

CYBERBULLYING

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

“Most parents have dreams of their kid being the next star. Percentages show most kids won’t go pro, but sports provide all kinds of opportunities to grow as a human being. Parents go wrong by focusing too much on winning.”

Two-time Olympic gold medalist and retired soccer player Abby Wambach, speaking about what parents can do to ensure that their child’s athletic participation is a positive experience, washingtonpost.com, October 23, 2017.



Back in the summer of 2016, 17-year-old teenager Felix Alexander took his own life. Since then, his mother has dedicated her life to helping other parents understand the role that social media plays as the new “playground” for cyber-bullies, and the role cyber-bullying plays in making an already difficult transition from childhood to adulthood that much harder.

Lucy Alexander says that once the already isolated and excluded Felix’s peers began spending time on social media, the 24/7 barrage of anonymous negative comments began. Sadly, Felix wasn’t even on a computer or smartphone at the time. He simply knew that negative things were being said about him by people he knew. . . and even people he didn’t know. He was called a “black rat”, “ugly”, hated by everyone, and other nasty things.

We need to realize that bullying is more pervasive and powerful in today’s world. In the old days, traditional bullies would ply their trade on the playground or in the neighborhood. If you were on the receiving end of their taunts, you could find relief and refuge in the comfort and safety of your own home. Now that our kids spend less and less time outside and more and more time “living” in the virtual online world, bullying has taken on new forms with increased intensity that continues around the clock. A nasty note passed around the classroom stayed in the classroom and was seen only by the hands it touched. Now, that same note can be posted online and go viral – through the school, the community, and the world.

Cyberbullying occurs when a child or teen intentionally intimidates or sends unflattering or hostile messages or threats via digital media to another child or teen or about another child or teen in order to harass, hurt, stalk, frighten, extort, humiliate or harm that person. Cyberbullying

always involves minors. If an adult is involved, the behavior is then classified as **cyberstalking** or **cyberharassment**. With more and more of our younger kids now venturing onto the digital frontier, cyberbullying is increasingly prevalent even at the elementary school level.

Here are five steps you can take with your kids to help prevent cyberbullying.

- Pray for your children and their friends.
- Build resilience to peer pressure by helping them understand what it means to find their identity and security in Jesus.
- Teach your kids to treat all people with the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus.
- Teach your children to take a stand in defense of bullying victims.
- Educate your children about the consequences of cyberbullying others.

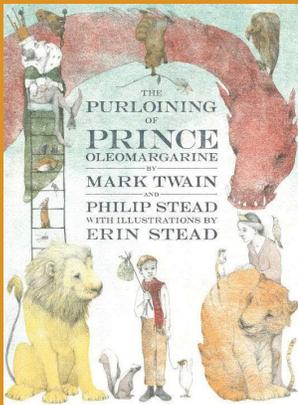
In today’s world, sticks and stones aren’t the only thing that hurt. Words hurt too. . . and they hurt badly. Keep an eye on what your kids are doing online and be sure to instill in them a deep respect for the words of Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Finally, as Lucy Alexander recommends, “From the moment you give your child a phone, you need to have a conversation running with them all of the time, what they are doing, who they are doing it with and what platforms they are using.”

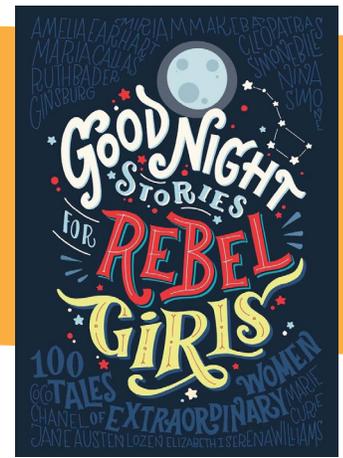
(For more information and helpful resources on cyberbullying and to download a free copy of *A Parents’ Guide to Cyberbullying*, visit our Digital Kids Initiative at digitalkidsinitiative.com.)*

Children's Middle Grade Hardcover Books

Issue Date of October 29, 2017
Source:
The New York Times



1. *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
2. *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo
3. *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine* by Mark Twain and Philip Stead
4. *JoJo's Guide to the Sweet Life* by JoJo Siwa
5. *Wishtree* by Katherine Applegate
6. *The Dark Prophecy* by Rick Riordan
7. *The War I Finally Won* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
8. *Auggie & Me* by R.J. Palacio
9. *Laugh Out Loud* by James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein
10. *Minecraft: The Island* by Max Brooks



QUICK STATS

87% of adults surveyed who played outside when they were young still held a love of nature into adulthood.
(*Australian Journal of Environmental Education*)

70% of recent and soon-to-be college grads said they wouldn't bother keeping social media accounts anonymous out of fear of putting off potential employers.
(*Red Bull Wingfinder*)

FROM THE NEWS:

IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR SLEEP TIMES

With school getting in full swing for our kids, it's a good time to be reminded of just how important it is for you to instill good sleep habits in your children who are students.

