

Tips to combat cyberbullying during a complicated school year



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Starting off the school year hasn't been easy for many students with the ongoing pandemic, and the threat of cyberbullying may make things worse.

When the coronavirus forced schools to switch to emergency online education, many worried that cyberbullying would soar. However, new research shows that both bullying and cyberbullying actually dropped by up to 40%.

With the gradual return to in-person learning, bullying has increased, in part due to perpetrators engaging in both types of activities, according to the study.

According to the latest national figures, one in five high school students has reported being cyberbullied. However, the frequency was higher for middle schoolers, which aligns with what I observed a few years ago as a brick-and-mortar middle school teacher. Some kids at this age just want to look cool so they do anything to make that happen, even if it means putting others down.

Smartphones, social media apps and online games have become essential for teens and tweens to keep in touch with friends. During the pandemic, many schools added Zoom, Google Classroom and other digital platforms for educational purposes, tempting internet trolls to interfere.

The more time young people spend on screens, the more likely they are to encounter a cyberbully.

Cyberbullies threaten, humiliate and do other cruel things through texts, tweets, email and online video games. Experts say more of this harassment happens on teens' favorite social media including TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Discord and YouTube.

A cyberbully can pack a bigger punch than the schoolyard bully because the digital attack can go viral, amplifying the victim's painful experience across the internet. Studies show cyberbullied children are at higher risk for anxiety, suicidal thoughts and academic problems.

Cyberbullying has serious consequences, so it's important for families to take positive actions before and after situations arise.

Several groups promote October as National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month to inform parents, educators and students about ways to combat cyberbullying.

Ounce of prevention

Block bullies by teaching kids how to be safe online and monitor their activities in cyberspace. To help prevent cyberbullying, parents should be honest with students about ground rules and expectations when they first start using digital devices.

You know what's best for your family but consider being proactive. Should your children provide logins

for all of their social media accounts to you? What about installing parental control software to stop inappropriate content from bullies? Do your research and decide which measures should be taken to help protect your child.

Encourage teens to be responsible digital citizens by showing you which apps they use and how they're staying safe online. Strong privacy settings so only friends can connect and avoiding links and attachments from unfamiliar sources are also good preemptive measures.

Open communication

Some students are afraid or embarrassed to talk about cyberbullying with their parents so adults should nurture open communication.

Let kids know they can come to you if they're being digitally harassed and that they will receive your unconditional support.

Know your options

Students should have a safety plan in case cyberbullying happens to them.

A 2020 national study indicated 60% of the time tweens blocked the cyberbullies, and in over half the cases kids turned to parents for assistance.

Retaliating could make things worse, so it's better to look at options like reporting cyberbullying to social media sites. Parents may also want to meet with school officials or contact their local police, if necessary.

Buddies not bullies

Bystanders sticking up to support the person being bullied can make a big difference. When I've witnessed students defend their peers, it deescalates tense situations — whether in person or online.

There are simple things that bystanders to bullying can do to help diffuse the situation such as questioning the behavior, changing the subject or using humor to redirect the conversation.

Reaching out privately to check on the person who was bullied and letting them know that you care can also have a positive impact.

With technology changing so rapidly, I worry about what cyberbullying will look like when my 8-year-old stepdaughter gets into middle school. Raising awareness about cyberbullying is a year-round effort and we need more families taking steps to protect their children from these harmful situations.

Resources for families

- stompoutbullying.org
- cyberbullying.org/report
- onlinesos.org
- iheartmob.org
- pacer.org/bullying
- safeoregon.com

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See's Candies CEO Pat Egan considers Oregon his home

Capi Lynn

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

When Pat Egan became CEO of See's Candies in 2019, he set a goal to visit each of the company's nearly 250 retail shops.

He wanted inside information on the brand, store associates and customers.

One location he already had intel on was Salem, where he lived and worked for nearly two decades.

Egan was a frequent customer at the downtown See's on Liberty Street NE, sandwiched between a Chinese restaurant and the former JC Penney building, first buying treats for himself while a student at Willamette University College of Law.

"My study group used to go to Golden Crown, which is right next door," Egan said during a recent Zoom interview with the Statesman Journal.

The temptation of See's, which sells chocolates and candies by the piece or the box, was nearly impossible to resist.

He became a regular, even braving long lines on some of the shop's biggest days of the year, buying gifts for his wife at home and colleagues at the Oregon State Capitol.

Egan was a longtime political insider who worked for two governors — John Kitzhaber and Ted Kulongoski — and was influential in state utility and transportation issues. His career path led him from the Capitol to PacifiCorp in Portland, then NV Energy in Las Vegas, and finally to See's, all parts of Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway empire.

Buffet bought the Bay Area-based candy chain nearly 50 years ago in 1972.

Egan joined See's in 2018 as president and the following year became the top executive of a company that makes over 26 million pounds of candy a year, is known for its black-and-white color scheme and free samples, and is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

And yes, eating what he calls "the best candy on the planet" is part of the job.

Choosing a favorite candy is not easy

Egan's office is at See's headquarters in South San Francisco, upstairs from a retail outlet and surrounded by production facilities.

Proximity alone is an occupational hazard that led him to experience his version of the "Freshman 15," a term used to describe the weight students tend to gain during their first year of college.

"It's a real thing," Egan said. "I narrowed it down after that to two pieces a day. Sometimes more."

On Fridays, he skips breakfast because he participates in a taste-testing panel.

Picking a favorite See's candy for him is almost like picking a favorite child. It tends to change, depending on the day, mood and season, and he's proud of all of them — his three children and the more than 100 varieties of sweets.

