

Bullying

Beyond the Schoolyard

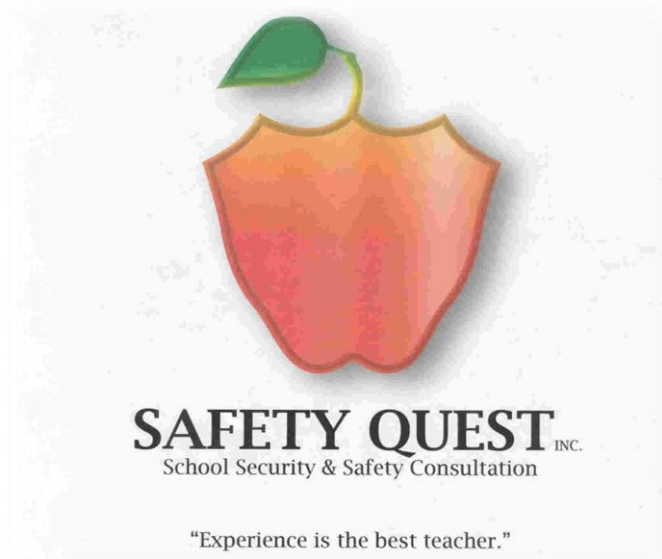
Preventing and
Responding
to
Cyberbullying

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Cyberbullying

The new adolescent aggression definition:
willful and repeated harm inflicted through
the use of computers, cell phones and other
electronic devices.

Cyberbullying Among Youth

Will lead to the same harm and long-term consequences as traditional bullying. As such, we believe it requires and even demands us to be responsible in educating ourselves and others to understand and address it.

There exists a great disconnect between what youth are doing in cyberspace and what adults know about what youth are doing in cyberspace.

Teens and Technology

The terms “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” have been used to describe how youth have grown up with computers, cell phones and the internet and used them as seamless, complementing extensions of their real-world behaviors; while adults have largely been induced to adopt them into their lives as supplements to their normal activities.

The Prevalence of Bullying

Of those youth surveyed between the ages of 12 to 18, 8% had been the victims of bullying in the previous 6 months. Conservative estimates maintain that at least 5% of those students in primary and secondary schools (ages 7-16) are victimized by bullies each day- but the percentages may well be much higher.

-U.S. Dept of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics

The Behavioral Consequences of Bullying

The United States secret service study (1974-2000) of 37 school shooting incidents featuring 41 attackers discovered that 71% of the attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack.

The Columbine High School shooters for example, were reported to have been ostracized and bullied by their classmates. Eric Harris issued numerous “cyber threats” prior to the attack.

The Target Population

While it is not suggested that the cyberbullying experiences of older youth and adults should be ignored, studies of this relatively new phenomenon have been focused on adolescents as being the most susceptible to cyberbullying and least likely (comparatively speaking) to have acquired skills to cope positively with it.

Review: Characteristics of Bullying (Traditional)

- Intentional behaviors
- Violence or aggression (physical or psychological)
- Repetition
- Power differential

Cyberbullying adds:

- The dis-inhibition factor/The “cloak of invisibility”

Other Issues Specific to Cyberbullying

- Lack of supervision: (for example-computers with internet access in adolescent bedrooms) adult “abdication”
- Viral nature: spreading content to many persons at dizzying speed
- Limitless victimization risk: no rest for the weary as cyberbullying penetrates all possible confines. A feeling of being “tethered to your tormenter”.

For many youth, there really is no clear distinction between life as lived in real space and in cyberspace; one social sphere is now a natural and complimenting extension of the other.

Mediums Through Which Cyberbullying Often Occurs

- E-mail
- Chat Rooms
- Voting/Rating Sites
- Blogging/Tweeting
- Virtual Worlds
- Online Gaming
- Instant Messaging (Buddy Lists)
- Cell Phones

Common Forms of Cyberbullying

- Photoshopping
- Rumor Spreading
- Flaming and Trolling (aimed at subject or another participant)
- Identity Theft/Impersonation
- Physical Threats(Columbine attack reference)
- Outing
- Exclusion
- Cyberstalking
- Harassment

Online Harm

Due to the widespread availability of electronic devices, there is no lack of participants in technologically assisted communications. Research verified types of harm resulting from cyberbullying include (but are not limited to):

- School tardiness & truancy
- Eating disorders
- Chronic illness
- Self-esteem problems
- Aggression
- Depression
- Interpersonal Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Juvenile Delinquency
- Suicidal Ideation
- Suicide

The Research of Drs. Patchin & Hinduja (2007)

1,963 middle school students stated as follows when asked:

1. Have you been cyberbullied in the last 30 days?
17% - yes
2. Have you cyberbullied others in the last 30 days?
18% - yes

*In no case did any respondent indicate “zero”.

