Common Sense Media on Cyberbullying

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Common Sense Media is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping educators empower young people to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in our ever-changing digital media world.
If you have the right tools, cyberbullies don’t stand a chance.

You know that bullying can be devastating to a student even when it comes in digital form. And even though cyberbullying most often takes place off school grounds, you, the teacher, remain on the front lines.

When it comes to technology colliding with your classroom, you’re an educator of a subject nobody taught you to teach. And that’s where Common Sense Media comes in.

We live and breathe the digital world. We’re your ally as you work to create a school culture where kids think before they act and stand up rather than stand by.

We’re proud to be partnering with The BULLY Project to offer you resources to prevent cyberbullying before it happens and respond adequately when it does.

In this kit you’ll find:

1. 4 classroom lesson plans, differentiated by grade
2. 2 tip sheets for families
3. Cyberbullying Response Flowchart

Check out www.commonsense.org/educators and www.digitalpassport.org for more FREE digital literacy and citizenship resources for schools:

- K-12 Curriculum that addresses cyberbullying, privacy, safety, creative credit, and more
- An interactive learning experience for upper elementary students, Digital Passport teaches and tests the basics of Internet safety and digital citizenship
- Family Media Engagement Program with tip sheets, videos, media agreements, and scripted presentations
- Robust library of professional development videos and tutorials

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Screen Out the Mean

Essential Question
What can you do when someone is mean to you online?

Lesson Overview
Students learn that children sometimes can act like bullies when they are online. They explore what cyberbullying means and what they can do when they encounter it.

Students first read a scenario about mean online behavior. They then discuss what cyberbullying is, how it can make people feel, and how to respond. Then they use their knowledge to create a simple tip sheet on cyberbullying. Students recognize that it is essential to tell a trusted adult if something online makes them feel angry, sad, or scared.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to ...

• analyze online behaviors that could be considered cyberbullying.
• explain how to deal with a cyberbullying situation.
• recognize the importance of engaging a trusted adult when they experience cyberbullying.

Materials and Preparation
• Copy the STOP Cyberbullying Student Handout, one for each student.
• Preview the scenario in Teach 2 and be prepared to present it to the class.

Family Resources
• Send home the Cyberbullying Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School).

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment – Common Core:
grade K: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.4, RL.10, RI.1, RI.2, RI.3, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4, W.2, W.5, W.7, W.8, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.2, SL.3, SL.4, SL.5, SL.6, L.6
grade 1: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.4, RI.1, RI.2, RI.3, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.5, W.7, W.8, L.6
grade 2: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RI.4, RI.6, RI.10, W.2, W.7, W.8, RF.4a, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.2, SL.3, L.6

NETS-S: 2a, 5a, 5d

Key Vocabulary –
online: connected to people on the Internet
cyberbullying: doing something on the Internet, usually again and again, to make another person feel angry, sad, or scared
introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

**ENCOURAGE** students to share what they know about bullying.

**ASK:**

*What kinds of things count as bullying?*

Students should understand that bullying is behavior that is purposely mean or scary to someone else — for example, making fun of how someone looks, telling lies about them behind their back, or threatening to do something bad to them.

*How does bullying make other people feel?*

Sample responses:
- Hurt
- Angry
- Upset
- Scared

*What is the best thing to do when you feel bullied, or when you see someone else being bullied?*

Students should know to always tell a trusted adult when they experience or witness bullying.

**EXPLAIN** to students that they will be learning about a kind of bullying that can take place when they use the Internet.

**Teach 1**

What Is Cyberbullying? (15 minutes)

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary term **online**.

**DISCUSS** the fact that some kids don’t go online very much at all, either because of their family’s rules or because they don’t like it very much. Other kids do go online to do different things.

**ASK:**

*What do you do online, or what do you think you might like to do?*

Students may mention sending emails, instant messaging, and playing games.

**SHARE** with students that most of the time when they go online it is to do fun or interesting things. But sometimes people can be mean to each other online and this is called cyberbullying.