Oldest daughter Madison graduated from Oregon Health & Science University and is doing her residence in a rural family medicine program in Klamath Falls. Son Matthew is working on his doctorate in electrical engineering with

an emphasis on renewable energy at the University of Nevada, Reno. And youngest daughter Bridget is a junior at the University of California San Diego studying cognitive linguistics.

As for the candy, Egan said he loves anything coffee-flavored. But, if he had to pick just one favorite, it would be the Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter Heart.

"It was the first piece we introduced in my time here, and it had been a little over four years since any new piece had been," Egan said. "But I would say that even if it wasn't something that I had a part in introducing."

Donating inventory while shut down

As sweet as his job has been, there have been unexpected and formidable challenges.

When production had to be halted last year because of COVID-19, and 249 stores all well-stocked for Easter had to be temporarily closed, Egan had to decide what to do with the inventory.

It was only the second time in a century the company's operation was interrupted. The other was during World War II when production was derailed because raw ingredients such as butter, sugar and cream were rationed and in short supply.

See's prides itself in using the finest ingredients and no preservatives, which means its candies have a limited shelf life.

Most are meant to be sold and consumed within 60 to 120 days of production. To experience the best taste and texture, the company recommends enjoying most sweets within 2-3 weeks of purchase, according to a post on its Facebook page.

With hundreds of thousands of boxes of candy it couldn't sell and would soon expire, Egan coordinated efforts to donate it to hospitals, police and fire departments, and charitable organizations throughout the West.

He called in favors with friends in Las Vegas and Portland, and at Oregon State University, where he graduated in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in history and is a past member of the alumni association board. He also recruited his oldest daughter, at the time attending OHSU, to help organize distribution.

It was estimated nearly 1 million people received a See's treat.

Salem's inventory went primarily to frontline workers at Salem Hospital, where two of Egan's children were born, and to the Keizer Community Food Bank, which helped distribute to community members.

Relying on experience in the company

The Salem store was closed for about 4½ months in 2020. Employees were furloughed for two weeks, then collected unemployment.

Once production resumed, they began taking phone orders in late July for curbside pickup and by late August, the store was re-opened.

By then, devoted customers everywhere had found new ways to get their See's fix. In addition to ordering online and having their favorite candy shipped to their door, two other contactless shopping options for safety and convenience were introduced: "Click...Pick...Go!" and a partnership with DoorDash.

Fast forward to more than a year later, and a steady stream of customers arrives at the Salem See's on a recent weekday morning. Other than masks being required and free samples being pre-wrapped, it seems like business as usual.

Salem has a dedicated and experienced team that includes store manager Susan Williams (eight years with the company), assistant manager Robyn Skog (40 years) and sales associate Kelly Winkle (40 years).

"We're doing great there," Egan said, "in large part because of those people."

He said many of his employees have been with See's for decades.

The last time he visited the Salem shop was in April, posing with the trio for a "teemie" — that's what he calls the selfies he takes with team members at each location. This one captured 90 years of See's experience. He's the "rookie" of the group.

Egan welcomes any chance he gets to visit the seven Oregon locations. The others are in Beaverton, Eugene, Happy Valley, Lake Oswego, Medford and Portland, according to the Shop Locator on the website.

"I still consider Oregon very much my home," said Egan, whose time in the State Capitol included working as chief of staff for former Gov. Kulongoski.

Egan and his wife, Karen, have a place on the Oregon Coast in Manzanita, near where he grew up. He lived in Nehalem with his grandmother and graduated from Neah-Kah-Nie High School in 1986.

And when the Beachie Creek Fire forced evacuations from the Santiam Canyon last Labor Day, Egan arranged with a friend involved with the American Red Cross to deliver six pallets of candy from San Francisco to the Oregon State Fairgrounds for evacuees.

Williams and Winkle appreciated the gesture. They both live in the canyon.

Salem will always have a special place in his heart. He and Karen made homes in the Englewood and Brush Prairie neighborhoods when their children were young.

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Towing company fined \$67,575 for environmental violations

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State regulators have fined Discount Towing and Recovery \$67,575 for multiple environmental violations.

The northeast Salem towing and recycling company broke laws regulating hazardous waste, used oil, waste tires and stormwater, the state Department of Environmental Quality said in its penalty order.

Many of the violations posed a risk of serious environmental harm, and have not yet been corrected despite numerous requests from DEQ, the order says.

Company owner Donald Duddles said he didn't correct the violations because he also was dealing with complaints from the city of Salem about the number of cars on the property.

"I stepped off onto the city stuff and forgot about keeping in touch with the state," he said. "I have a head injury. Sometimes I get stuck in the here and now."

Dudley has appealed the fine. No hearing has yet been scheduled, DEQ spokesperson Lauren Wirtis said.

DEQ inspectors visited the facility, at 3750 Mainline Drive NE, on July 13, 2020.

They found as much as 13,228

pounds of accumulated hazardous waste stored at the facility.

The waste was in both labeled and unlabeled containers, none of which were marked as hazardous waste, and none of which were dated.

Inspectors also found at least 50 improperly stored waste lead-acid batteries, 10 improperly stored mercury-containing switches removed from vehicles, two unlabeled 55-gallon drums full of oil stored outside, and a used oil filter draining oil into the ground.

They also found about 4,000 unusable tires in piles at the facility. The company does not have a waste tire storage permit.

The company does not have permits to store, treat or dispose of hazardous waste, had never trained employees in hazardous waste requirements, and had no records of conducting required weekly inspections of hazardous waste storage areas.

The company also operates an oil/water separator, which discharges to Claggett Creek. The company does not have a required permit for the discharge.

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