

Title: Cyberbullying & Coping

Age/Grade: 10th grade

Length: 40 minutes

In this lesson, students will:

- Know how their behavior changes when they are online as opposed to offline.
- Improve their understanding of the internet's influence on our behavior and how they can safely avoid making disinhibited risky decisions.
- Build strategies that will improve youth online decision-making when encountering cyberbullying situations.

Overview:

Cyberbullying has become synonymous with online safety over the last two decades. As the popularity of the internet increased, so did the propensity for violence online. The physical and emotional harm that cyberbullying can have is undeniable, however what we are seeing is that youth are unsure of how to best react to these situations when they arise online. Even more disappointingly, there has been a growing sentiment of “that’s the status-quo”, when we talk about the internet and cyberbullying. In this lesson, we are going to analyze situations that happen online to determine the impact that can have on ourselves and others. From there, we will explore how our behaviors can be influenced because of the internet itself and how we can keep safe from those situations leading to unsafe outcomes.

This lesson seeks to address to following questions:

- What situations do you think are safe? On the line? Over the line?
- How does our behavior change when we go online?
- What are the impacts of cyberbullying on us and others?
- What can I do to stand-up for others that might be impacted by cyberbullying?

Materials:

Slides with short scenarios

White board

Activity worksheet.

Safe, On the Line, or Over the Line?

10-minutes

Start the lesson with introducing yourself and why you are there. You are an expert on social media and online safety and you want to simply have a conversation with the students about these topics. You do not want to bore them or lecture them – but rather allow them to bring the lesson wherever they are more interested to go.

Begin the lesson by stretching a string down the center of the classroom. Allow the string to touch the ground. Then put-up signs on each side of the room, one of them reading “OVER THE LINE” on the right side of the room, and the other reading “SAFE” on the left side of the room.

At this point, explain what you are trying to do in this activity. You want to run through some specific examples that might happen to them when online. After explaining each situation, you want the students to move throughout the room to stand wherever they would classify the situation with regards to “risk”. Do they believe the situation is “safe”? “On the line”? Or is it “over the line”? Ask if there are any questions about the instructions.

Bring up a slide deck with different brief situations explained on each slide. Include about 3 scenarios in this activity. These scenarios should be brief and to the point. They should also address an array of risks: content risks, contact risks, risks presented to youth, youth making risky decisions themselves, etc.

1. After hanging out with one of your friends for a long time, you go home and are scrolling through Instagram. While scrolling, you see that your friend you were just with posted a story. You look at the story and see it is a video of you doing something you found to be VERY embarrassing of yourself. Some of your other friends start to send it to you with jokes about how embarrassing it is.
2. While on YouTube, you start to watch a video about the way you should look and dress to stand out when you go to school. While watching, the person on the video starts to explain that if you wear your hair in a certain way “that will make you look like a [homophobic slur], and you don’t want that”. You continue to watch the video till it is over and just keep watching that creator’s videos.
3. A friend of yours texts you saying “I am about to send you a follow request. Accept it and follow the account back and I will accept you”. You do what your friend says to do, and your request to follow the account is accepted. First thing you do is to look at what pictures have been posted on the account and they are photos of everyone in your class. Each photo has a caption that give a corresponding “rating of cringe” given by the person running the account.

As you go through each scenario, you want to ask the students questions as to *why* they are standing where they are in the room. And with every situation, you want to determine what students are doing if placed in these situations in real life.

Discussion: Comfort Online

5-minutes

You can tell the students to return to their seats and ask them if they think *the internet* played any role in those situations happening online? You want to bring to students to identify (if they haven't already), that the internet makes us much more comfortable online.

Take a moment to introduce the phrase "Online disinhibition" and define it for the students.

Online disinhibition – the loosening up and feeling less restrained feeling when on the internet.

Ask the students whether they have ever felt this way when online? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? In what ways?

Before moving forward, explain about the ways that online disinhibition can be connected to something like cyberbullying. Ask the students if they can explain what cyberbullying is and even some examples of what it may be. You can also ask whether it is a common occurrence online?

Online Cruelty & Disinhibition

15-minutes

Next you want to introduce the next activity, where you're aiming at changing the student's perspective-taking around online cruelty. Depending on student numbers, you ideally want to break the students into a couple of different small groups. Each group will receive a worksheet with a couple of cyberbullying scenarios. These are short outlines of situations happening to people online. What you want the students to do is:

1. Identify the impact that this situation is having or would have on the victim.
2. Discuss what the potential consequences of cyberbullying would be in this situation.
3. Identify an action you would take from two different perspectives of the situation that would help the situation:
 - a. What would you do to seek help as the victim?
 - b. What can you do as a bystander to this situation that would help the victim?
4. And lastly, what might be the motivations for someone to say or do these things?

Give the students about 15-minutes to complete this activity and allow for them to work together. Walk around the room and discuss their thoughts as they work through it and gather some questions you can ask when the class comes back together at the end. The scenarios are:

Jessie

While at school one afternoon, Jessie started to notice a group of people looking at her and laughing. This made Jessie uncomfortable and didn't know why so she walked away. Later on in the day, she noticed that a group of students were taking photos of her walking down the hall. Jessie didn't know what was going on so she ask why they were doing that to her. Nobody gave a reason and they all just said "nothing" and walked away. Later that night, a friend sent a post to

Jessie showing that people were taking photos and sharing them in a private Snapchat group and making fun of what she was wearing.

Ethan

Ethan, 16 years old, went to school every day and was generally friendly with everyone. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, he started to notice a lot of people talking about how Asian-Americans were the only ones to catch the virus. Ethan, an Asian-American, knew that wasn't true and assumed others did too. While at school the next day, he started to notice people were avoiding him more and not wanting to get close to him. That night, a classmate posted on his TikTok, tagging Ethan, saying Ethan should not go to school the next day to make sure he didn't get anyone sick.

Cameron

While gaming one afternoon, Cameron is in an Xbox party and playing Call of Duty. While playing, he starts to argue with another player online who he does not know. Cameron doesn't say anything aggressive, but boasts about how much better at the game he is than the other person. Later on the in the night, that same person sends Cameron a private message with his full name, hometown info, phone number, and social media usernames. They then tell Cameron they plan to release all of this info online.

Activity Wrap-up & Close

7-minutes

To wrap-up the class, go through the groups and ask them to briefly share their scenario and some of the responses to the prompts. Mainly, you want to hear what the students say to #3. As the students share what they would do to help these situations, write down some of these on the board. You want the students to use these actions whenever they are in these situations and that we can use that comfort online as a benefit to stopping cyber cruelty in all forms.

Lastly, you want to identify *why* they believe that people are bullying online and you want to discuss as a class of "big-picture" things that could be done to help stop it from happening. Are there any actions that the students themselves could do to help limit cyberbullying? Or can we change our app use to help eliminate it?

Conclude the lesson by answering any questions and again highlighting the strategies they came up with to help react to situations of cyberbullying and cyber cruelty.

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