



Dangers of cyberbullying (Video)



By [Rajah Maples](#)

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We've all heard about the dangers of cyberbullying, but no one knows them better than one St. Charles mother.

You might recall the case of Megan Meier, the young teenager who committed suicide after getting harassed online in the St. Louis area.

As it turns out, a mother and daughter who lived right down the street befriended Megan online by pretending to be a teenage boy.

The imaginary boy later told Megan he didn't want to be friends with her, then "bullied" her online by calling her a number of terrible names.

It not only broke Megan's heart, but it also led her to take her own life. Megan walked upstairs to her room after reading this on her family computer and hanged herself in her closet.

Tina Meier, Megan's mother, talked with parents about cyberbullying at North Shelby High School Tuesday night.

KHQA's Rajah Maples attended that session to gather advice for other parents in an effort to prevent this tragedy from happening again.

"What is one thing you hope parents will get out of you talking about this case?" asked Maples.

"My hope is that parents will take a closer look at what their children are doing online. If they're not familiar with Web sites, then get an account on the Web site, figure out how to interact on the Web site to know what's going on," said Tina Meier

Tina Meier says cyberbullying or online harassment can happen through a variety of media, e-mail, instant messaging, online chatrooms or bash boards, PDA's, Web sites, online voting/polling booths and even through text messaging on cell phones.

And MySpace isn't the only social networking site to be concerned about. Other popular sites include AOL Instant Messaging, Bebo, Facebook, Xanga and Friendster.

Meier told parents that open dialogue with their kids is the top priority. She says kids' biggest threat is that parents will take away their computer privileges or cell phones if things get out of hand.

"That's their world, and their links, and when they're getting cyberbullied and they don't go to talk with their parents, they're scared that their parents are just going to say, 'enough of this.... Just give me the cell phone, we're done with it,'" Meier said.

Even though Meier says rules should be established, it's important for parents to let their kids know that they can come talk with them if anything gets out of hand.

And last but not least, kids are smart when it comes to technology. So Meier says it's important that parents educate themselves about technology to be just as smart if not smarter. She mentioned a couple of software programs, like netnanny.com or imsafer.com, that parents can use to monitor their kids' online activity.

Cyberbullying can happen on some popular video games that a lot of boys tend to play.

For example, a boy playing a game on a portable Playstation 2 game can communicate with anyone who has the same game and who's standing 50 feet away. Xbox Live also can be a resource for kids to bash each other back and forth.

And there's a long list of acronyms that kids use that parents should familiarize themselves with acronyms such as "P-O-S," which stands for "Parent Over Shoulder."

You can find some of the more popular ones on www.netlingo.com.