



# ***MYFRIENDS DOT COM CYBER SAFETY***

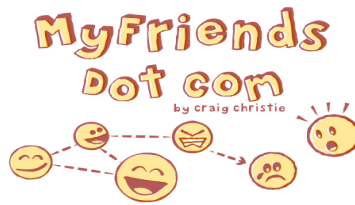
# **Teacher Activity Pack**

## **Contents:**

- About the Company
- Teacher instructions
- Selection of activities suitable for either before or after the performance

### **PERFORM! EDUCATIONAL MUSICALS**

1 SURREY ST, BENTLEIGH EAST, VICTORIA, 3165 AUSTRALIA **T:** 1300 652 470 **F:** (03) 9576 5658  
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## **ABOUT THE COMPANY**

***Perform! Educational Musicals*** is a multi award-winning theatrical producer and one of the largest touring theatre companies throughout Australia and New Zealand.

The company specialises in touring educational musicals for schools and has been operating since the year 2000. In that time we have toured to nearly 200,000 students annually in schools across Australia & New Zealand. In all, the company and its writers have toured our specialty educational musicals to **over one million students** across several countries including Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Papua New Guinea.

In 2011 we premiere a new musical tackling the theme of **Cyber Safety and Cyber Bullying**. This production promotes the theme and curriculum by inspiring students to identify and investigate the issues surrounding cyber safety and cyber bullying and its impact on their everyday life.

***“Cyber-bullying is the number one non-academic issue confronting parents and schools at the moment.” Susan McLean, Cyber Safety Solutions***

The performances, which take place within schools, feature powerful narratives with challenging and identifiable characters, linked using irresistible **songs** that captivate and engage all audiences from ages 10 to 15 years (as well as their teachers). Question time at the conclusion of the performance reinforces the learning outcomes, and this specially designed Teacher Activity Pack sent prior to the performance offers a comprehensive selection of classroom exercises for both before and after the show.

**The Writer** – Craig Christie      [www.craigchristie.com](http://www.craigchristie.com)

Craig Christie is an award-winning writer, composer and teacher. His unique educational musicals have played to over one million students throughout New Zealand, Australia, UK, USA and Asia. As a composer Craig has also created a number of commercial musicals including ***Eurobeat*** – ***Almost Eurovision*** which opened on the London West End in 2008. He also travels extensively around the world to lecture and run workshops in drama in education, community theatre and creative writing.

To find out more about ***Perform! Educational Musicals*** or to contact the company, please log onto our website at [www.performmusicals.com](http://www.performmusicals.com)

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## **TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS**

- **TEACHER ACTIVITY PACK:** Please copy and distribute to all relevant teachers **PRIOR** to the performance.
- **PERFORMER ARRIVAL TIME** Performers will arrive approximately 30 minutes before the scheduled performance start time.
- **STUDENT NUMBERS:** Please know **IN ADVANCE** the number of students attending and inform our Team Leader at the conclusion of the performance.
- **START TIME:** Please ensure students are lined up outside the performance space 5 minutes before the commencement of the show to guarantee a prompt start. We are not able to work within your school bell times if the performance does not start on time.
- **PERFORMANCE SPACE REQUIREMENTS:** Power access is required in the space to power our sound equipment.  
*Please note:* a small or medium sized room such as a multipurpose room or small hall is more effective acoustically and atmospherically than a large space such as a gym. Please make the performance area available 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the show so that the performers can prepare the space.
- **SAFETY:** Please ensure the space is clean and clear for the safety and wellbeing of your students and the performers.
- **TEACHER PRESENCE:** We request teacher presence and support for the performers at all times during the show.
- **PRICE:** \$4.50 per student (Your school may have already paid a deposit which will be deducted off the final invoice).
- **MINIMUM NUMBER OF STUDENTS:** 140 students are required per show otherwise a flat fee of \$630 will apply per performance.
- **PAYMENT OF BALANCE:** A tax invoice for the balance will be forwarded to you the day *after* the performance, so please **do not prepare a cheque on the day.** We have instructed the performers not to handle any money or financial issues. These should all be directed to our office.

