

What's Cyberbullying?

Essential Question

What is cyberbullying, and how do you deal with it?

Lesson Overview

Students discuss positive and negative aspects of interacting with others online. They learn the definition of cyberbullying and help the teacher fill in a Venn diagram that compares in-person bullying with cyberbullying. They then read a story of a student who is cyberbullied, identifying the players involved and how the target might feel.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- empathize with the targets of cyberbullying.
- recognize some of the key similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying.
- identify strategies for dealing responsibly with cyberbullying.

Materials and Preparation

- Chalkboard or white board
- Copy the **That's Cyberbullying Student Handout**, one per group of four or five students.

Family Resources

- Send home the **Cyberbullying Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School)**.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grade 3: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

grade 4: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

grade 5: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

NETS•S: 2a, 2b, 5a, 5d

Key Vocabulary –

cyberbullying: the use of digital media tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset or harass someone else

target: the person being cyberbullied

empathize: to imagine the feelings that someone else is experiencing

introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

ASK:

What are some positive aspects of going online?

Sample responses:

- Finding information quickly
- Meeting people with similar interests
- Communicating with people around the world
- Having fun

EXPLAIN that in order to really enjoy the power of the Internet, it is important for students to learn how to handle any situation they might encounter online responsibly so they can keep their experiences positive.

ASK:

What are some of the ways that people hurt other people's feelings online?

Sample responses:

- When people make jokes online that they think are funny, but they actually hurt other people's feelings
- When a friend teases a classmate
- When someone logs in to someone else's account and pretends to be that person

teach 1

Exploring Bullying vs. Cyberbullying (10 minutes)

ASK:

How do you think it feels to be bullied, and why?

Guide students to reflect upon their personal experiences and to put themselves in the shoes of others who have been bullied. Common feelings: humiliated, sad, angry, helpless

INVITE student volunteers to describe the Key Vocabulary terms **cyberbullying** and **target**. Then provide the definitions.

DRAW a Venn diagram on the board. Label one side "Bullying" and the other side "Cyberbullying."

EXPLAIN that there are similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying. Let students know that both can be very hurtful to the target, but that they should be aware of the differences between the two as they learn how to deal with cyberbullying.

ASK:

What are some of the similarities and differences between bullying and cyberbullying? (Fill in the Venn diagram with students' responses.)

Sample responses:

Differences:

- Kids may use more hurtful and extreme language online than offline.
- Cyberbullying can happen anytime, whereas regular bullying generally stops when kids go home.

- Cyberbullying can be very public. Posts can spread rapidly and to a large, invisible audience because of the nature of how information travels online.
- Cyberbullies sometimes act anonymously, whereas with traditional bullying it is often clear who the bully is.
- In-person bullying can cause physical and emotional harm, while cyberbullying causes only emotional harm (though it can lead to physical bullying later).
- The age and size of a person are often less important with cyberbullying because people are not face to face. For example, even teachers can be targets.

Similarities:

- Both can make kids feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, helpless, sad, and angry.

teach 2

Identifying Cyberbullying (25 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **empathize**.

HAVE students recall a time when they have empathized with someone else, and ask them to share this memory with a partner.

DISTRIBUTE the **That's Cyberbullying Student Handout**.

INVITE students to read the scenario out loud, along with the questions that follow.

HAVE students work with a partner to complete the questions on the handout.

ASK:

Who are the cyberbullies?

The two girls who are not invited to the sleepover.

Who is the target?

Sondra

Is this a cyberbullying situation? Why or why not?

Yes, the angry girls have created a cyberbullying situation. Their behavior is online and it is intentional and harassing.

How do you think Sondra might feel, other than embarrassed?

Explain that when the students put themselves in Sondra's shoes, they empathize with her. To be a good friend, it is important to empathize with the targets of cyberbullying. The website that the girls created is mean, but Sondra may still feel regretful. Maybe she wishes she had invited the other girls, or that her parents' rules had been different.

Why do you think the two girls created the mean website about Sondra?

They felt left out. They did not like Sondra anyway, and they thought they had an excuse to be mean to her.

USE the one or all of the following questions to deepen class discussion about the scenario on their handout:

Imagine someone saying that they hate you and making fun of you everywhere you go at school. Now imagine someone doing that on the Internet. How are these two situations similar? How are they different?

Guide students to think about how in-person bullying and cyberbullying both make targets feel bad. Also, one can physically get away from in-person bullying, but not with cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can sometimes be more public than in-person bullying, because lots of people can see and share public messages online. But cyberbullying can also occur behind-the-scenes. For example, a cyberbully could send mean messages to someone without others knowing.

What advice would you give Sondra about how to handle the situation?