Gender Differences in Cyberbullying

- Girls appear equally likely to be active participants in cyberbullying as boys.
- Girls tend to be more verbal, boys more physical. Girls more apt to use “social sabotage”.
- Girls have historically been entrenched in a social structure that forbids them to manifest violence in the same way boys do because they are often told it is not culturally appropriate to do so.
- It is possible that females share the same tendencies toward hostility as males.

Racial Differences in Cyberbullying

- The digital divide – certain racial and economic groups have less access to technology in the private sector.
- Less powerful groups may be more powerful (or at least not disadvantaged) when online.
- Youth who may not (or cannot) stand up for themselves in school may be more likely to do so in cyberspace.

Age Differences in Cyberbullying

- Recent research has noted that electronic bullying tends to peak later in middle school.
- Most recent research finds seventh grade seems to be an important transition point when it comes to online behaviors and cyberbullying specifically.
- A greater variety of mediums are used as kids get older.

Victim Offender Relationships in Cyberbullying

- Research suggests that victims of cyberbullying overwhelmingly know (or think they know) who is harassing them.
- Even though online bullying provides bullies with a veil of perceived anonymity, it appears that eventually the target often figures out who is harassing them.
- We are now seeing traditional bullies using computer based communications to extend and expand their reach.

Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying

- Youth who reported bullying others in real life were 2.5 times more likely to bully others online.
- 51.6% of those who reported cyberbullying others also admit to bullying others at school.

Responses of Cyberbullying Victims

- Victims don't want to be blamed for the behavior and are afraid that parents will simply remove the source of the problem – the computer or cell phone.
- Adults may be ill-equipped or unwilling to intervene.
- Adults may “make it worse”, cause retaliation.
- We hope you will make yourself available to help.

If a victim feels scared about going to school because of cyberbullying, he or she may be tempted to bring a weapon to school for protection. Another particularly upsetting outcome has been labeled “Cyberbullicide” or suicide related to an experience with bullying or cyberbullying. This problem is increasing.

The Internet and Puberty Do Not Mix!

When presented with the opportunity to harass someone online, impulsive adolescents may be unable to hold back!

Tens of millions of youth across the world interact on social networking sites every day. Traditional and online aggression are deviant behaviors society needs to control.

Safer Social Networking

Assume that everyone has access to your profile. Don't discuss things you wouldn't want parents, teachers, future employers or law enforcement to know about.

Assume that people will use the information on your profile to cause you harm. Don't put anything online that you wouldn't want your worst enemy to know about.

Assume there are predators out there trying to find you based on the information you provide in your profile. Think like a predator. You don't need to post personal contact information online; your friends know how to find you!

Legal Issues

“It’s pretty difficult to figure out what to do. The law seems so complex. I just know that we have got to do something, because cyberbullying is leading to other problems on my campus under my watch.”

-Administration at a Florida middle school

Remember

Inaction is action! School administrators have a moral (and often legal) obligation to take action when harassment is brought to their attention.

Elements of an Effective School Cyberbullying Policy

1. Specific definitions of harassment, intimidation and bullying (including the electronic variants).
2. Graduated consequences and remedial actions.
3. Procedures for reporting.
4. Procedures for investigating.
5. Language specifying that if a student's off-campus speech or behavior results in "substantial disruption of the learning environment" the student can be disciplined.
6. Procedures for preventing cyberbullying.

Simply Put

You cannot formally discipline students for speech or behavior that occurs away from school with which you merely disagree, or are uncomfortable. You must demonstrate how such behavior or speech materially and substantially interferes with the learning environment at school.

A Definition of Substantial Disruption (Arkansas Legislative Public Act 115) 2007

1. Necessary cessation of instruction or educational activities.
2. Inability of students or educational staff to focus on learning or functions as an educational unit because of a hostile environment.
3. Severe or repetitive disciplinary measures are needed in the classroom or during educational activities; or
4. Exhibition of other behaviors by students or education staff that substantially interfere with the learning environment.

U.S. Courts Are Generally Oriented Toward:

Supporting schools intervening in online issues that;

- substantially or materially disrupt learning
- interferes with the educational process or school discipline
- utilizes school owned technology to harass
- threatens other students or infringes on their civil rights

PREVENTING CYBERBULLYING

All children will be exposed to things in cyberspace that are problematic. What they do at that point depends on the instruction they received and the habits they have developed. The best filtering software you can acquire is the software that sits in the hardware in the middle of your child's shoulders!

