicit material posted online.

Defamatory comments

Someone has posted defamatory comments online intended to harm my reputation.

Skills & strategies for coping with cyber abuse

There are a number of ways you can respond to cyber abuse, let's build your psychological armour.

Remember your strengths
There are a number of ways you can respond to cyber abuse.

Pause and reflect
Cyber abuse can be overwhelming. Give yourself space and time so that you respond rather than react.

Maintain perspective
While the situation may seem challenging in the moment, remember to focus on the big picture and your main priorities in life.

Acknowledge your feelings
You're allowed to be upset. But try not to deplete your emotional strength by defending yourself against every unwarranted attack. Question whether this is worth your time and energy.

Build a supportive network
Surround yourself with supportive people. You don't need to handle this on your own. Talk with family, friends, peers and mentors who may be best placed to help.

Be kind to yourself
Practice self-care through leisure, exercise good nutrition, adequate sleep, meditation and other relaxation techniques.

Create a safe space offline
Go for a walk, catchup with a friend or read a book. Consider turning off notifications at night or during periods when you want to disconnect.

Skills & strategies for coping with cyber abuse

Stay positive
Emotional reactions can feed the trolls. Don't be afraid to respond to negative comments with a positive attitude.

Be prepared
Clarify your thoughts and be informed on issues so that you are better prepared to take part in online discussions.

Be confident & assertive
In your beliefs, opinions and values. Don't be afraid to advocate for your beliefs and opinions online. Stay true to your character and your sense of right and wrong.

Be a role model
You can gain a sense of purpose by knowing that you're contributing to an improved online world for other people.

Support other people
Help other people when they experience abuse online by safely speaking up or showing other forms of support.