

## Social Media

In **today's digital age**, social media is undeniably an integral part of our youths' way of communicating – perhaps it is even their preferred way of “talking.”

Unfortunately, social media presents many opportunities for weight-related cyberbullying, while sending our kids the wrong message that this bias is acceptable.

### Examples of weight bias in the social media:

- Posting mean jokes or comments about someone's weight
- Taking unauthorized photos/videos of peers with overweight and uploading them
- Writing “fat shaming” comments on Facebook, Twitter, etc.

### Why should I be concerned?

- *Anyone can be anonymous.* It's harder for kids to know if they're being teased, while it's easier for bullies to be even harsher.
- *Messages spread far and wide.* Technology is fast and with so many digital-savvy kids, comments or images posted online on social networking sites are immediately viewable.
- *24/7.* As kids' interaction with their friends and the outside world doesn't end once they are home, they are vulnerable to weight-based teasing no matter when or where they are.



### What can I do?

- *Treat cyberbullying seriously.* Consequences of cyberbullying are just as real as face-to-face incidents
- *Have clear rules.* Just like your permission is required for certain activities, set rules for your kids' online activities. Reassure your kids that you are not banning technology, but simply want to protect them.
- *Keep communication open.* Talk with your kids about interesting websites they have visited, any unusual activity online, who their cyber-friends are, etc.

### Signs to be aware of in your child:

- ✓ Unexpectedly stops using their computer or phone
- ✓ Appears anxious with computer or phone alerts
- ✓ Avoids going to school or interacting with others
- ✓ Expresses anger, sadness, or frustration after using computer or phone
- ✓ Withdrawn from friends and family

