STOP THE DIGITAL BULLYING

The Internet is not a parallel fantasy world where young people are protected from harm. What happens there is, sadly, far too real. 33% of children and young people state that they have been subjected to online abuse. We want that number to decrease.

Child or adult? It does not matter. In this manual, we have gathered how you can contribute and be involved in stopping digital bullying.

CONTENTS

ADULTS

As an adult, you are a role model for children and young people. Your actions are crucial on how they communicate and act – be sure to set a good example. To overcome the problem, we need to work preventively. Your involvement is important even if your child has not been exposed – or exposed someone else – to digital bullying.

1. **Be curious**
You must be aware of how the children's digital landscape works. Download the apps they use, let them show you the functions, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

2. **Talk about social media**
What have the children seen, experienced, and been exposed to? Go through with them what is appropriate behavior online: the meaning of what they write, word choice, and why they must act decently.

3. **A glamorized world**
What's on social media rarely reflects reality. Explain that the images are edited and that angles, lighting, and filters can be deceiving.

CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

You who read this may be a person who has been exposed, or exposed someone else, to online bullying. Or maybe you are not – that does not matter. Regardless of who you are and what you have done, you must understand that you can be a part of making social media a safer place for everyone.

CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

1. **The receiver**
Reflect on how what you write is received. Does the recipient understand what you mean when he, or she, neither sees you, hears your tone of voice, or can read your body language?

2. **The written word**
The written word weighs as much as the spoken word - possibly even more. Be aware that what you write can be spread and lead to consequences in the future.

3. **Choice of words**
What words do you use? Do you understand the meaning of the word? Remember that words are not just words and that different things hit different people in different ways.

TO WORK PREVENTIVELY

Our starting point in AIK Football is to work preventively, instead of reacting when something has happened. Preventing incidents – both on and off the football pitch – is about incorporating common values at an early stage and, from that, creating desired behaviors. Simply talking about common values does not work if there is a lack of concrete actions and rules. Therefore, it is vital to reach a common consensus among players, leaders, and parents and determine what consequences will occur if the set rules are not followed.

1.

A question formula
We begin the work by setting up a question formula and defining how we reach our wanted position.
For example:

– How do we want children and young people to feel when they come to us?
– What do we want them to say about us when someone asks?
– What do we want them to remember from their time in AIK Football?

2.

Method
Based on these questions, we can get a sense of what we want our children and teenagers to feel, describe and remember. As an example, we come to the conclusion that we want them to feel safe – then we can ask ourselves the questions:

– What does it mean to be safe?
– What do we do concretely to make them feel safe?
– What actions do we need to take, and what behaviors do we need to show, in order for them to feel safe?

3. Reflection

To prevent problems on social media and the Internet, we use the previously mentioned questions. But we also make sure to hold an open dialogue with the children and young people – in order for them to share their experiences and give their view on the digital landscape:

– What do they think?
– What are the challenges?
– Do they have any suggestions on solutions?
– If they see bullying, abuse, or threats, what do they do?

4. Conclusion

It is of essence that we break the norm that prevails among young people, where they – for one reason or another – do not want, or dare to, be the one speaking out. Through conversation, we can create a culture where we encourage the opposite behavior. It does not matter if the bullying takes place online or in real life – the basis is the same; we must work preventively to create desired behaviors and get everyone to understand why it is important.