Whether they are attending middle school, high school, or college, our kids need their sleep. Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston have found that going to sleep and waking up at approximately the same time every day is just as important as the number of hours one sleeps. While researchers still don't have a handle on cause and effect, they have discovered that irregular patterns of sleep and wakefulness are associated with lower grades. It seems that the release of melatonin and one's body clock shift to nearly three hours later for those with irregular schedules, as compared to those who are consistent with their sleep times. Teach your children that God has created their bodies for a rhythm of work and rest. Getting sleep at the right time is a matter of stewardship.

TRENDS: COSMETIC PLASTIC SURGERY

Plastic surgery is a good thing when it serves to correct physical abnormalities that decrease our ability to live a fruitful and healthy life. These types of procedures are known as medically necessary plastic surgery. But in recent years, there's been a steady growth in what is known as cosmetic plastic surgery. These surgeries tend to be rooted in our growing sense of vanity regarding physical appearance, and our desire to reverse the aging process. According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, U.S. spending on purely cosmetic procedures and minimally invasive procedures has increased from twelve billion dollars annually in 2014, to sixteen billion dollars in 2016. Parents, our culture increasingly tells us and our kids that our value and identity is connected to outward standards of beauty and appearance. This is absolutely contrary to the message of the Scriptures. God looks on the heart. Teach your kids to cultivate their hearts.



LATEST RESEARCH: SPORTS PARENTING

Here's a suggestion for parents whose kids are involved in organized sports: next time you attend one of your kids' games, spend less time paying attention to what your son or daughter is doing out on the field, and more time examining your own sideline behavior.

Researchers are telling us what we should have noticed about ourselves a long time ago. That is, we're increasingly becoming a bunch of bad sports, so much so that many youth leagues are issuing written and verbal announcements prior to games warning that inappropriate gestures and profanity will not be tolerated and will result in the expulsion of violators from the game. Research from the University of Maryland indicates that fifty-three percent of parents report getting angry at their child's game, and forty percent report yelling at the ref. Parents, your Christian faith and love for Christ should stretch to and through every area of your life. Does your sideline behavior bring honor and glory to God?

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www.DigitalKidsInitiative.com

Social Media Depression

by Walt Mueller



Social Media Depression is fueled in large part by the fact that social media allows us to craft and curate ourselves as we carefully construct our persona through the words and images that we choose to post. In other words, an online profile and postings consist of what one judiciously chooses to upload. In a world where our kids come to believe that "I am defined by my appearance and what others think of it," we are constantly comparing ourselves to others. . . and wind up feeling like we don't measure up.

Help your kids realize that what they see from their friends on social media is a horribly incomplete picture. The tendency to put one's best foot forward is universal in the online world of social media. What you see offers only a small, curated window into a person's reality. And, when the postings seem too consistently good to be true, remember that that is probably the case. Everyone struggles with sin and brokenness in their lives and their relationships. And sometimes, the most carefully curated personas have been most carefully curated to cover deep hurt, pain, brokenness, and difficult life situations. As Brennan Manning has advised, "Don't compare your insides to other people's outsides."

New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters

is a long-format podcast from CPYU. Co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek.



Listen at
www.cpyu.org/podcast.

Be sure to check out
**Episode 44 for an interview
with counselor Julie Lowe
on the topic of bullying.**

FROM THE WORD

God never promises that our lives will be easy. We live in a broken world as broken people. Hardships, distress, and troubles oftentimes come our way. When we are blessed with the gift of children, our family grows with the addition of more broken people. Therefore, the opportunities for difficulty to visit our homes increase. Realizing these things is not taking a pessimistic view of life, but rather a realistic view of life.

But we can't stop by lamenting our brokenness. A fully realistic view of life is a view that realizes the fact that we can turn to God in our times of difficulty to find hope. In Psalm 40, we read David's confession of trouble and distress. He describes himself as crying as he is stuck in troubles that he calls a "slimy pit" filled with "mud" and "mire." But this swampy ground of life's troubles are not where God allows him to remain. Rather, they are an occasion for God to answer his prayers by lifting him out of the difficulties.

**"BLESSED IS THE MAN
WHO MAKES THE
LORD HIS TRUST."
PSALM 40:4**

Life throws all kinds of difficult situations at us. Add children to the mix and the difficulties seem to come at us faster and harder. But David reminds us that that when we trust in the Lord, we have a help and a deliverer. We are truly blessed when we make the Lord our trust (Psalm 40:4). Parents, trust in the Lord not just when life is difficult, but at all times.

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Throughout the history of the church, Christians have used catechisms—collections of questions and answers designed for memorization and recitation—to teach others the core doctrines of the faith. *The New City Catechism* is a modern-day resource aimed at reintroducing this ancient method of teaching to Christians today.

This short book lays out 52 questions and answers related to God, human nature, sin, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and more. Whether used devotionally, recited orally, or memorized over the course of a year, families, churches, small groups, and Christian schools will treasure this as a valuable tool for teaching the core doctrines of the Christian faith to children and adults alike.

Additional resources are available in the form of *The New City Catechism Devotional* as well as *The New City Catechism Curriculum*. Each question in the devotional features a relevant Scripture reading, a short prayer, and a devotional commentary written by contemporary pastors, including John Piper, Timothy Keller, and Kevin DeYoung, and historical figures, such as Augustine, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and many others.

The New City Catechism

52 Questions
& Answers
for Our Hearts
& Minds
Introduction by
Kathy Keller

Introduction by
Kathy Keller



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