Beware! You might be a bully, too!

The term "**Cyber Bullying**" means to use web-based platforms, such as instant messengers, cell phones, e-mails, BBS, blogs, chartrooms, message boards, etc., to send or post rumors, slanders, or pictures in order to humiliate, mock, insult, or disgust somebody. The characteristic of cyber space being seemingly false and real at the same time has facilitated the abovementioned messages being widely spread among peers, even the general public, and eventually achieved the objective of slandering somebody. The victims normally feel frightened, ashamed, or resentful since they find her/himself being publicly judged in the cyberspace whereas the sources of such "messages" are difficult to pin down.

◇ **Common Cyber-Bullying Behaviors**

1. <u>Cyber Writing</u>: Discriminative jokes, ruthless or harsh critique, even those embarrassing online votes are regarded as cyber bullying. Some people are easily affected by the words and deeds of others since they make rather much of other people, matters, or objects. In light of that, being voted as for instance "The Class's Most XXX Person" is highly likely to result in negative mental development or mental stress.

2. <u>Graphical Harassment</u>: Public circulation of personal photos, pornographic pictures or pictures containing sexual innuendo, or fake (normally computer-edited) photos is within this category. Graphical harassment very often comes with writing, and that will bring huge impact to the victim's reputation and everyday life.

3. <u>Personal Message</u>: This involves with sending threatening e-mails or text messages directly to the victims or their families and close friends. Since e-mails and messages contain both words and images, it is impossible to guard against such behaviors, it is too tiring to handle, and it is highly likely to cause critical mental injury.

The abovementioned three types of long-term and causeless harassment can be found from mocking or insulting somebody, excluding somebody from certain communities including the society, or disturbing and jeopardizing somebody's study. As a matter of fact, a simple click from the bullies on their keyboards or keypads often create unimaginable impact, for instance, sending out a huge amount of e-mails or text messages with fake and negative contents, assuming somebody else's names, giving somebody the elbow, or even framing somebody, which sometimes is worse than traditional school bullying in terms of the seriousness of harm.

In addition, the victims of cyber bullying can be teachers or administrative staff as well. If, for instance, a student just posts without consulting anyone some resentful words on the Internet letting off her/his anger toward some teacher, the aggressive, exaggerative, or even insulting wording can be considered as cyber bullying. Another example will be fabricate through cut and paste the photos

of some teacher and turn them into inappropriate ones.

◇ **When to do when encountering cyber bullying?**

1. Deal with it ASAP! In other words, do not submit to humiliation. You should retain all the evidence for making official complaints to web administrators, teachers, or the police.

2. Before posting messages in the cyberspace, think carefully if such action will break any law or harm somebody. When you find yourself agitated, you need to wait until perfectly calm to take any action.

3. Verify carefully whether or not anything you read from the Internet is true. Do not forward or post at your own choice any message that might hurt somebody to avoid becoming an accessory to cyber bullying.

Chu, Mei-Kuei (2006) *A New Type of Cyber Crime ~ Invisible Fists: A Research on Teenagers' Cyber Bullying*.

Smart Kids (http://youth.smartkid.org.tw/youth/)

Criminal Investigation Bureau – Say 'No!' to Cyber Bullying (http://bullying.cib.gov.tw/)