



Cyberbullying Prevention in the Screen Age: It Takes a Village

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Reality of Bullying

Bullying Facts from U.S. Department of Education Website:

- Bullying peaks in middle childhood and 15 to 25% of students are being bullied with some frequency and much of it occurs online.
- Cyberbullying involves harassing, mocking and threatening via social media or texting and it is very challenging for parents and schools to monitor and intervene as victims can be reached anywhere!
- Studies have found only 1/3 of the bullying victims told an adult.

2017 Data from Common Sense Media, Inc.

- 24% of teens are online “almost constantly”
- 25% of kids experience cyberbullying
- 46% of 10-23 year olds would change their online behavior if their parents were watching

Opening Questions

- Is it really the school's role to intervene in cyberbullying?
- Isn't cyberbullying really the parent's problem?
- Why is there so much cyberbullying drama and fallout at school on Mondays?
- What role do students play in prevention?
- Do I really have to call the parents of the bully as they may yell at me?
- Where do we start and how much in-service time is needed for staff to know what to do?

Screen Time

- Studies found children spend 6.5 hours a day or more on social media, playing video games or texting.
- Screen time is interfering with sleep and relationships.
- Even young children spend many hours on technology.
- Research has found that excessive screen time can result in addiction.
- Screen time interferes with developing social skills, reduces free play and exercise time.

Screen Time: Tips Schools Can Provide Parents

- Suggest no screens in cars or bedrooms.
- Recommend don't be in a hurry for your child to have a Smartphone.
- Model balancing screen time.
- Take charge of technology as it is a privilege not a right!
- Create technology free times and develop a technology contract.

Middle school example of cyberbullying:

- A 7th grade boy texts several of his friends about a new boy in school. The new boy has tried out for the basketball team and is very good and will likely be competition for others in the group to get their positions on the team.
- The 7th grade boy's text instructs his friends to send the new boy online messages that tell him he is not welcome at the school, he is a loser, he doesn't fit in, and he will never make friends.

How would you handle this middle school cyberbullying incident?

- The fallout:

The new student's parents report this to the school administration as their son has refused to come to school and has finally admitted the online cyberbullying. They bring screenshots of the messages sent to their son.

Legislation

- All states have passed school anti-bullying legislation requiring policies, procedures and intervention.
- Twelve states have included cyberbullying requirements for schools.
- Ohio legislation includes bullying, harassment or intimidation that occurs via electronic means.
- Ohio legislature in fall of 2017 had two bills introduced: SB 196 specified tiered discipline for aggravated bullying and HB 360 proposed suspension for first bullying offence and counseling before return to school.

Myths About Bullying

- Bullies seek power because they are powerless –they are very calculating and often get what they want.
- Bullies were themselves previously abused—long term studies show that children who have been abused are most likely to be the victim.
- Bullying is a problem only for schools to solve—it’s a societal problem.
- When bullied it is best to fight back—social assertiveness is better and it is best is to walk away or not respond online and its important to tell an adult
- Bullies outgrow bullying—many carry their pattern of aggression into adulthood.

Cyberbullied Signs

- Depression.
- Withdrawal.
- Anxiety.
- Want to skip school or avoid activities.
- Somatic complaints.
- Avoid discussing online behavior.
- Secretive and nervous about cell phones and computers.

Definition of Bullying

- Bullying occurs when a person is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more persons (Olweus).
- It is about power and is nasty and humiliating.
- It is victimization not teasing or a simple conflict!
- It is intentional and hurtful!
- Cyberbullying may be continual, content is shared and it is impossible to erase.

Suicide and Bullying

- A strong association exists between bullying and suicide.
- Personal characteristics such as internalizing problems; low self-esteem; and low assertiveness increase the risk of being bullied.
- Children most at risk for suicide are also at risk for being bullied and schools must ask bullied students about hopelessness and suicide
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center Brief

www.sprc.org

How Can School Staff Help a Student who is Bullying Others?

- Let them know consequences are inevitable, consistent, and non-hostile and escalate in severity.
- Hold them accountable and confront the excuses they make for their behavior.
- Let them know that school staff and other adults will be watching for further bullying behavior.
- Assess possible reasons for their behavior.

How Can School Staff Help a Student Who is Bullying Others?

- Contact and conference with their parents using the “sandwich approach.”
- Consider referral for mental health treatment.
- Help them to develop empathy for others.
- Encourage involvement in pro-social activities
- Reward them for appropriate behavior towards others.

Bystanders: Key Role

- Present 80% of the time.
- Can intervene to stop bullying and can support the victim.
- Research has found the more bystanders are online then the less likely anyone will intervene.
- Literature has found bystanders reported anxiety and insecurity as a result of witnessing bullying.
- Programs that specifically targeted bystander attitudes and behavior were the most effective.