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary term **cyberbullying**.

**EMPHASIZE** that when children are mean to someone else online, even if they only do it one time, it isn’t nice. Also stress that cyberbullies usually bully repeatedly, with the intention of causing hurt feelings. When children do something very mean and/or scary, or do it over and over again, then they are cyberbullying.
SHARE with students some examples of cyberbullying. These might include:
- sending a mean email or IM to someone
- posting mean things about someone on a website
- making fun of someone in an online chat
- doing mean things to someone’s character in an online world like Club Penguin or WebKinz

ASK:

Did you ever see someone make someone else feel bad online?

Answers will vary. Reminds students to tell what happened, but not use real names.

EXPLAIN to students that they will be learning more about how cyberbullying occurs, and what to do when it happens to them or to someone they know.

**teach 2**

**What to Do About Cyberbullying** *(20 minutes)*

DISTRIBUTE the STOP Cyberbullying Student Handout, one for every student.

GUIDE students through the scenario on the handout. After allowing students time to read it on their own, you may wish to read it aloud.

Jada’s parents let her play on a website where she can take care of a pet pony and decorate its stall. Her friend Michael has played with her in the past and knows her user name and password. One day Jada goes to the site to care for her pony. She finds that her pony’s stall is a mess and that there are some things missing.

ENCOURAGE the class to answer the questions on their handouts. Invite them to share their answers.

ASK:

What do you think happened?

Students should conclude that Michael went to the website himself and messed up the pony’s stall.

How do you think this made Jada feel?

Students should recognize that Michael’s behavior probably made Jada feel upset, sad, angry, or let down by her friend.

DIRECT students’ attention to the four rules for dealing with cyberbullying at the bottom of their STOP Cyberbullying Student Handout. Use the following questions to guide discussion.

ASK:

How will you know when someone is cyberbullying you?

Students should recognize that they may be experiencing cyberbullying whenever someone does something online that makes them feel sad, scared, angry, or upset in any way.

Why do you think it is important to stop using the computer when someone starts cyberbullying you?

Students should realize that if they stay online, the cyberbullying may continue or get worse.
If someone makes you feel angry, sad, or scared online, which grown-ups can you tell and ask for help?

Students may name parents or grandparents, an older sister or brother, a teacher, or the school nurse or counselor. If students cannot think of someone right away, help them brainstorm and identify an appropriate adult.

Why is it important to go online only with an adult, or when an adult says it is OK?

Students should recognize that adults can help guide them online and keep them safe from cyberbullying.

How can you decide whether you should play or chat with someone online?

Students should acknowledge that they need adult guidance in deciding who to connect with online. If someone is very mean to them, or is mean repeatedly, then that person is a cyberbully and should not be contacted online. Remind students that they should never talk to strangers online either without asking a trusted adult, even if that person is nice or has shared interests.

Which of the four things do you think is the most important?

Students should recognize that telling an adult is the single most important thing they should do if they experience or witness cyberbullying.

REVISIT the scenario in the STOP Cyberbullying Student Handout, and have students apply the S-T-O-P rules to Jada’s situation.

- Jada should STOP using the computer.
- Jada should TELL an adult she trusts what happened.
- Jada should not go back online or return to the pony website until an adult says it is OK.
- If Jada and Michael are good friends, Jada may want to tell Michael how his actions made her feel, after she gets advice from an adult.
- But if Michael continues cyberbullying her, she should play with other kids who don’t take part in cyberbullying.

**closing**

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives.

ASK:

What is cyberbullying? How does it make people feel?

Students should recognize that cyberbullying is any kind of online behavior that makes people feel sad, scared, angry, or upset.
What four things can you do to help stop cyberbullying?

Students should be able to explain each of the four rules on the STOP Cyberbullying Student Handout.

What is the most important thing to do if someone starts cyberbullying you?

