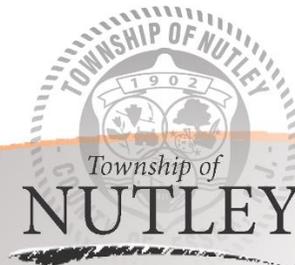




NEWSLETTER



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#Roastme: New form of cyberbullying parents should know about

It's called "Roasting" — a new form of cyberbullying that experts are warning parents about as it becomes particularly popular among children and teens.

Often under the hashtag #roastme, the trend involves people uploading videos of themselves on social media and asking to be roasted.

On platforms like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Reddit, friends and strangers then go back and forth posting barbs about the person in the video, often including hurtful and humiliating attacks.

What parents should know?

The new trend might be hard for some to understand with some asking why a child would intentionally ask to be publicly insulted?

However, experts like Stephanie Humphrey, a "tech life" expert, says children may not always know the difference between being funny and being hurtful to their peers, and that parents need to be aware and vigilant with their child's social media activity.

It takes vigilance

Being a teenager is often already a struggle, and Humphrey warns that this new trend is only adding to the hardship of growing up. Therefore, she says, parents need to stay vigilant on the social media platforms their children are using.

"Parents need to stay up on the tools because it happens on different platforms. They need to monitor what they are doing, as there is always a new platform and a new way to communicate that parents may not know about," she said.

Parents should take "roasting" seriously

Humphrey said that she has received some feedback from parents saying that the fears about roasting may be overblown. However, she doesn't think so.

"I think we need to have the proper mindset to have about this — it could be harmless (but) when hundreds of people have access to you, that is a completely different scenario," she said. "I think we need to be careful not to dismiss this — the tools make this much more of a dangerous thing."

Why are people asking to be roasted?

Humphrey said that some children may choose to invite the public insults on social media for a number of reasons — from "kids just being kids," to some wanting attention with others wanting to portray themselves "as invincible and fearless." it is actually a form of digital

However, for others, she said "it is actually a form of digital self-harm — "almost the same as cutting because they don't feel worthy already, and they use the roasting to reinforce what they already feel bad about."

Sometimes it's not voluntary

Humphrey, however, also noted that videos or photos of children are sometimes being posted by others without their permission.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has reached an all-time high in recent years, and has led to depression and even suicide among children and teens. On June 14, Mallory Grossman, who was just 12 years old, killed herself after she had been bullied in texts, on Instagram and Snapchat and in person. Her family has filed a lawsuit against the school district.

Some stats on cyberbullying

According to bullyingstatistics.org:

- Around half of teens have been the victims of cyber bullying.
- Only 1 in 10 teens tells a parent if they have been a cyber bully victim.
- Fewer than 1 in 5 cyber bullying incidents are reported to law enforcement.
- 1 in 10 adolescents or teens have had embarrassing or damaging pictures taken of themselves without their permission, often using cell phone cameras.
- About 1 in 5 teens have posted or sent sexually suggestive or nude pictures of themselves to others.
- Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to be involved in cyber bullying.

Talk to the ones doing the roasting

Humphrey said parents should not only be on the look out if their child is the one being roasted but also if their child is roasting another child.

"These parents need to be aware of the potential legal ramifications," she said. "Kids are being arrested for accessories to assault if it gets to the point that a child commits suicide. Some are being held liable for that, and parents should have a talk with their children about why they shouldn't be participating in the roast itself."

An app to help monitor your child's activity

There are many ways to keep an eye on your child's online activity. One is an application called Bark, which helps monitor children's use of social media, alerting parents about potential issues of cyberbullying, sexting, drug-related content, internet predators, depression and suicidal thoughts, according to a statement from a firm representing the app company.

Titania Jordan, chief parenting officer of Bark, said in a statement that roasting can start out innocuous and light-hearted but "can quickly escalate to cyberbullying that leaves lifelong scars."

The app's "watchdog engine" uses "advanced algorithms," which alerts parents if a potential issue is detected and sends a text or email that they can review — along with recommendations as to how to handle the situation, according to the app's website.

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