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## **TEACHER INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES**

1. *MyFriends Dot Com!* synopsis
2. General discussion points
3. Student group activities
4. Related web sites and further activities

*The 2009 Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities survey reported that of the 2.7 million children aged 5 to 14 years, 79% used the internet. Home was reported as the most common site of internet use (73%) followed by school (69%).*

*In 2009 an estimated 841,000 children (31%) aged 5 to 14 years had access to their own mobile phones.*

*Up to 27% of all 8-11 year olds and 55% of 12-15 year olds have social networking profiles*

*35% of children have been bullied or harassed online  
84% of teenagers use chat rooms daily*

### **SYNOPSIS**

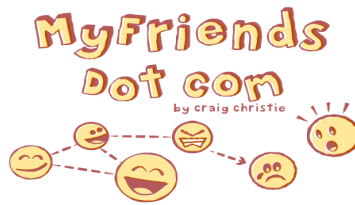
*MyFriends Dot Com!* takes us into the dangerous world of cyber bullying. Emma arrives at a new school facing new friendship groups. Meanwhile, Dylan is spending more time away in his room on the computer. Soon they both will discover how the anonymous cyber world will threaten to take over their lives in a way from which they can see no escape!

On Emma's first day at Winter Valley High School, she attempts to find out what book was set for English homework from classmate Michael. When he immediately asks for her mobile number to text her the title, a confused Emma rejects it as unnecessary. Popular girl Hannah catches Michael, her ex-boyfriend, asking for Emma's number and confronts him over it, suggesting he wants to date Emma. Hannah bumps into Dylan, who attempts to engage her in conversation. Hannah cuts Dylan off and heads to class. That evening, Dylan is at home on the computer and decides to request Emma as a friend on Facebook. Sitting at home on her computer, Emma sees Dylan's friend request and accepts it, deciding that although she hasn't met him she needs all the friends at school she can get.

The next day at school, Dylan meets Emma in person and reassures her that she will make new friends soon. Emma bumps into Michael again, who criticizes her for making friends with a "geek" like Dylan after rejecting his mobile number the day before. That night on his computer, Michael notices that Dylan has added Emma on Facebook. Annoyed, he also requests Emma as a friend. A jealous Hannah takes

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revenge by spreading rumours about Emma online to other students that Emma is “picking up every guy she meets”. Dylan sees the abusive messages that Hannah is writing, but decides not to intervene at the risk that Hannah will “turn” on him.

Dylan finds Emma alone and distraught after having been verbally attacked by other students. Dylan lets Emma know that rumours are being spread about her and reassures Emma that these rumours will soon die down. Dylan offers his mobile number to Emma in the event she needs anything. Emma sends a text to Dylan so he also has her number and both part on good terms. That evening Dylan accesses a second profile on Facebook where he assumes a fake identity as an 18 year old college student from California reflecting on his desire to be “someone else”.

Hannah accuses Dylan of wanting to date Emma. She tries to convince Dylan that Emma is a bad person and to stay away from her. When this fails, she asks to borrow Dylan’s mobile but uses it to send an abusive text message to Emma. Thinking this text was sent by Dylan, Emma texts Dylan to “get lost”. Believing that Emma has turned on him without reason, a hurt Dylan turns to his computer. In retaliation he sets his Facebook status to “I hate Emma”, then under his alias posts a message berating her.

Emma reflects on how hurt she is that Dylan was so horrible. She also reveals that she had been receiving anonymous abusive text messages all night and feels unable to confide in either her parents or the school. Michael then accuses Emma of thinking she is “better than everyone” and suggests that “everyone knows about” the bad things she has done.

Dylan reveals he has met a new online friend called Sally who understands everything he is going through. Hannah then accuses Dylan of being Emma’s boyfriend. When Dylan challenges this accusation, Hannah asks him to hand over his phone as proof. She then uses Dylan’s phone to send another abusive text and deletes the evidence. Meanwhile, Emma is getting more distraught at the hostility she is facing at school and her inability to do anything about it.

That night Dylan is chatting online with Sally. Their discussion turns to a disturbing request to see pictures of him in his boxers and t-shirt. Signing off from the chat, Dylan checks his Facebook and discovers an ominous status update from Emma that reads ‘You win Winter Valley High. You won’t be able to hurt me any more’. Although Dylan concludes from this that Emma is going to another school he is not certain what has happened to her.

Hannah, Michael and Dylan are questioned by the police on their knowledge of the Cyber Bullying incidents against Emma. Hannah argues that she barely knew Emma and accuses Dylan of stalking. Michael defends himself and accuses Hannah of leading a bullying pack. Dylan comes to realise that Hannah was responsible for sending abusive texts to Emma from his phone and provoking the illusion that Emma

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had “turned”. He is also questioned on his alias profile and informed that this is illegal.