Recent Comparative Surveys

Indicate that more targets of bullying and cyberbullying are telling parents or teachers. This may imply that messages about internet safety are getting through to our youth!

Strategies That Work!

The Educator Role:

- Acceptable use policy
- Antibullying, cyberbullying (harassment) policy
- Announce your intention in policy when off-campus online actions cause on-campus disruption. Demonstrate the certainty of consequences.
- Classroom internet use rules
- Rules for portable electronic devices at school

The Educator's Role

1. Survey students (free sample in Dr. Patchin's book)
2. Educate students and staff (classroom, assemblies, etc.)
3. Have clear rules regarding the use of computers and other technological devices
4. Utilize the expertise of students
5. Maintain a safe and respectful school culture

The Educator's Role Cont.

6. Install monitoring and filtering software
7. Implement and evaluate formal anti-cyberbullying programming
8. Educate parents
9. Create “Cyberbullying Prevention Trustees” in your school!



**DESIGNATED
CYBERBULLYING
TRUSTEE**

**Talk to me if you or someone you know
is being electronically harassed or threatened!
I care about your online experience and can help!**

Resource K
Cyberbullying Trustee Designation

The Parent's Role

1. Communication is key!
2. Use an internet contract (free one in book)
3. Go online
4. The earlier the better!
5. Monitor their activities – tell children about filters, tracking
6. Use discretion when spying – be “up front” with kids

The Student's Role

1. Protect personal information
2. Protect passwords
3. Speak up!
4. Use proper “netiquette”
5. Remember there is a real person on the other end of the keyboard!
6. The moral exemplar
7. Help others who are bullied or cyberbullied

Law Enforcement's Role

1. Be prepared to respond to threats to safety or violation of law.
2. Utilize school resource officers or others for classroom discussions about internet safety.
3. Offer to host a school assembly about online safety.
4. Remind students that almost everything done online is traceable.

**LEARN THE WARNING SIGNS OF
CYBERBULLYING OR OF BEING A
TARGET OF CYBERBULLYING**

The Target

- Unexpectedly stops using the computer.
- Appears nervous or jumpy when an I.M. or E-mail appears.
- Avoid answering the cell phone in front of you.
- Appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general.
- Angry, depressed, frustrated after using the computer.
- Avoids discussion about online activities.
- Becomes withdrawn.
- Is bullied at school.

The Cyberbully

- Quickly switches screens when you walk by.
- Uses computer at all hours of the night.
- Gets upset if cannot use the computer.
- Is using multiple online accounts.
- Excessive laughter during computer use.
- Avoids discussions about online activities.
- Bully's others in school or elsewhere.

RESPONDING TO CYBERBULLYING

What Schools Should Do When Made Aware of a Cyberbullying Incident

- Assess the immediate threat
- Ensure the safety of the target(s)
- Demonstrate compassion and empathy to the target
- Confront the bully (separate from target; closely monitor)
- Investigate and gather evidence
- Contact parents

School Responses Continued

- Contact the internet service provider (when appropriate)
- Contact the police when physical threats are involved
- Enforce disciplinary policy
- Contact legal counsel if considering serious legal action

What Parents Should Do if their Child is Cyberbullied

- Make sure their child is and remains safe
- Collect evidence
- Contact the school
- In some cases, contact the parent(s) of the offender
- Contact the service provider or content provider
- Contact the police when physical threats are involved

What Parents Should Do if their Child is the Cyberbully

- Talk about the hurtful nature of cyberbullying
- Apply reasonable consequences
- Set firm limits and stick to them!
- Consider installing tracking hardware
- Closely monitor computer/cell phone usage
- Convey firmer consequences if the behavior continues

What Youth Should Do if they Witness Cyberbullying

- Document what they see and hear
- Don't encourage the behavior
- Don't forward hurtful messages
- Don't condone the act just to fit in
- Don't silently allow it to continue
- Stand up for the victim
- Tell an adult you trust

What Youth Should Do if they are Being Cyberbullied

- Ignore minor teasing or name calling
- Block messages from unknown people
- Don't respond to the bully
- Keep a log/journal of attacks
- Keep all evidence of bullying
- Talk to an adult you trust

Civil Response Includes (But may not be limited to)

- Defamation
- Invasion of privacy
- Intentional infliction of emotional distress
- Negligence

Be a Part of the Solution!

As an educator you will eventually – if you haven't already – face a cyberbullying incident that affects a student, staff member or your entire school. By now you understand the severity of the problem and it's time to be part of the solution. Let's help our children avoid the landmines on the landscape of high technology!

Thank you!

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