Why Don't Bystanders Get Involved?

- Not sure of what to do.
- They are afraid of retaliation.
- They are afraid that they will become ostracized by their existing friends or social group.
- They are concerned they might do the wrong thing and make the situation worse.
- They think adults won't help and nothing can be done.

Schools and Cyberbullying?

- Take immediate action to investigate cyberbullying.
- Support the victim.
- Let all students know that bullying behavior is not acceptable.
- Provide immediate consequences for the bully and refer them to the appropriate personnel.
- Conference with parents.
- Contact police if a bodily threat was made.

Key Points for School Staff

- Do not require students to meet and work things out.
- Share information with other staff about the incident.
- Let the bully know that you and other staff will be watching them closely.
- Let the victim know the next steps that will be taken and urge them to report any further incidents.

Student Involvement is Key

- Student survey input is needed especially about cyberbullying to determine extent of the problem.
- Teach all students digital citizenship and begin in early grades.
- Gain a commitment through anti-bullying pledges
- Establish a means for anonymous reporting.

Digital Citizenship:

- Developmentally appropriate curricula for all grade levels from K through 12!
 - Privacy and security
 - Self-image and identity
 - Digital footprint and reputation
 - Creative credit and copyright
 - Relationships and communication
 - Information gathering literacy
 - Cyberbullying
 - Internet safety

Common Sense Media Examples of K-2 internet use training:

- Using a search engine safely; key words.
- Going places safely; screening and selecting appropriate websites.
- Keeping it private! Private and personal information, password protection.
- Limit your online community. NEVER engage in online communication with someone you do not know in person.

Common Sense Media, cont.

- How to send emails and messages online; proofreading your message, the power of words, screen out the “mean”! Show respect online.
- Rings of responsibility: People online who post hurtful comments intended only to upset other people are called “trolls.”
- Be aware of your digital “trail”.
- Digital Citizenship Pledge

Common Sense Media link:

Resource:

Examples of these FREE digital citizenship curricula (80 lessons) for all grade levels can be found at:

https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/classroom_curriculum/digital_literacy_and_citizenship_curriculum_overview.pdf

What if my child is cyberbullying others?

- Take it seriously and let them know it will not be tolerated. Provide consequences.
- Develop clear and consistent expectations for your child's behavior.
- Increase your supervision of their online behavior.
- Build on their strengths.
- Share information with school administrators and get help.

What if my child is being cyberbullied?

- Take it seriously and do not ignore it or blame your child and take screenshots and contact the police if your child was threatened.
- Empathize and let them know bullying is wrong.
- Ask your child what will help? Do not immediately take away their technology.
- Step back and consider your emotions and options carefully and look to the school for help.
- Do not contact the parents of the bully.

Who should I contact at school?

- Contact your child's teacher as bullying does not stop without adult interventions.
- Ask the teacher to alert other school staff to the problem.
- If you are not comfortable with the teacher's response make an appointment with the principal.
- Commit to making the bullying stop and to talking regularly with your child and the school staff.

How can children become more resistant to bullying?

- Help them develop their talents and positive attributes and areas/activities where they are successful.
- Encourage them to build friendships.
- Teach safety strategies and how to seek adult help.
- Make sure school and home are welcoming and provide an environment where they feel safe.
- Maintain open communication with students and children and create times when they will truly talk to you.

Protective Factors: World Health Organization

- Stable and cohesive families.
- Coping and problem solving skills and impulse control.
- School environment that promotes well-being.
- Good relationship with peers.
- Involvement in after school and community based activities.
- Access to mental health care.
- Significant go to adults in their lives besides parents.

Best Practices for Schools

- Teach students to be responsible online.
- Provide preventive information for parents and include cyberbullying policies in the handbook.
- Recognize off line and on line bullying are intertwined and form an anti-bullying task force
- Accept responsibility to intervene and recognize students are the most powerful element in any prevention plan.
- Know all students well and recognize warning signs of victimization.
- Recognize association between bullying and suicide.

Best Practices for Parents

- Develop technology savvy and don't rely only on your child to be your technology guru!
- Encourage friendly interactions between children and be alert for early gateway “mean behaviors.”
- Develop a technology usage plan for your child with their input and insist they follow it and use it wisely.
- Help them understand the impact of technology and the misinterpretation of online communication versus face to face communication.

Resources for Cyberbullying

- www.common sense media.org
- www.cyberbullying.org
- www.stopbullying.gov
- *Bullying and Cyberbullying: What every educator needs to know* by Elizabeth Kandel Englander

Questions?



Thank you...

For joining *PSI* in dealing
with this difficult issue.

PSI website:

▶ <http://psi-solutions.org/>