Back at school, Michael confronts Hannah, telling her she is partially responsible for Emma’s disappearance. Hannah reveals that her friends are no longer talking to her and she has no idea how she is going to put her life back together.

Dylan enters and reveals that the police have confiscated his computer and been able to trace everything. He states how humiliating it was to have this information revealed to his parents and expresses concern about Emma’s fate. He voices regret at letting Hannah use his mobile and relates that “Sally” turned out to be a 45 year old man, arriving at the conclusion that you can’t trust what you see online.

Emma returns and discusses how her isolating experience of bullying led her to have such negative thoughts. She explains that she called Lifeline who informed her that she was a victim of criminal bullying and that they helped her to devise strategies regarding how to address the problem. She reveals that she has now moved to a different school and warns the audience to consider the consequences of thoughtless texting or posting online.

## **DISCUSSION POINTS**

Post show question time in conjunction with this Activity Pack is designed to extend these themes by then encouraging students to investigate and take real action within their own lives, families and community. The following questions can be used before or after the production to reiterate themes covered and questions raised in the production.

- What effect do you think being on the receiving end of any cyber bullying can have on a person?
- Why would someone do things that would make them a cyber bully? Do you think cyber bullies always know what they are doing and how it can affect the person they are bullying?
- Do you think it’s fair that Dylan got most of the blame for what happened in the show? Discuss
- Even though she escapes the blame from the police there are consequences for Hannah for what she had done. What are they and how do you think life will be different for her at school now?
- What things do you think Hannah could have done to have made a much better outcome for herself and other people in the show?

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- In the show Dylan sometimes pretends to be someone else on line. Why does he do this? What are some of the dangers involved in pretending to be someone else online?
- Dylan also makes online friends who are not who they pretend to be. What are the dangers of making friends online with people you don't actually know?
- What does Hannah do with Dylan's phone when she borrows it?
- What should you do if you ever receive an unpleasant or threatening text message?
- What is the difference between real friends you see in person all the time and virtual friends who are far away or you may not know in person?
- What are some of the things that can happen if you spend too much time online in chat rooms and facebook?
- How would the story of *MyFriends Dot Com* be different if Emma had reported the cyber bullying that happened on facebook when it first started?

### **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- What is cyber bullying? Write out a list of all things that could be part of a definition of what cyber bullying is
- Do any of the characters in the show remind you of characters from elsewhere – movies, television, books? Hold a class discussion about who the characters from the play resemble and why.
- Write a police report of the incident that the police became involved in including what exactly happened, who was involved and what the outcome was.
- Write a character profile for each of the following characters – Emma, Dylan, Hannah, Michael.
- Create a document for all students outlining ways to deal with cyber bullying.
- In the show Emma starts at a new school. Has anyone in your class come from another school? Create a class document outlining ways to make a new student feel more secure and welcomed.

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### **The “am I spending too much time on Facebook” Test**

Tick each of the following statements if they apply to you and add up your total:

- a. I spend more than an half an hour on Facebook each day.
- b. When I am doing homework, I keep flicking over to facebook to check for updates.
- c. Facebook is the first page you check when you go online.
- d. I find myself updating my status for than once in a day.
- e. I spend more time talking to people online than in person in a normal day.

1-2 -You’re doing OK

3-4 - Not too bad, but perhaps you should think about cutting back a little

5 - Facebook addict! Log off now before it takes over your life completely!

### **How do you know whether it is Cyber bullying?**

*Which of these situations might count as cyberbullying? Read through the following and then get into pairs or small groups and compare and discuss your reasons.*

- 1) A friend texts you an angry message demanding you give back the ipod you borrowed
- 2) A student hacks your facebook profile and posts an offensive status update
- 3) A friend turns down your invitation to go and see a movie
- 4) Someone sends you an anonymous abusive text
- 5) Someone posts a link on twitter to an image of you on a website

