Beyond the Schoolyard: Cyber-Bullies

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Beyond the Schoolyard: Cyber-Bullies ©

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With ever changing electronic technology the home is no longer the refuge from bullies at school or on the school playground

Bully – a young hoodlum who revels in making peoples lives a misery during school years.

online urban dictionary
Bullies can be girls or boys

Some bullies attack their victims physically such as shoving, slapping or punching while other bullies use verbal insults or psychological control to torment their victims.

Bullying – is repeated acts over time that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful.

U.S. Department of Justice

Bullying may also be a “tradition” in some school settings where older students or certain groups of students feel superior to the younger students.

Where bullying was once considered a childhood rite of passage, bullies can make a school a place of fear. Children who are bullied are often afraid to eat in the cafeteria or even to go to school.

How many people were ever bullied during their school years?

Studies have shown that while envy or resentment may be motives for bullying there is little evidence to suggest that bullies suffer from any deficit in self esteem – As this would make it somewhat difficult to bully.
However, bullying can also be used as a tool to conceal shame, anxiety or to boost self esteem. By demeaning others, the abuser himself or herself often feels empowered.

Victims of bullying often suffer anxiety, loneliness, depression and a lack of self esteem
Victims of bullying are not always unpopular loners

Parents and educators are now dealing with tweens and teens who are the “always connected” generation.

As a result we are now dealing with a non-traditional approach to bullying.

Cyber-bullying – is when the Internet, cell phones or other electronic devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

National Crime Prevention Council

Computer Webcam and “Real Time” Problems for Children
Unlike traditional bullying, electronic or cyber-bullies can remain virtually anonymous using temporary email accounts, pseudonyms in chat rooms, instant messaging programs, cell-phone text messaging, and other Internet or electronic means to mask their identity. This perhaps frees the cyber-bully from the normative or the social constraints of their behavior.

**Proxy Server**

- Keeps computers behind it anonymous
- Scans inboard content for malware
- Logs internet usage
Anonymous Proxy Server
• Access blocked Internet sites
• Hides your IP address
• Surf anonymously

Cyber-bullies might be braver when utilizing electronic technology to carry out their hostile and intimidating behavior because it takes less nerve to express hurtful comments when utilizing a cell phone keypad or a computer keyboard.

Another problem is the inseparability of the victim’s “always connected” cell phone, making the child a continuous target for victimization. As the result, cyber-bullying can penetrate the walls of a home, usually a place where victims could seek refuge from the traditional forms of bullying.

Types of Cyber-bullying

Internet
• Cruel instant computer messaging
• Harassing, threatening or insulting emails
• Creating a social networking site in order to mock certain students
• Posting humiliating, “photo-shopped” or digitally modified photos of students

Types of Cyber-bullying

Internet
• Pretending to be someone else by using someone’s online screen name
• Verbally abusing someone on an online gaming site or an avatar based website

Direct vs. Indirect Methods of Cyber-bullying

Direct
• Sending cyber-bullying messages directly to the victim

Indirect
• Using others to cyber-bully the victim
• With or without the accomplice’s consent
Types of Cyber-bullying

**Internet**
- Flaming – which is posting offensive messages or so called “flames” within online discussion forums, the IRC or the various newsgroups

**Cell phone**
- Harassing telephone calls
- Threatening or insulting text messages
- Surreptitiously taking cell phone photos or videos and then posting them on the Internet or a social networking site

Cell phone video clips of traditional bullying behavior can then be posted on social networking sites or YouTube

Types of Cyber-bullying

**Cell phone**
- Forwarding “private” photos or videos to other students
- Sexting – is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between cell phones

Child Pornography

**Child Abuse Images**
- Defined – Visual depiction of a minor (18) engaged in sexually explicit conduct or the lewd exhibition of the genitals

In a 2010 Johnson Institute of Ethics bullying study of 43,321 teens, 47% of the respondents reported they had been bullied at least once while 50% reported having bullied, teased or taunted someone at least once.

USA Today, 10/26/10
What is the School’s Role in Protecting Students from Cyber-Bullies?

- Educate the students regarding the many implications of electronic harassment
- Be proactive – Require that student cell phones be left in school lockers

What is the School’s Role? (cont.)

- Establish an Acceptable Use of Technology Policy (AUTP) regarding student internet access that shall include, but not be limited to: parental consent for student internet use, teacher supervision of the use and auditing procedures to determine whether the technology is being employed for threatening, abusive or obscene use

What is the School’s Role? (cont.)

- Don’t transmit pornographic, obscene or sexually explicit material
- Don’t transmit threatening, abusive or sexually explicit language
- Don’t access, copy or transmit another’s messages without permission

What is the School’s Role? (cont.)

- The AUTP shall identify:
  - Digital Etiquette – electronic standards of conduct
  - Digital Access – Norms of electronic participation

What is the School’s Role? (cont.)

- The AUTP shall also identify:
  - Guidelines for social networking, texting, IM and phone interactions between staff and students
Add a provision to the school’s “Student Policy Manual” reserving the right to discipline a student for any type of technology related incident, for example involving social networking sites or cyber-bullying on or off school property. Then discuss the policy provision with the school attorney.

Enlist the assistance of the School Resource Officer (SRO) or the Police Department’s Juvenile Officer.

The best school cyber-bully intervention and prevention model is threefold:

- School wide-level Interventions – A survey of bullying problems at the school, increased supervision, school wide assemblies, and teacher in-service training to raise the awareness of children and school staff regarding bullying.
- Classroom-level Interventions – The establishment of classroom rules against bullying, regular class meetings to discuss bullying at school, and meetings with all parents.
- Individual-level Interventions – Discussions with students identified as cyber-bullies and the victims of cyber-bullies.

The student’s discipline file should include: computer screen captures, message logs, photos, or any evidence that will demonstrate the seriousness of the student’s behavior and its impact on the victim and the school.

Explain what cyber-bullying is and why it is not acceptable – Student Policy Manual.

You may first have to explain electronic technology and the Internet to the parents!!

Talk with the student about the impact of bullying – Try to get them to understand what it is like being bullied.

Make it clear what the school rules are on cyber-bullying and the consequences.

Have the student acknowledge that what was done was a violation of school rules.

Discuss what the student thinks might help them to stop bullying in the future.
The Initial Conversation (cont.)

- Inform the parents that the police may have to be notified of the incident by the school
- Inform the parents that the police may be notified by the victim’s family
- Increase the Internet or electronic communication supervision of the student
- NO school Internet access
- NO cell phone on school property

What should parents do if your child has been the victim of a cyber-bully?

What Should a Parent Do?

- Refrain from the knee jerk reaction of immediately banning a victim’s access to instant messaging, email, social networking sites a cell phone or the Internet – You punish the victim not the offender
- Talk with your children and caution them about opening emails, text messages, etc. from people that they don’t know

What Should a Parent Do? (cont.)

- If your child receives a text message, IM or an email that is hurtful, tell them to NEVER respond to it – Save it to a folder and tell a trusted adult or a parent
- Internet Service providers can often block cyber-bullies
- If a child has been threatened the police should be notified immediately – “Child Predator Protection 101”

What Should a Parent Do? (cont.)

Notifying the Police

- What kind of threat? (direct or indirect)
- What was said exactly?
- What type of technology was used?
- How often has the threat occurred?
- Do you know who is responsible?

Making a Complaint – NCMEC

www.missingkids.com
1-800-843-5678

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
www.missingkids.com
Thank you!