Encourage the following tips:

- **Don't respond or retaliate.** If you are angry and reply, then you might say mean things. Cyberbullies often just want to get a reaction out of you. Don't let them know that their plan has worked.
- **Block the bully.** If you get mean messages online, take the person who sent you the messages off your buddy or friends list. You can also just delete messages from bullies without reading them.
- **Save and print bullying messages.** If the bullying continues, save the messages. These could be important evidence to show your parents or teachers if the bullying does not stop.
- **Talk to a friend.** When someone makes you feel bad, it can help to talk the situation over with a friend.
- **Tell a trusted adult.** Telling an adult – like a parent, family member, teacher, or coach – isn't tattling. It's standing up for yourself.

What do you think the people who are bullying Sondra would say about their behavior?

Sample responses:

- They might say they were only kidding, they didn't mean any harm, or it was just a joke.
- Students creating a website might also say that it is a matter of free speech. (Point out that whether or not the First Amendment permits it, bullying with a website is unkind and hurtful. Moreover, it may be against school rules.)

EXPLAIN to students that good experiences online are much more common than bad ones. However, just as in the real world, situations online can arise in which they might encounter something uncomfortable. Point out that in this lesson they can learn how to deal with some of those upsetting experiences.

INVITE students to share their own stories of bullying or cyberbullying situations, without using actual names. Encourage them to discuss how the target felt. Use the prompts below if students are having trouble remembering incidents. Possible prompts:

- *Have you ever seen kids' webpages or messages that caused another student distress?*
- *What happened? Why? Remember, don't use real names.*

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

What are some words or phrases to describe how it feels to be cyberbullied?

Embarrassed, upset, depressed, hurt, powerless.

How is cyberbullying the same and/or different than in-person bullying?

Guide students to recognize that cyberbullying is a form of bullying, but that cyberbullying often spreads faster, further, to more people, and can occur 24/7. It is important for students to know about these distinctions so they can better deal with cyberbullying situations.

What are some ways to handle a cyberbullying situation?

Sample responses:

- Don't respond or retaliate.
- Block the bully.
- Save and print bullying messages.
- Talk to a friend.
- Tell a trusted adult.

Extension Activity

Have students pretend that they are Dr. Chip Micro, a famous TV personality who helps people having difficulties with others online. Let students know that Sondra has written to Dr. Chip Micro about her situation. They, as Dr. Chip Micro, should send an email reply providing concrete advice to Sondra. Let them know that they should: (1) empathize with Sondra, (2) acknowledge the difficulty of her situation, and (3) offer help and/or suggested solutions for her situation.

At-Home Activity

Encourage students to interview family members about incidents of bullying that they have either been part of or witness to. Suggest that students create about ten interview questions that invite family members to share their stories and also ask them to reflect on how they think technology has or has not changed the way bullying impacts kids (and adults). Students can record the interviews with an audio recorder or a smartphone's voice memo function. They then can share their interviews with the class or incorporate them into a multimedia presentation using VoiceThread (www.voicethread.com).

What's Cyberbullying?

Directions

Read the story of Sondra below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Sondra is planning a birthday sleepover. Her parents have set a limit of eight girls, so Sondra can't invite everyone she'd like.

Two girls, who are left out of the party, overhear the plans. They decide to create a "We Hate Sondra Jones" website. They say that anyone invited to the party should not go. They share the website with everyone in school. The girls also tell everyone to add new reasons why they hate Sondra and to spread mean rumors about her.

When Sondra hears about the site, she gets a sick feeling in her stomach. Each day she finds a new mean comment or joke about her on the website. She feels hurt and embarrassed. She tells her parents she is sick, so she won't have to go to school.

Is this a cyberbullying situation? Why or why not? _____

Who are the cyberbullies? _____

Who is the target? _____

How do you think Sondra feels? _____

Why do you think the two girls made the mean website about Sondra?

What advice would you give Sondra about how to handle the situation?

What do you think the people who are bullying Sondra would say about their behavior?

What's Cyberbullying?

1. Dean is a target of cyberbullying. He gets a text message from Eric that says, "You are such a loser. I can't believe you made us lose the game yesterday with that lame shot." Dean notices that all of the other members of his soccer team got the message about him too. Dean probably feels:

- a) Sad and hurt
- b) Like it's not a big deal
- c) Fine

2. What are some similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying? Write the letter that goes with each answer in the correct space in the diagram below.

- a) Makes people feel sad, angry, hurt, and embarrassed
- b) Can cause physical harm
- c) Can cause emotional harm
- d) The bully's identity can be anonymous, or unknown
- e) Can be witnessed by a bystander
- f) Can be stopped or made better by an upstander

| In-Person Bullying Only | Both In-Person Bullying and Cyberbullying | Cyberbullying Only |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | |

3. TJ keeps getting mean messages from someone online. Circle the answers below that show what TJ should do in response. (You may circle more than one answer.)

- a) TJ should block the bully.
- b) TJ should write mean messages back.
- c) TJ should tell an adult.

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Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**. Eric is cyberbullying Dean. This is harmful to Dean, as well as to the rest of the team.

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Answer feedback

The correct answers are **a** and **c**. If you are cyberbullied like TJ, you could block the bully and talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling.