



## Cyberbullying: Instant Cruelty

**Character Traits:** Respect, responsibility, courage, fairness, kindness

**Concept:** Your children will explore the ramifications of cyberbullying and examine the values that can prevent it.

**Grade Levels:** 4 – 12

**Subjects:** all

**Materials:** Dictionary. We encourage you to use this opportunity to have your children look up any vocabulary words they do not understand.

**Directions:** Print out the Glossary of Terms and Personal Internet Standards form.

### Part 1: Define cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is harassing, humiliating, intimidating and/or threatening others on the Internet. Some teens are using the Internet to deliver cruel and harmful messages. Sometimes cyberbullying involves racial, religious or cultural slurs. Sometimes it is sexual in nature. It can involve someone you know or a complete stranger.

### Part 2: Assess your children's knowledge, attitudes and experience.

1. What's your opinion about cyberbullying? Is it a serious problem? No big deal?
2. Do you think kids have the right to say anything they want about others on the Internet? Explain. What if it invades that person's privacy, or inflicts harm? Explain.
3. Have you had any direct experience with it? How did you handle it? Was it through emails? Blogs? Instant Messaging? Web site? Discussion groups?
4. Do you think kids say things online that they wouldn't say face-to-face? If yes, why?
5. Do you think cyberbullying is worse than face-to-face bullying? Explain.



6. What's the cruelest thing about cyberbullying? What's the scariest?
7. Why do you think kids are reluctant to tell their parents or caregivers when they are being bullied over the Internet?
8. What positive values are missing when someone bullies online? (Respect, responsibility, fairness, etc.) What about kids who watch as another kid is bullied online? What does that say about them? Their values?

### **Part 3: Share information about cyberbullying**

1. Tell your child(ren) that a study in Britain revealed that 1 in 4 students had been bullied online. Ask them if they think that is true in their school or community?
2. Explain to them that cyberbullying is different from face-to-face bullying because:
  - It frequently gives the bully anonymity.
  - Cyberbullying moves beyond the school or schoolyard directly into the home.
  - The cyberbully doesn't see the hurt he or she has inflicted. There is no visual or auditory feedback. Cyberbullies may not feel any compassion or empathy.
  - At the click of a button, vicious gossip or highly personal information can be shared with thousands of people.
  - Kids who are victims of cyberbullying can suffer from long-term psychological harm, such as depression, anxiety, and school failure or school avoidance.
  - Cyberbullies can be dangerous people. It's very important to tell a trusted adult if you are being bullied or harassed online.
  - Online bullying is a punishable offense.
3. Explain to them the importance of not disclosing personal information online.
  - Never disclose personal contact information.
  - Don't share anything online that you wouldn't be willing for everyone to read, including parents.



## Glossary of Terms

### General Online Terms

- **Blogs** – (Web logs) Provides users with the tools to publish personal content online about ranges of topics such as hobbies, travel or work projects. People then connect their blogs with other people’s blogs with similar interests.
- **Chatrooms** – A virtual meeting “place” where users can find people to talk with online. Most chatrooms accommodate over 100 users simultaneously.
- **Discussion groups** (newsgroups) – a discussion group accessible via the Internet. Each group (forum) is categorized and devoted to a single topic. Messages are posted in bulletin form and remain on a server, rather than being emailed.
- **Emails** – electronic mail. A service which allows subscribers to pass messages from one person to the other through an Internet service provider.
- **Instant Messaging** – (IM) an online activity which allows two or more people to converse online. Subscribers can create a contact list of those they want to communicate with.
- **Message Boards** – online place where people with common interests go to talk about those interests such as sports teams, TV shows and online games.

### Cyberbullying Terms

- **Anonymity** – staying anonymous to another user or stealing passwords and sending out emails or instant messages pretending to be someone else.
- **Bully Blogs** – online blogs or web sites that can have either one person posting to the blog or allow a large number of contributors. The content of the posts might be malicious or gossip intended to harm others. A “bully blog” would be an online blog intended to tease, embarrass or threaten others. Blogs are often opinions similar to op/ed newspaper columns.



- **Cyberbullying** – harassing, humiliating, intimidating and/or threatening others on the Internet. Cyberbullying sometimes involves racial, religious or culture slurs. It can also be sexual in nature. It can involve someone your child knows or a complete stranger. Cyberbullying can include cruel jokes, malicious gossip, embarrassing information or photographs, and/or Web sites designed to target a specific child or teacher.
- **Cyberstalking** – when online incidents of harassment causes the victim to fear his or her life.
- **E-thugging** – Referring to cyberbullying as e-thugging suggests that there is an online equivalent to traditional thugging which is commonly associated with gang activities.
- **Exclusion** – Excluding someone from an online group like an IM “buddies” list.
- **Flame mail** (being flamed, flaming) – receiving/sending a nasty or abusive email that is meant to inflame a situation or enrage someone
- **Offline Slam Books** – notebooks that students pass around in school, asking questions such as “What’s your favorite food?” or “What’s your favorite movie?”. A final question (which is where the “slam” comes in) asks participants to slam the people writing in the book by asking a question such as “What do you think about Amy?”
- **Online Multi-Player Role Playing Games** - online games where someone can create a character and play through that character with people from around the world.
- **Online Slam Books** – same as the offline concept, but a Web site or threaded discussion where visitors can post answers to the questions online and can be easily spread around electronically.
- **Spam** (being *spammed*) – junk email from people you don’t know.



## My Personal Internet Standards

### Prevention

How I will protect personal information online: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I will and will not disclose online: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Decision-making

The kind of person I want to be: \_\_\_\_\_

The kind of person I choose to be *online*: \_\_\_\_\_

The principles that will guide my online decision-making:

- Respect for myself
- Respect for others
- Responsibility for my choices
- Kindness toward others
- Moral courage to do the right thing
- Fairness
- Rejection of all forms of cruelty

### Intervention

Action(s) I will take if I receive abusive or offensive email:

- Not reply
- Try to find out where the email is coming from by right clicking on the email and then report the information to a trusted adult.
- Talk to a trusted adult, a parent, caregiver, teacher, grandparent, faith leader.
- Save any abusive or offensive emails in case action needs to be taken.
- Block the sender's messages.
- Forward harassing messages to my Internet Service Provider ([abuse@isp](mailto:abuse@isp). Replace isp with your service provider's name, e.g. aol.com or yahoo.com)
- Call the police if bullying includes threats of physical violence.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_