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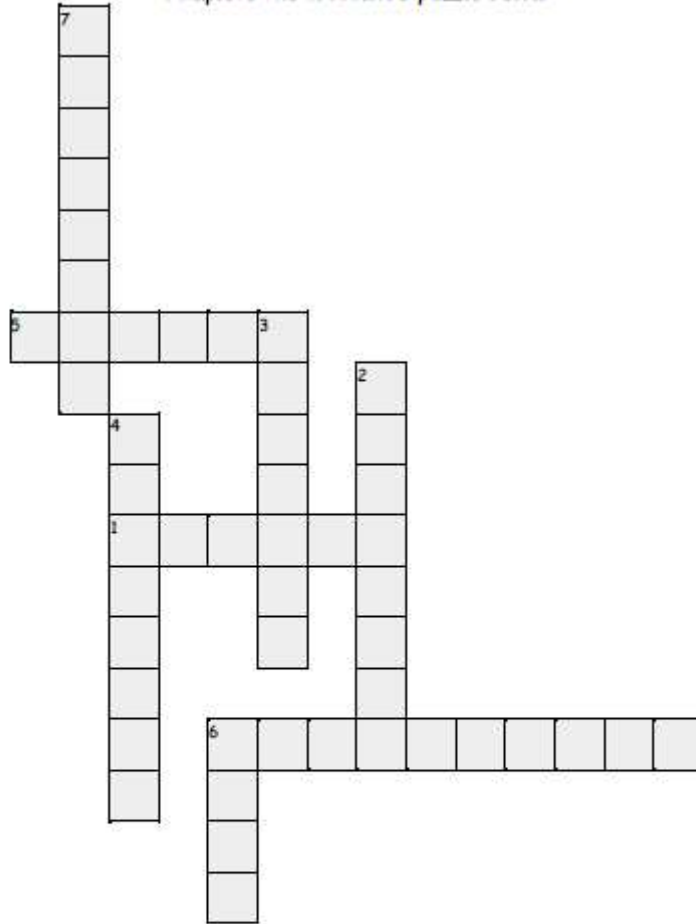
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## MyFriends Dot Com Crossword

Complete the crossword puzzle below



**Across:**

- 1. Hannah sends abusive messages using Dylan's \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Hannah, Dylan and Michael are questioned by \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Hannah's actions toward Emma make her a \_\_\_\_\_

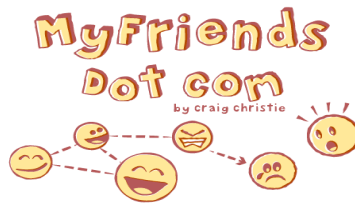
**Down:**

- 2. The organisation Emma calls for help
- 3. Emma asks Michael about homework for this subject
- 4. The first thing Dylan switches on when he gets home
- 7. A social networking site
- 6. The name of Dylan's fake online identity

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## **USEFUL WEBLINKS & FURTHER ACTIVITIES**

Learn Guide Protect

<http://www.mylgp.org.nz/>

Netsafe

<http://www.netsafe.org.nz/>

Cyber Bullying (Netsafe)

<http://www.cyberbullying.org.nz/>

Department of Internal Affairs – Child Safety Online

[http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg\\_URL/Resource-material-Information-We-Provide-Child-Safety-Online?OpenDocument&ExpandView](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Resource-material-Information-We-Provide-Child-Safety-Online?OpenDocument&ExpandView)

WebSafety

<http://www.websafety.co.nz/>

TelstraClear

<http://www.cyberbullying.co.nz/index.cfm>

Digital Literacy

<http://www.nwlg.org/digitalliteracy/>

Bullying No Way

<http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/talkout/spotlight/cyberbullyingmain.shtml>

Webaware

<http://www.bewebaware.ca/english/default.html>

Internet Safety Zone

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/getsource.cfm?id=10553>

Getnetwise

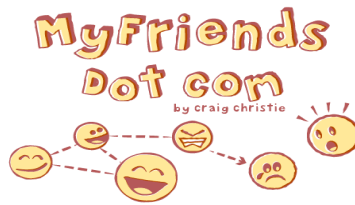
<http://www.getnetwise.org/>

Daily Telegraph

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw-act/cyber-bullying-is-every-schools-responsibility/story-e6freuzi-1225881102673>

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## **STUDENT COUNSELLING AND INFORMATION HANDOUT**

### **Lifeline**

<http://www.lifeline.co.nz/>

Lifeline offers a 24-hour telephone counselling service to anyone from anywhere in New Zealand. Lifeline volunteer telephone counsellors are well trained and always ready to listen to you. Counsellors offer friendly and kind advice and your information is strictly confidential. You can call Lifeline on 0800 543 354..

### **Youthline**

<http://www.youthline.co.nz/>

Youthline features a section of their website that offers contact details and information regarding their youth counselling services.

### **0800 What's Up?**

<http://www.whatsup.co.nz/>

What's Up? is a free, national telephone counselling service for New Zealanders aged 5 to 18 years. The service operates seven days a week from noon to midnight.

### **Headspace**

<http://www.headspace.org.nz/>

Headspace provides mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across New Zealand.

### **Youth Beyondblue**

<http://www.youthbeyondblue.com>

Youth Beyond Blue provides information, fact sheets, resources and young people's stories on depression and anxiety.

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## AN IMPORTANT NEWS ARTICLE

# As Bullies Go Digital, Parents Play Catch-Up

By JAN HOFFMAN

Published: December 4, 2010

“The kids say I’m saying all these nasty things about them on [Facebook](#),” he said. “They don’t believe me when I tell them I’m not on Facebook.”

But apparently, he was.

Marie, a medical technologist and single mother who lives in Newburyport, Mass., searched Facebook. There she found what seemed to be her son’s page: his name, a photo of him grinning while running — and, on his public wall, sneering comments about teenagers he scarcely knew.

Someone had forged his identity online and was bullying others in his name.

Students began to shun him. Furious and frightened, Marie contacted school officials. After expressing their concern, they told her they could do nothing. It was an off-campus matter.

But Marie was determined to find out who was making her son miserable and to get them to stop. In choosing that course, she would become a target herself. When she and her son learned who was behind the scheme, they would both feel the sharp sting of betrayal. Undeterred, she would insist that the culprits be punished.

It is difficult enough to support one’s child through a siege of schoolyard bullying. But the lawlessness of the Internet, its potential for casual, breathtaking cruelty, and its capacity to cloak a bully’s identity all present slippery new challenges to this transitional generation of analog parents.

Desperate to protect their children, parents are floundering even as they scramble to catch up with the technological sophistication of the next generation.

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Like Marie, many parents turn to schools, only to be rebuffed because officials think they do not have the authority to intercede. Others may call the police, who set high bars to investigate. Contacting Web site administrators or Internet service providers can be a daunting, protracted process.

When parents know the aggressor, some may contact that child's parent, stumbling through an evolving etiquette in the landscape of social awkwardness. Going forward, they struggle with when and how to supervise their adolescents' forays on the Internet.

Marie, who asked that her middle name and her own nickname for her son, D.C., be used to protect his identity, finally went to the police. The force's cybercrimes specialist, Inspector Brian Brunault, asked if she really wanted to pursue the matter.

"He said that once it was in the court system," Marie said, "they would have to prosecute. It could probably be someone we knew, like a friend of D.C.'s or a neighbor. Was I prepared for that?"

Marie's son urged her not to go ahead. But Marie was adamant. "I said yes."

### **Parental Fears**

One afternoon last spring, [Parry Aftab](#), a lawyer and expert on cyberbullying, addressed seventh graders at George Washington Middle School in Ridgewood, N.J.

"How many of you have ever been cyberbullied?" she asked.

The hands crept up, first a scattering, then a thicket. Of 150 students, 68 raised their hands. They came forward to offer rough tales from social networking sites, instant messaging and texting. Ms. Aftab stopped them at the 20th example.

Then she asked: How many of your parents know how to help you?

A scant three or four hands went up.

Cyberbullying is often legally defined as repeated harassment online, although in popular use, it can describe even a sharp-elbowed, gratuitous swipe. Cyberbullies

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themselves resist easy categorization: the anonymity of the Internet gives cover not only to schoolyard-bully types but to victims themselves, who feel they can retaliate without getting caught.

But online bullying can be more psychologically savage than schoolyard bullying. The Internet erases inhibitions, with adolescents often going further with slights online than in person.

“It’s not the swear words,” Inspector Brunault said. “They all swear. It’s how they gang up on one individual at a time. ‘Go cut yourself.’ Or ‘you are sooo ugly’ — but with 10 u’s, 10 g’s, 10 l’s, like they’re all screaming it at someone.”

The cavalier meanness can be chilling. On a California teenage boy’s Facebook wall, someone writes that his 9-year-old sister is “a fat bitch.” About the proud Facebook photos posted by a 13-year-old New York girl, another girl comments: “hideous” and “this pic makes me throwup a lil.” If she had to choose between the life of an animal and that of the girl in the photos, she continues, she would choose the animal’s, because “yeah, at least they’re worth something.”

This is a dark, vicious side of adolescence, enabled and magnified by technology. Yet because so many horrified parents are bewildered by the technology, they think they are helpless to address the problems it engenders.

“I’m not seeing signs that parents are getting more savvy with technology,” said [Russell A. Sabella](#), former president of the American School Counselor Association. “They’re not taking the time and effort to educate themselves, and as a result, they’ve made it another responsibility for schools. But schools didn’t give the kids their cellphones.”

As bullying, or at least conflict, becomes more prevalent in the digital world, parents are beginning to turn out for community lectures, offered by psychologists, technology experts and the police. One weekday night this fall, Meghan Quigley, a mother from Duxbury, Mass., was among the 100 or so parents who attended a panel featuring [Elizabeth Englander](#), a psychologist who consulted on the new Massachusetts bullying law.

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“I absolutely have to be much more techno savvy than I want to be,” said Mrs. Quigley, who does not know how to text, although two of her children use cellphones just to text their friends. “But it is overwhelming to me.”

These lectures typically combine technology primers so elementary that elementary-school children might snicker, with advanced course work in 21st-century child-rearing.

Dr. Englander reminded parents that while children may be nimble with technology, they lack the maturity to understand its consequences.

Then she demonstrated how to adjust Facebook privacy settings. Many parents peered at her slides, taking notes.

Don't set too much stock in those settings, she said: “ ‘Privacy’ is just a marketing term.” A child's Facebook friend, she noted, could easily forward the “private” information.

In a study last year of 312 freshmen at Bridgewater State University, Dr. Englander found that 75 percent reported that during a typical high school day they had used their cellphones for voice communication 30 percent of the time or less, preferring to use them for texting, sending photos and videos, and surfing the Internet.

This is not a “phone,” Dr. Englander told the parents who looked, collectively, shellshocked. What you've given your child “is a mobile computer.”

If their children get caught in a crisis, she said, parents should preserve the evidence, by taking a screenshot of the offending material.

A mother timidly raised her hand. “How do I make a screenshot?”

### **The Bully Next Door**

Throughout the fall, the Facebook profile set up in D.C.'s name taunted students: “At least I don't take pics of myself in the mirror like a homosexual midget,” wrote “D.C.” Also, “you smell weird.” And “ur such a petaphile.” At school, students would belligerently ask D.C. why he was picking fights on Facebook. He would eat lunch alone, and skipped some school, insisting that he was ill.

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“I would always ask him, ‘Are you having a good day?’” Marie said. “So he stopped talking to me about anything at school. He was afraid I would make more trouble for him. But the real victim was being ostracized more than the kids who were being bullied on his Facebook page.”

She would call Inspector Brunault weekly. Last fall, the detective had to subpoena Facebook for the address of the computer linked to the forged profile. Then he had to subpoena [Comcast](#), the Internet service provider, for the home address of the computer’s owner.

Facebook has since made it simpler to report malicious activity. Although Facebook declined to make its head of security available for an interview, a spokesman replied by e-mail that if Facebook determines that a report of an impostor profile is legitimate, “We will provide a limited amount of data that helps the person take steps to repair his or her identity.”

Finally, in January, Inspector Brunault told Marie he was getting close. He visited the home address supplied by Comcast. When he left, he had two more names and addresses.

A few weeks later, he called Marie.

Just before dinner, Marie broke the news to D.C. Two culprits were 14; one was 13. After learning the first two names, D.C. said: “Those guys have never liked me. I don’t know why.”

But the third boy had been a friend since preschool. His father was a sports coach of D.C.’s.

D.C. was silent. Then he teared up.

Finally, he said, “Do you mean to tell me, Mom, that they hate me so much that they would take the time to do this?”

Inspector Brunault asked the boys why they had done it. That summer, they replied, they had been reading Facebook profiles of people’s dogs, which they found hilarious. They decided to make up a profile. They picked D.C. “because he was a loner and a follower.”

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Although the police did not release the boys' names because they are juveniles, word seeped through town. In the middle of the night, Marie received anonymous calls. "They told me my son should just suck it up," she recalled. "They said he would be a mama's boy. They would rant and then they would hang up."

### **Contacting the Other Parent**

After Marie learned the identities of her son's cyberbullies, she did not call their parents. She was so incensed that she communicated only through official go-betweens, like the police and prosecutors.

But some parents prefer to resolve the issue privately, by contacting the bully's family. Psychologists do not recommend that approach with schoolyard bullying, because it can devolve into conflicting narratives. With cyberbullying, a parent's proof of baldly searing digital exchanges can reframe that difficult conversation.

Parents who present the other parents with a printout of their child's most repugnant moments should be prepared for minimization, even denial.

Maj. Glenn Woodson's daughter, Sierra, has a shortened leg because of a congenital condition. One night, when she was in sixth grade, she received a text message showing a stick figure of her lying prostrate, eyes crossed out, another girl holding a bloody blade over the body. It had been sent by three girls in Sierra's grade.

Major Woodson, who lives on an Army base in Monterey, Calif., contacted the military police. They had a stern sit-down with the families of the three girls. Teachers held a workshop on cyberbullying. Two families apologized to the Woodsons.

Finally, the mother of the third girl, the instigator, called. " 'It isn't her fault,' she said to my wife," Major Woodson said. "The mom said: 'I think this is way overblown. My daughter is being punished and she's not the only one who did it.' "

The mother did not apologize.

What may be offensive in one household may be just a shoulder shrug in another.

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In the San Francisco Bay Area, Christine, who, like many parents interviewed for this article asked that her last name not be used to protect her child's identity, selected a school for her daughter largely because it eschewed technology. But when her daughter was in sixth grade, a classmate e-mailed her links to pornography sites.

Christine called the boy's mother. "I asked her to get her son to stop," Christine said. "She apologized, and her son wrote us a letter of apology. "

"My goal wasn't to polish my shotgun. It's not about a show of force but a show of presence. I said, 'If you want to be friends with her, you can't text her and you can't use another boy's phone.' "

The boy's father said Rolin had been easier on his son than the father would have been, had the roles been reversed.

Eventually, the relationship cooled on its own. "But I still have his number blocked on her phone," Rolin said.

### **When the Bully Is Your Child**

After the police arrested the boys who usurped D.C.'s identity, the parents wrote Marie awkward apology letters. Only one mother phoned, in tears.

No matter how parents see their children, learning of the cruelties they may perpetrate is jarring and can feel like an indictment of their child-rearing.

One afternoon two years ago, Judy, a recent widow in Palm Beach County, Fla., who had been finishing her college degree, helping a professor research cyberbullying, and working in an office, got a call from the middle school.

"Your daughter is involved in a cyberbullying incident," the assistant principal said. "Come down immediately."

Her daughter and two others had made a [MySpace](#) page about another middle-schooler, saying she was a "whore," with a finger pointing to her private parts.

The young teenagers printed out copies and flung them at students.

Judy rushed to school. Her daughter, a sweet, straight-A student, was waiting in the guidance counselor's office, her arms crossed defiantly.

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“I said to her, ‘This is a human being,’” Judy recalled. “ ‘This girl will be destroyed for the rest of her life!’ And my daughter just said: ‘I don’t care. It’s all true.’ And I bawled while she just sat there.”

The school suspended Judy’s daughter for three days.

“I did not call the target, I’m ashamed to say,” Judy recalled. “I didn’t know how to get hold of her. The school wouldn’t give me her name, and my daughter wouldn’t talk to me.”

Once Judy got over her shock, she said, “I had to accept that my daughter had really done this and it was so ugly.”

Judy took away her daughter’s computer, television and cellphone for months. She tried talking with her. Nothing. There were weeks of screaming and slammed doors.

Meanwhile, the girl’s grades dropped. She was caught with [marijuana](#). Judy realized that her daughter had long been bottling up many family stressors: illness and death, financial worries, her mother’s exhausting schedule. In reaction, the girl had been misbehaving, including doing the very thing her mother found so abhorrent: cyberbullying.

In time, as Judy took long walks with her daughter, the girl began to resemble the child Judy thought she had known.

When her daughter’s grades improved, Judy bought her a puppy. “A lot of people will disagree with me,” Judy said, “but I thought, this is a way for her to be responsible for something other than herself, something that would be dependent on her for all its needs.”

The girl doted on the puppy. One day, Judy asked: “ ‘Would you want anyone to be mean to your dog? Throw rocks at Foxy?’ ”

Her daughter recoiled. Judy continued: “ ‘How do you think other parents feel when something mean happens to their children?’ Then she broke down crying. That’s when I think she finally understood what she had done.”

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## **Supervisor or Spy?**

Should teenagers have the same expectation of privacy from parents in their online accounts that an earlier generation had with their little red diaries and keys?

Software programs that speak to parental fears are manifold. Parents can block Web sites, getting alerts when the child searches for them. They can also monitor cellphones: a program called Mobile Spy promises to let parents see all text messages, track G.P.S. locations and record phone activity without the child knowing.

Parents who never believed they would resort to such tactics find themselves doing so.

Christine, the Bay Area mother whose daughter was sent links to pornography, struggled with how to supervise her daughter online. The challenge was compounded because students in the girl's grade were playing sexualized Truth or Dare games. Her daughter had a leading role.

Christine cut off her daughter's Internet access for months, mandating that she write schoolwork by hand. Over time, the girl earned back computer privileges. Christine also moved her to a parochial school. Then her daughter went on Facebook.

"We didn't know much about Facebook," said Christine, "but we set up serious monitoring." One program limited computer time; another blocked certain sites. Christine even had her daughter's Facebook password, so she could read the girl's private messages.

That was how Christine discovered 82 exchanges between her daughter, a freshman, and a popular senior boy at the school. Her daughter offered him oral sex if he promised not to tell friends. The boy wrote back, "Would it be O.K. if I tell friends but not the ones at school?"

Christine's daughter now sees a therapist. Christine herself uses a keystroke logger, software that records everything her two daughters write and see on their home computer. "It's uncomfortable," Christine said. "But my older daughter has

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demonstrated less than zero common sense. The level of trust between us is much lower than I'd like it to be. But I also think she was relieved that we caught her.

“My younger daughter calls me a stalker. She says we mistrust her because of what her sister did. That’s true. But my eyes are open, and I won’t go back.”

[Studies](#) show that children tend to side with Christine’s younger daughter. Last April in an omnibus review of studies addressing youth, privacy and reputation, a [report](#) by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard noted that parents who checked their children’s online communications were seen as “controlling, invasive and ‘clueless.’” Young people, one study noted, had a notion of an online public viewership “that excludes the family.”

Conversely, studies show that more parents are heading in Christine’s direction. A recent [study](#) of teenagers and phones by the [Pew Research Center](#) Internet and American Life Project said that parents regard their children’s phones as a “parenting tool.” About two-thirds said they checked the content of their children’s phones (whether teenagers pre-emptively delete texts is a different matter). Two-thirds of the parents said they took away phones as punishment. Almost half said they used phones to check on their child’s whereabouts. Anne Collier, editor of [NetFamilyNews.org](#), a parenting and technology news blog, noted that stealth monitoring may be warranted in rare cases, when a parent suspects a child is at serious risk, such as being contacted by an unknown adult.

But generally, she said, spying can have terrible repercussions:

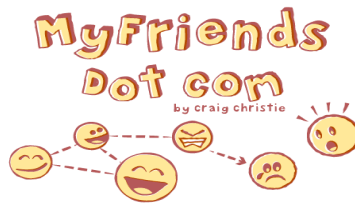
“If you’re monitoring your child secretly,” Ms. Collier said, “what do you say to the kid when you find something untoward? Then the conversation turns into ‘you invaded my privacy,’ which is not what you intended to talk about.”

Experts do not agree on guidelines about monitoring. But most concur on one principle:

“There is no one technology that will keep your kids safe,” said Dr. [Larry D. Rosen](#), a psychology professor at [California State University](#), Dominguez Hills, who writes about raising a tech savvy generation. “The kids are smart enough to get around any technology you might use.”

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Dr. Englander installed keystroke logger software on her family computer. She uses it less as a monitoring device than as a means to teach her sons about digital safety. The Post-it on the family's computer reads: "Don't Forget That Mom Sees Everything You Do Online." She does not, in fact, check frequently. She just wants her boys to think before they hit the "send" button, so they understand that there is no privacy online, from her, or anyone.

Last spring, the Essex County, Mass., district attorney's office sent the three boys who forged D.C.'s Facebook identity to a juvenile diversion program for first-time nonviolent offenders.

If the boys adhere to conditions for a year, they will not be prosecuted. According to a spokesman, those conditions include: a five-page paper on cyberbullying; letters of apology to D.C. and everyone they insulted in his name on Facebook; attending two Internet safety presentations; community service; no access to the Internet except to complete schoolwork. Their computers must be in a public family space, not the bedroom.

Marie, who reports that D.C. has a new circle of friends and good grades, is reasonably satisfied with the sentencing conditions.

But compliance is another matter. She believes that at least one boy is already back on Facebook.

Overburdened school administrators and, increasingly, police officers who unravel juvenile cybercrimes, say it is almost impossible for them to monitor regulations imposed on teenagers.

As with the boys who impersonated D.C. online, a district attorney's spokeswoman said, "That monitoring is up to the parents."

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