

MEDIA RELEASE

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headspace provides 'top tips' for young people on *Safer Internet Day*

headspace, National Youth Mental Health Foundation, is using *Safer Internet Day* to encourage young people to think about how their online activity can affect other people.

Safer Internet Day is an annual event that aims to raise awareness about the safe and responsible use of online technologies by children and young people. The theme for this year is: *think before you post*. **headspace** is reminding young people to consider the impact their online activity has on others.

headspace CEO Chris Tanti says, "Whether deliberately or inadvertently it is easy to hurt, humiliate or offend someone online. People often don't think about the impact of their online interactions on others. Negative online interactions can have a significant impact on a young person's mental health and can become very problematic to deal with because of the viral nature of social networking."

When hurtful, humiliating or aggressive activity persists the activity is classed as cyber bullying. 31 per cent of 14-17 year olds have reported that they have been cyber bullied, as have 21 per cent of 10-13 year olds¹. Cyber bullying can include name-calling, making abusive or derogatory remarks and picking on less experienced users. It is not limited to mobile phones and social networking sites; young people are also reporting being bullied via gaming sites, virtual worlds and other 'fun' online activities.

Cyber bullying can impact on different aspects of a young person's life including self-esteem, relationships, work or study. Cyber bullying can lead to trouble sleeping and concentrating, withdrawing from family and friends, stress and decreased self-confidence. In serious and ongoing cases, cyber bullying can lead to depression, anxiety disorders and thoughts of suicide.

headspace top 5 'netiquette' tips:

1. *Never send a reply to anyone when you are angry. Wait a period of time to cool down before you reply. Think about not replying at all.*
2. *Consider the impact of sharing someone else's sensitive personal information or images – how would you feel if it was your information or images?*
3. *Don't forward messages or pictures or jokes that are offensive even though you may not have started it, this also makes you a cyber bully.*
4. *It's important to respect other people's views – just because you don't agree with them, it doesn't mean you have to be rude or abusive.*
5. *Cyber bullying can be upsetting and stressful. If you're concerned for yourself or a friend, tell someone, particularly if you are feeling unsafe or frightened. See www.headspace.org.au to find help and support.*

In October 2009, **headspace** launched the Cyber Bullying Initiative with **S-press**, the nation's largest free publication for teenagers. The [Cyber Bullying Initiative](#) is a 12-month campaign to address and combat the growing incidence of online bullying.

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¹ http://www.microsoft.com/australia/presspass/news/pressreleases/Cyberbullying_Galaxy_Research_Release.msp