

BULLYING AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

SEVENTH GRADE

LESSON 5

TITLE: Learning About Internet Safety

PURPOSE: To increase awareness and empathy of the problem of cyberbullying.

OBJECTIVES: The student will be able to:

- consider what motivates young people to participate in online cruelty.
- develop strategies for resisting peer pressure and communicating in a positive way.

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: LA.7.1.6.1, 7.1.6.10, 7.1.7.4

STUDENT SERVICES BENCHMARKS AND STANDARDS: PS 1.1, 2.1, 4.5

VOCABULARY: cyberbullying, ethics, harassment, retaliation

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME: 60 Minutes

PREPARATION/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Dry erase board and markers
- Xerox copies of handout 7-3 (one per student)
- Xerox copies of handout 7-4 (one per student)

SPRINGBOARD ACTIVITY:

1. Tell students that you are going to share an incident that happened to a real teenager named David in the recent past. Ask them to close their eyes as they listen, and to imagine that they are a student at David's school. Read aloud from the handout, *Welcome to the Web Site that Makes Fun of Dave*, then discuss the following:
 - How did it make you feel to hear about this incident?
 - What do you think motivated the students to create the Web site?
 - What about those who added comments or e-mails and those who chose not to tell anyone about what was taking place?

ACTIVITY:

- 1) Ask students to consider if cyberbullying, or online cruelty, is a common occurrence in their lives. Direct them to form a human continuum, standing to one side of the room if they feel it is extremely common, the other side if it is rare, or somewhere in-between that reflects their experience. Ask for volunteers at different points in the continuum to explain why they chose their position. Solicit specific examples from them, making sure that they respect the confidentiality of others and avoid stories that will offend or embarrass their peers. Have students return to their seats.
- 2) Go to <http://www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying> to access three public service announcements. The public service announcements were created by the National Crime Prevention Council for its cyberbullying prevention campaign. Play one or all of the announcements.
 - Talent Show (video clip, 50 seconds)
 - Kitchen (video clip, 50 seconds)
 - Megan (audio clip, 30 seconds)
- 3) Post a sheet of chart paper with the following question at the top, which appears at the end of each PSA: “If you wouldn’t say it in person, why say it online?” Challenge students to articulate why cruelty is so common in an online environment and list their responses. (Consult the reference sheet, Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty, and add some of these examples to the chart if students don’t address them.)

ASSESSMENT: Teacher observation, class participation and completion of activity.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Conclude the lesson by suggesting that the most important way to deal with the impulse to participate in online cruelty is to reflect on the kind of person we want to be and the personal values that guide our behavior toward others. Ask students to think of one statement that reflects their values regarding conduct toward others online. Share the following examples:

- Always use respectful language.
- Protect your own and others’ safety.

While students are thinking, post a sheet of chart paper and write the following in the center: “Class Code of Ethics for Internet Communication.” As students are ready, invite them to write their statements “graffiti style” on the chart paper (have a variety of markers, paint pens, etc. on hand).

* Lesson adapted from ADL Curriculum Connections at www.adl.org

Welcome to the Website that Makes Fun of Dave

After being teased, taunted and punched for years, some peers set up an abusive Web site about David that made his life unbearable. The site—titled "Welcome to the Web site that makes fun of Dave"—was active for months before David found out about it; none of his friends or classmates bothered to warn him about it.

The students who created the Web site included pages of hateful comments directed at David and his family. Soon other students at school joined in, posting rude remarks that embarrassed David and smeared his reputation. Some students used a link to David's e-mail address to send messages like this one: "You're gay, don't ever talk again, no one likes you, you're immature and dirty, go wash your face."

The abuse went on for seven long months before the Web host agreed to take down the site. By that time David felt so defeated that he decided to leave school and complete his studies at home.

"Rather than just some people, say 30 in a cafeteria," commented David, "hearing them all yell insults at you, it's up there for 6 billion people to see. Anyone with a computer can see it. And you can't get away from it. It doesn't go away when you come home from school. It made me feel even more trapped."

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING ONLINE CRUELTY

REASONS¹ for online social aggression	STRATEGIES for reducing online social aggression
1. I can't see you (invisibility lessens empathy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visualize the person on the receiving end of the message and imagine how they will feel. ▪ Balance time spend online with activities that involve face-to-face interaction
2. You don't know me (anonymity emboldens people to say things they normally wouldn't).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Picture yourself saying this to someone in person. Could you? How would it feel?
3. See you later (communication that does not involve immediate, real-time feedback may reduce inhibitions).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Think about the response your message may provoke at a later time from the recipient, other peers and adults.
4. It's just a game (the Internet may seem like a world separate and apart, with different rules and norms).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the real-life outcomes and consequences that your actions could have. ▪ Never engage in fantasy play without others' consent and willing participation.
5. It's not me (responsibility for cruel behavior may be placed on an online persona or identity rather than on oneself).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask yourself if the person on the receiving end will experience your comments as part of a fantasy or role-play.
6. Look at me (personal attacks are an easy way to attract notice; negative attention may be better than no attention).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflect on how you really want others to view you. ▪ Consider behaviors that will lead to positive attention and friendships.
7. Don't mess with me (retaliation online is less threatening than standing up to a foe in person).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider whether revenge will actually solve your problems or make you feel better. ▪ Talk to a trusted adult about proactive solutions.
8. I'm one of you (participating in online cruelty may seem like a way to gain social acceptance; standing up to it may seem like it will bring ostracism).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask yourself if you really want friends who are cruel to others. ▪ Talk to an adult about ways to avoid online hostility and support those who are targeted.
9. You're not like me (the Internet may be a vehicle for expressing hate or prejudice that is socially unacceptable at school).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Imagine how it would feel if you were targeted for being different. ▪ Seek help from a teacher or counselor who can help you to deal with negative feelings.

¹ Reasons 2-4 are from Suler, J. 2004. The Online Disinhibition Effect. *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 7: 321-326; reasons 1, 5 and 6 are from Willard, N. 2007. *Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats*. Center for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet. Retrieved from <http://www.cyberbully.org/cyberbully/docs/cbcteducator.pdf>.