

Bullying & Cyber-bullying Tips for Teachers & School Staff

Terri Erbacher, Ph.D.

Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

How to Intervene On-The-Spot!

- Immediately stop the bullying (stand between them and deflect eye contact).
- Refer to the bullying behavior and to the relevant school rules against bullying.
- Support the bullied child in a way that allows him/her to regain self-control, to 'save face', and to feel supported and safe from retaliation. Do not ask what happened in front of others.
- Later, talk to the bully and victim separately to get the facts. Assure victim it is not their fault.
- Praise students for talking about it, including victims, bullies and bystanders. Encourage all students to report future incidents of bullying.
- Ask the victim what they need to feel safe as they often feel powerless, scared and helpless. Reassure them that steps will be taken to prevent recurrence.
- Include bystanders in the conversation and give them guidance about how they might appropriately intervene or get help next time.
- Expect denial and inform the bully about actions to be taken.
- If appropriate, impose immediate consequences for the bully according to school district policies and procedures. Notify school staff/administration as appropriate.
- Communicate incident to colleagues so they can also keep a watchful eye.
- Do not require the students to meet and 'work things out' as this is ineffective with bullying.
- Provide follow up interventions as needed (counseling, activities to foster friendships).
- Notify parents of children who were involved, as appropriate.
- Check in with the student periodically to ensure future incidents are discussed, if there are any.
 - www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

Common Cyber-Bullying Tactics:

- Stealing someone's online name and using it to write nasty rumors, comments, or gossip.
- Altering someone's message or doctoring pictures to mean something different or poke fun.
- Secretly recording conversations using a cell phone and playing the recording back to the person being talked about. Or, forwarding mean texts.
- Posting damaging information or pictures online.
- Writing mean comments or spreading lies or rumors about a person online.
- Creating or taking part in Internet polling.

Encourage Students to protect themselves from cyber-bullying:

- Never give out personal information or passwords or write them where others can find them
- Don't believe everything you see or read
- Use netiquette: Be kind in all technological interactions
- Don't send a message to someone else when you are angry
- Don't open a message from someone you don't know
- Protect yourself! Do not arrange to meet anyone you don't know
- Ensure students understand that the Internet is a public forum so anything can be shared with other people without their consent or knowledge. They should be very discreet in what they say and do online and be vigilant in protecting their reputations. Things said and done online can come back to bite them many years later, such as when they are seeking a job.

If they are a victim of cyber-bullying, tell them:

- Don't reply to messages from cyber-bullies.
- Do not keep this to yourself! You are not alone and you did NOT do anything to deserve this! Tell an adult you know and trust.
- Inform your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or Site.
- Do not erase or delete messages from cyber-bullies. School staff and students should learn how to use the *print screen* option to save evidence if needed.
- Help students learn how to report fake profiles or malicious content.
- Encourage them to tell their parents again ensuring they realize this is not their fault.
- If a student expresses emotional distress or thoughts of self-harm, seek help immediately.

Teach children to become a courageous bystander! Encourage children to speak out against cyber bullying they witness and report it immediately:

- Don't engage in or support mean material, gossip, or rumors posted online.
- Don't talk about it at school to perpetuate rumors, gossip.
- Support a classmate being targeted online by posting positive messages!
- If you know the person being targeted, invite him/her to spend time with you.
- Tell an adult at home and at school.
- Print the evidence to share with an adult.
- If it is safe, confront the cyber-bully and make it clear that you think their behavior is wrong.
- Remember that we are not invisible online and anything we post can be traced back to us.
- Monitor your own online reputation.
- If a victim is upset or agitated or is threatening self-harm or suicide, tell an adult IMMEDIATELY. **Do not keep this a secret and do not wait!**

What else can schools do:

- Formally assess the extent and scope of the problem within your school district by collecting survey or interview data from your students. You may not know it, but it's happening.
- Teach students that all forms of bullying are unacceptable, particularly cyber-bullying.
- Specify clear rules regarding the use of the Internet, computers and electronic devices. Be sure your *Acceptable Use Policy* includes online harassment. Download blocking/filtering software.
- Consult with your school attorney BEFORE incidents occur to find what actions you must take.
- Include cyber-bullying into the school conduct code or policy manual with set consequences.
- Report the cyber bullying to the police or cyber crime unit in your area if the cyber bullying contains threats, intimidation or sexual exploitation.
- Thoroughly investigate all reports of cyber-bullying, contacting sites when needed (Facebook).

Reporting Offensive Profiles or Inappropriate Content: (Patti Agatston, 5/2/10)

MySpace: www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.faq&Category=3&Question=27

Facebook: Email Facebook directly at abuse@facebook.com

Xanga: <http://help.xanga.com/contact/parentcontact.htm>

YouTube: http://youtube.com/t/community_guidelines (learn how to flag inappropriate videos)

Websites

www.cyberbullyhelp.com

www.stopcyberbullying.org

www.backoffbully.com

www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

www.targetbully.com

www.cyberbullying