

## Module 2 - Cyberbullying

### Essential Question

When does inappropriate online behavior cross the line to cyberbullying, and what can you do about it?

### Key Vocabulary

**harassing:** bombarding someone with messages over digital media, or repeated contact when it is least expected

**deceiving:** using fake names, posing as someone else, or creating a fake profile about someone else

**flaming:** saying mean things, usually in ALL CAPS, and often in a public forum with the intention to humiliate

**hate speech:** a verbal attack targeting someone because of their race, gender, religion, ability, or sexual orientation

### ASK

**What are some of the ways that you and your friends tease each other online for fun?**

Sample responses:

Send jokes back and forth, Alter photos of one another, in a goofy (not mean) way

**When does teasing “cross the line” and become harmful? What are some signs, and what does it feel like to be in that situation?**

Sample responses:

The teasing begins to feel scary, not funny anymore.

You feel helpless.

You feel like your reputation might suffer.

You are worried about your safety.

**ASK** students if they have ever heard of the the Key Vocabulary terms **harassing**, **deceiving**, **flaming**, and **hate speech**. Have students describe the terms, and then provide their definitions.

**POINT OUT** to students that these are examples of situations that definitely “cross the line” and are considered cyberbullying. (However, they are not the only examples.)

**DISCUSS** with students why someone might not want to talk to other people about a cyberbullying situation. What would the roadblocks be? Why? Emphasize to students that, no matter what label they put on a situation, if it makes them feel uncomfortable, upset, or hurt, they should talk to someone about it.

**EXPLAIN** that you are going to watch a video of a teen reflecting on a cyberbullying experience.

**SHOW** students the video “Stacey’s Story – When Rumors Escalate.” (The video is called Cyberbullying in your list of resources)

**DISCUSS** these questions:

Video Discussion Questions

**1. Why did the girls start to harass and threaten Stacey online in the first place?**

(Guide students to recognize that the girls started to bully Stacey because of a misunderstanding. It seems that

they thought she was trying to flirt with one of the girl's boyfriends. It turns out the boy was actually Stacey's cousin. Make it clear, though, that cyberbullying Stacey was not an appropriate response even if the guy had not been her cousin.)

## **2. When do you think the girls' behavior "crossed the line"?**

(Pretty much right from the beginning. They called her names publicly on MySpace and said she was stupid. But the threats did get worse over time.)

## **3. Stacey says, "People talk really big, when there's, like, miles between you." What do you think she means by this statement?**

(Students might take Stacey's statement literally. It is fine if they do, but guide them to think about the intent behind Stacey's comment. Sample responses:

- People say things that aren't true online because they are not face to face with you.
- People are meaner online because you're not there to react.
- People make bigger threats online because they feel invincible behind their computers.)

## **4. In what ways might the online context make the situation worse than if the bully had harassed Stacey offline?**

(Students might say that online bullying is either not as bad or the same as offline bullying. This is okay, because there is no right or wrong answer. The point is that there are differences between these two forms of bullying, and it is important to untangle some of the similarities and differences. Sample responses:

- It's more public. Many MySpace friends and users who don't have anything to do with the incident can see the postings.
- The offenders may be bolder over the Internet, saying things they might not say in person.
- People may say things that are meaner online because it seems that actions are separated from consequences.
- Bullying is no worse online than offline because the impact on the victim is the same.)

## **5. Stacey's mom says that Stacey should call the school and report the incidents. Stacey responds that it would "just make it worse." Do you think this is true? Why or why not?**

(Guide students to think about the importance of finding an adult they trust, though inform students that some schools have clearer and more well-thought-out policies than others. Ideally, a trusted adult would listen closely to students' concerns, take them seriously, investigate the problem, make it clear that there will be consequences for offenders, clearly define those consequences, and involve the parents. Sample responses:

- There are people such as counselors, psychologists, and other school staff who might be trusted adults.
- Maybe Stacey is scared. Perhaps Stacey's mom can go with her to talk to adults at her school.

## **Quiz**

Here are the questions your kids need to answer.

Teachers, these questions and answers are here for your sake.

1. True or False

It's ok to flame someone as long as you're just joking.

2. True or False

Schools have adults in place who can help you if you are being bullied online.

3. True or False

Harassment, deception, flaming, and hate speech are all types of cyberbullying.

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