Students should understand that telling a trusted adult is the most important response whenever someone makes them feel sad, scared, or angry online.

Extension Activity

Introduce the following additional scenarios involving cyberbullying, and have students use the rules on the STOP Cyberbullying Student Handout to describe how the children in the stories might feel when this happens, and how they should respond.

Kyle keeps getting IMs from someone saying mean things about him. The person who is sending the messages doesn’t use a real name, but Kyle can tell the messages are coming from someone who also makes fun of him at school in gym class.

Sasha is a new girl at school and she is making a lot of friends. Then Sasha finds out that another girl sent around an email that had a picture of a cow with Sasha’s name on it.

At-Home Activity

Have students work with an adult family member to turn the S-T-O-P rules into a poster to hang in their bedroom.
Screen Out the Mean

Directions
Jada’s parents let her play on a website where she can take care of a pet pony and decorate its stall. Her friend Michael has played with her in the past and knows her user name and password.
One day Jada goes to the site to care for her pony. She finds that her pony’s stall is a mess and that there are some things missing.

What do you think happened?

How do you think Jada feels?

What should you do if someone starts cyberbullying you?

STOP using the computer until it is safe.
TELL an adult you trust.
Go ONLINE only when a trusted adult says it’s OK.
PLAY online only with kids who are nice.
Screen Out the Mean

1. Draw lines to show which things a cyberbully would do most and which things an in-person bully would do most.

- Threatens to pull your hair
- Takes your stuff in an online game
- Sends mean emails
- Hits you

2. A cyberbully might:
   a) Write an email to make someone feel scared
   b) Say mean things at recess
   c) Share a knock-knock joke online

3. What should you do if you are cyberbullied?
   a) Stop using the computer until it is safe
   b) Tell an adult you trust
   c) Both a and b
1. Draw lines to show which things a cyberbully would do most and which things an in-person bully would do most.

   - Threatens to pull your hair
   - Takes your stuff in an online game
   - Sends mean emails
   - Hits you

   **Answer feedback**
   A cyberbully does and says mean things online. An in-person bully is mean in person.

2. **A cyberbully might:**
   a) Write an email to make someone feel scared
   b) Say mean things at recess
   c) Share a knock-knock joke online

   **Answer feedback**
   The correct answer is **a**. Cyberbullies are mean online.

3. **What should you do if you are cyberbullied?**
   a) Stop using the computer until it is safe
   b) Tell an adult you trust
   c) Both **a** and **b**

   **Answer feedback**
   The correct answer is **c**. If someone is mean to you online, get off the computer and tell an adult. Saying mean things to a cyberbully won’t help.
What’s Cyberbullying?

Essential Question
What is cyberbullying, and how do you deal with it?

Lesson Overview
Students discuss positive and negative aspects of interacting with others online. They learn the definition of cyberbullying and help the teacher fill in a Venn diagram that compares in-person bullying with cyberbullying. They then read a story of a student who is cyberbullied, identifying the players involved and how the target might feel.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to ...
- empathize with the targets of cyberbullying.
- recognize some of the key similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying.
- identify strategies for dealing responsibly with cyberbullying.

Materials and Preparation
- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- Copy the That’s Cyberbullying Student Handout, one per group of four or five students.

Family Resources
- Send home the Cyberbullying Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School).

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment – Common Core:
grade 3: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.6, L.3a, L.6
grade 4: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.6, L.3a, L.6
grade 5: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

NETS-S: 2a, 2b, 5a, 5d

Key Vocabulary –
- cyberbullying: the use of digital media tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset or harass someone else
- target: the person being cyberbullied
- empathize: to imagine the feelings that someone else is experiencing

cyberbullying: the use of digital media tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset or harass someone else

target: the person being cyberbullied

empathize: to imagine the feelings that someone else is experiencing
Warm-up (5 minutes)

**ASK:**

*What are some positive aspects of going online?*

Sample responses:

- Finding information quickly
- Meeting people with similar interests
- Communicating with people around the world
- Having fun

**EXPLAIN** that in order to really enjoy the power of the Internet, it is important for students to learn how to handle any situation they might encounter online responsibly so they can keep their experiences positive.

**ASK:**

*What are some of the ways that people hurt other people's feelings online?*

Sample responses:

- When people make jokes online that they think are funny, but they actually hurt other people's feelings
- When a friend teases a classmate
- When someone logs in to someone else's account and pretends to be that person

Exploring Bullying vs. Cyberbullying (10 minutes)

**ASK:**

*How do you think it feels to be bullied, and why?*

Guide students to reflect upon their personal experiences and to put themselves in the shoes of others who have been bullied. Common feelings: humiliated, sad, angry, helpless

**INVITE** student volunteers to describe the Key Vocabulary terms **cyberbullying** and **target**. Then provide the definitions.

**DRAW** a Venn diagram on the board. Label one side “Bullying” and the other side “Cyberbullying.”

**EXPLAIN** that there are similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying. Let students know that both can be very hurtful to the target, but that they should be aware of the differences between the two as they learn how to deal with cyberbullying.

**ASK:**

*What are some of the similarities and differences between bullying and cyberbullying? (Fill in the Venn diagram with students’ responses.)*

Sample responses:

**Differences:**

- Kids may use more hurtful and extreme language online than offline.
- Cyberbullying can happen anytime, whereas regular bullying generally stops when kids go home.
Cyberbullying can be very public. Posts can spread rapidly and to a large, invisible audience because of the nature of how information travels online.

Cyberbullies sometimes act anonymously, whereas with traditional bullying it is often clear who the bully is.

In-person bullying can cause physical and emotional harm, while cyberbullying causes only emotional harm (though it can lead to physical bullying later).

The age and size of a person are often less important with cyberbullying because people are not face to face. For example, even teachers can be targets.

Similarities:
• Both can make kids feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, helpless, sad, and angry.

**teach 2**

**Identifying Cyberbullying (25 minutes)**

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary term *empathize*.

**HAVE** students recall a time when they have empathized with someone else, and ask them to share this memory with a partner.

**Distribute** the *That’s Cyberbullying Student Handout*.

**Invite** students to read the scenario out loud, along with the questions that follow.

**Have** students work with a partner to complete the questions on the handout.

**Ask:**

*Who are the cyberbullies?*

The two girls who are not invited to the sleepover.

*Who is the target?*

Sondra

*Is this a cyberbullying situation? Why or why not?*

Yes, the angry girls have created a cyberbullying situation. Their behavior is online and it is intentional and harassing.

*How do you think Sondra might feel, other than embarrassed?*

Explain that when the students put themselves in Sondra’s shoes, they empathize with her. To be a good friend, it is important to empathize with the targets of cyberbullying. The website that the girls created is mean, but Sondra may still feel regretful. Maybe she wishes she had invited the other girls, or that her parents’ rules had been different.
Why do you think the two girls created the mean website about Sondra? They felt left out. They did not like Sondra anyway, and they thought they had an excuse to be mean to her.

USE the one or all of the following questions to deepen class discussion about the scenario on their handout:

Imagine someone saying that they hate you and making fun of you everywhere you go at school. Now imagine someone doing that on the Internet. How are these two situations similar? How are they different? Guide students to think about how in-person bullying and cyberbullying both make targets feel bad. Also, one can physically get away from in-person bullying, but not with cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can sometimes be more public than in-person bullying, because lots of people can see and share public messages online. But cyberbullying can also occur behind-the-scenes. For example, a cyberbully could send mean messages to someone without others knowing.

What advice would you give Sondra about how to handle the situation? Encourage the following tips:

1. Don’t respond or retaliate. If you are angry and reply, then you might say mean things. Cyberbullies often just want to get a reaction out of you. Don’t let them know that their plan has worked.
2. Block the bully. If you get mean messages online, take the person who sent you the messages off your buddy or friends list. You can also just delete messages from bullies without reading them.
3. Save and print bullying messages. If the bullying continues, save the messages. These could be important evidence to show your parents or teachers if the bullying does not stop.
4. Talk to a friend. When someone makes you feel bad, it can help to talk the situation over with a friend.
5. Tell a trusted adult. Telling an adult – like a parent, family member, teacher, or coach – isn’t tattling. It’s standing up for yourself.

What do you think the people who are bullying Sondra would say about their behavior? Sample responses:

- They might say they were only kidding, they didn’t mean any harm, or it was just a joke.
- Students creating a website might also say that it is a matter of free speech. (Point out that whether or not the First Amendment permits it, bullying with a website is unkind and hurtful. Moreover, it may be against school rules.)

EXPLAIN to students that good experiences online are much more common than bad ones. However, just as in the real world, situations online can arise in which they might encounter something uncomfortable. Point out that in this lesson they can learn how to deal with some of those upsetting experiences.
INVITE students to share their own stories of bullying or cyberbullying situations, without using actual names. Encourage them to discuss how the target felt. Use the prompts below if students are having trouble remembering incidents. Possible prompts:

- Have you ever seen kids’ webpages or messages that caused another student distress?
- What happened? Why? Remember, don’t use real names.

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

What are some words or phrases to describe how it feels to be cyberbullied?
Embarrassed, upset, depressed, hurt, powerless.

How is cyberbullying the same and/or different than in-person bullying?
Guide students to recognize that cyberbullying is a form of bullying, but that cyberbullying often spreads faster, further, to more people, and can occur 24/7. It is important for students to know about these distinctions so they can better deal with cyberbullying situations.

What are some ways to handle a cyberbullying situation?
Sample responses:
- Don’t respond or retaliate.
- Block the bully.
- Save and print bullying messages.
- Talk to a friend.
- Tell a trusted adult.

Extension Activity

Have students pretend that they are Dr. Chip Micro, a famous TV personality who helps people having difficulties with others online. Let students know that Sondra has written to Dr. Chip Micro about her situation. They, as Dr. Chip Micro, should send an email reply providing concrete advice to Sondra. Let them know that they should: (1) empathize with Sondra, (2) acknowledge the difficulty of her situation, and (3) offer help and/or suggested solutions for her situation.

At-Home Activity

Encourage students to interview family members about incidents of bullying that they have either been part of or witness to. Suggest that students create about ten interview questions that invite family members to share their stories and also ask them to reflect on how they think technology has or has not changed the way bullying impacts kids (and adults). Students can record the interviews with an audio recorder or a smartphone’s voice memo function. They then can share their interviews with the class or incorporate them into a multimedia presentation using VoiceThread (www.voicethread.com).
Directions
Read the story of Sondra below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Sondra is planning a birthday sleepover. Her parents have set a limit of eight girls, so Sondra can’t invite everyone she’d like.

Two girls, who are left out of the party, overhear the plans. They decide to create a “We Hate Sondra Jones” website. They say that anyone invited to the party should not go. They share the website with everyone in school. The girls also tell everyone to add new reasons why they hate Sondra and to spread mean rumors about her.

When Sondra hears about the site, she gets a sick feeling in her stomach. Each day she finds a new mean comment or joke about her on the website. She feels hurt and embarrassed. She tells her parents she is sick, so she won’t have to go to school.

Is this a cyberbullying situation? Why or why not?

Who are the cyberbullies?

Who is the target?

How do you think Sondra feels?

Why do you think the two girls made the mean website about Sondra?
What advice would you give Sondra about how to handle the situation?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What do you think the people who are bullying Sondra would say about their behavior?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
What’s Cyberbullying?

1. Dean is a target of cyberbullying. He gets a text message from Eric that says, “You are such a loser. I can’t believe you made us lose the game yesterday with that lame shot.” Dean notices that all of the other members of his soccer team got the message about him too. Dean probably feels:

   a) Sad and hurt
   b) Like it’s not a big deal
   c) Fine

2. What are some similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying? Write the letter that goes with each answer in the correct space in the diagram below.

   a) Makes people feel sad, angry, hurt, and embarrassed
   b) Can cause physical harm
   c) Can cause emotional harm
   d) The bully’s identity can be anonymous, or unknown
   e) Can be witnessed by a bystander
   f) Can be stopped or made better by an upstander

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3. TJ keeps getting mean messages from someone online. Circle the answers below that show what TJ should do in response. (You may circle more than one answer.)

   a) TJ should block the bully.
   b) TJ should write mean messages back.
   c) TJ should tell an adult.
What’s Cyberbullying?

1. Dean is a target of cyberbullying. He gets a text message from Eric that says, “You are such a loser. I can’t believe you made us lose the game yesterday with that lame shot.” Dean notices that all of the other members of his soccer team got the message about him too. Dean probably feels:

   a) Sad and hurt
   b) Like it’s not a big deal
   c) Fine

*Answer feedback*

The correct answer is a. Eric is cyberbullying Dean. This is harmful to Dean, as well as to the rest of the team.

2. What are some similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying? Write the letter that goes with each answer in the correct space in the diagram below.

   a) Makes people feel sad, angry, hurt, and embarrassed
   b) Can cause physical harm
   c) Can cause emotional harm
   d) The bully’s identity can be anonymous, or unknown
   e) Can be witnessed by a bystander
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   a) TJ should block the bully.
   b) TJ should write mean messages back.
   c) TJ should tell an adult.

*Answer feedback*

The correct answers are a and c. If you are cyberbullied like TJ, you could block the bully and talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling.
Cyberbullying: Be Upstanding

Essential Question
How do you judge the intentions and impact of people’s words and actions online?

Lesson Overview
Students learn about the difference between being a passive bystander versus a brave upstander in cyberbullying situations.

Students reflect on what it means to be brave and to stand up for others. They fill out the Why Care? Student Handout, create a diagram of the players involved, and generate ideas about how bystanders can become upstanders. They then identify concrete solutions for dealing with cyberbullying situations.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to...

- reflect on what it means to be brave and stand up for others offline and online.
- learn to show empathy for those who have been cyberbullied.
- generate multiple solutions for helping others when cyberbullying occurs.

Materials and Preparation
- Drawing paper and markers (for all students)
- Copy the Why Care? Student Handout, one per group of four or five.

Family Resources
- Send home the Cyberbullying Family Tip Sheet (Middle School).

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment – Common Core:
grade 6: RI.2, RI.3, RI.7, RI.8, RL.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.6, L.6
grade 7: RI.2, RI.3, RI.8, RI.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6
grade 8: RI.2, RI.3, RI.8, RI.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6
NETS-S: 2a, 2b, 5a, 5d

Key Vocabulary –

bystander: someone who sees cyberbullying happening, but does nothing to help
upstander: someone who helps when they see cyberbullying occur
empathize: to imagine the feelings that someone else is experiencing
introduction

Warm-up (10 minutes)

ASK:

What does it mean to be brave?

Sample responses:
- To be courageous
- To stand up for others
- To go against social pressure to do what is right

How can you show bravery if someone is being cyberbullied and you are a witness?

Note: You may wish to remind students that cyberbullying is the use of digital media tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset or harass another person.

Sample responses:
- Standing up for the target
- Empathizing with the target
- Getting help from a trusted adult

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms bystander, upstander, and empathize.

DISCUSS the following qualities associated with upstanders:

An upstander ...
- is not directly involved in the cyberbullying incident, but steps in to help anyway.
- empathizes with the targets of cyberbullying, letting them know that they care and are listening.
- does not spread rumors or go along with cyberbullies because of peer pressure, and may even tell the cyberbully to stop.
- encourages the target to tell a trusted adult about the situation.

| teach 1 |

Create a Cyberbullying Map (15 minutes)

DISTRIBUTE the Why Care? Student Handout and ask students to read the story about Kevin and José.

GUIDE students to use drawing paper and markers to create a map showing all the players in this event (bully/bullies, target, bystanders). Students may choose to show a labeled web, use concentric circles, or draw something more representational. Ask students to share their maps with the class.

| teach 2 |

Read about Bystanders (15 minutes)

HAVE students complete the Why Care? Student Handout, and follow-up with a class discussion.
### ASK:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is doing the cyberbullying in this story?</strong></td>
<td>Encourage students to decide for themselves and support their reasoning. Ask them to consider if it is only José? What about the boys at school who helped him upload the video to the website? What about the people who posted nasty comments? What about the people who viewed the video?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who are the bystanders?</strong></td>
<td>The students at school who witnessed the abuse and kids online who viewed the video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What would you do if you were a bystander?</strong></td>
<td>Guide students to think about empathizing with Kevin, telling the other boys to take down the video, writing public comments on the video saying that Kevin did not want the video up, or encouraging Kevin to tell a trusted adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What would you say to José if you wanted him to stop?</strong></td>
<td>I might tell him that it is unfair to put up the video without Kevin’s permission, and let him know how hurtful it is to Kevin. This may not work, but at least it is an attempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What would you say to Kevin or do for him to show your support for him?</strong></td>
<td>Guide students to talk about how it is important to listen to Kevin and empathize with him, and then discuss with him what actions to take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What could you say to the other kids at school who viewed the video and left cruel comments?</strong></td>
<td>I could let them know that they are followers. I could tell them how Kevin feels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How could you have involved a trusted adult?</strong></td>
<td>Guide students to consider what the consequences of telling an adult for Kevin could be. The other students might make fun of him, so he has to confide in someone who is trustworthy and has the skill and authority to help him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POINT OUT** that people who posted cruel comments were just as guilty of being bullies as the boys who originally uploaded the video. Discuss with students how trusted adults could help, including asking a guidance counselor to talk to Kevin, a technology teacher to investigate whether it would be possible to remove the video from the site, and a school principal to enforce school bullying rules.

**HAVE** students add to their concept map drawings, clearly labeling their proposed solutions.
Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

What kinds of online behaviors could be considered cyberbullying?

- Posting someone else’s video without permission, leaving cruel comments on a website.

What does it mean to be a bystander to cyberbullying?

- A bystander sees cyberbullying happening, but does nothing to help. Some bystanders also might get involved in the bullying, and some will spread the disaster further by recruiting even more bystanders.

What are some things a bystander can do to become an upstander?

- Show understanding and support for the target, don’t react to the bully, tell the bully to stop, or ask a trusted adult for help. Remind students that a trusted adult is someone who you believe will listen and has the skills, desire, and authority to help you.

Extension Activity

Point out to students that most kids say they would report cyberbullying if they did not have to identify themselves. Have students brainstorm ways for students to anonymously report cyberbullying at school. Have them make an action plan for dealing with the problem and a proposal for convincing administrators, teachers, students, and parents to get involved.

At-Home Activity

PSAs, public service announcements, are messages in the public interest that are meant to help raise awareness or change attitudes about a particular social issue. These campaigns, popular since World War II, tend to be short, multimedia messages. Challenge students to work with family members to create a PSA about the importance of being an upstander in 45 seconds or less. Students can use an audio recording, a slide presentation, music, video, or a combination to encapsulate and deliver their powerful message to others.
Directions
Read this scenario about Kevin and José and answer the questions below.

Kevin sends his friend José a short video he made at home, a reenactment of a famous fantasy movie scene. José, laughing at how Kevin looks, shows it to some other boys at school. The boys laugh at Kevin too, and then decide to post it on a video-sharing website. Millions of people then view Kevin’s video. Nasty comments are posted. Every day, Kevin goes online to check the site and sees more comments like “idiot” and “fat nerd.” Every day, he goes to school and hears similar cruel comments from his classmates.

Who are the bystanders?
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

What would you do if you were a bystander?
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

What would you say to José if you wanted him to stop?
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

What would you say to Kevin or do for him to show your support for him?
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
What could you say to the other kids at school who viewed the video and left cruel comments?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

How could you have involved a trusted adult?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Don’t Be a Bystander

In this true story, many people contributed to the cyberbullying. But there were many more kids who knew about the situation but chose not to get involved. Kids who are not cyberbullying but who see, hear, or know about it are called bystanders. In this situation, kids in school who witnessed the abuse and kids online who viewed the video were bystanders.

Use Common Sense!

Be an upstander! If you witness cyberbullying, you can help by supporting the target and letting the bullies know that their behavior is not acceptable. Here are things you can do:

• Step in to help in a cyberbullying situation by letting the target know you are there for them.
• Listen to and empathize with the target.
• Do not spread rumors; instead, tell the cyberbully to stop.
• Report what is happening to a trusted adult or website administrator, or encourage the target to tell a trusted adult. A trusted adult is someone who you believe will listen and has the skills, desire, and authority to help you.
Cyberbullying: Be Upstanding

1. An upstander is someone who:
   a) Takes action and stands up for someone who is being cyberbullied
   b) Goes along with what a cyberbully is doing because of peer pressure
   c) Ignores what a cyberbully is doing

2. Lali tells Gloria that she keeps receiving mean messages on her cell phone. “That must make you feel awful,” Gloria says. “Do you want to talk about it?” True or false: Gloria is showing Lali empathy.
   a) True
   b) False

3. Alina notices that a classmate keeps posting rude comments about her friend Mike on a blog. What could Alina do to become an upstander?
   a) Show Mike support
   b) Ask her classmate to delete the posts
   c) Both a and b
Cyberbullying: Be Upstanding

1. An upstander is someone who:
   a) Takes action and stands up for someone who is being cyberbullied
   b) Goes along with what a cyberbully is doing because of peer pressure
   c) Ignores what a cyberbully is doing

   *Answer feedback*
   The correct answer is a. An upstander is someone who helps a target when they see cyberbullying occur.

2. Lali tells Gloria that she keeps receiving mean messages on her cell phone. “That must make you feel awful,” Gloria says. “Do you want to talk about it?” True or false: Gloria is showing Lali empathy.
   a) True
   b) False

   *Answer feedback*
   The correct answer is a, True. When you empathize with someone, you try to understand how that person might be feeling.

3. Alina notices that a classmate keeps posting rude comments about her friend Mike on a blog. What could Alina do to become an upstander?
   a) Show Mike support
   b) Ask her classmate to delete the posts
   c) Both a and b

   *Answer feedback*
   The correct answer is c. An upstander tries to make things better for a target of cyberbullying.
Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty

Essential Question
What factors intensify cyberbullying and online cruelty, and what can you do to lessen them?

Lesson Overview
Students learn that cruelty can escalate quickly online because people are often anonymous and posts spread quickly. They view the video, “Ricardo’s Story – Making Fun of Others Online,” and identify the factors that contribute to online cruelty. Students then watch the video, “Stacey’s Story – When Rumors Escalate,” identify the roles of various players in the video, and describe what upstanders can do to lessen the effects of this online cruelty. Students then create diagrams on their Dial It Down Student Handout to show how online cruelty can either escalate or de-escalate.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to ...
• reflect on the factors that intensify online cruelty and cyberbullying.
• identify what targets and upstanders can do when online cruelty occurs.
• recognize their own role in escalating or de-escalating online cruelty.

Materials and Preparation
• Preview the videos, “Ricardo’s Story – Making Fun of Others Online” and “Stacey’s Story – When Rumors Escalate,” and prepare to show them to students.
• Copy the Dial It Down Student Handout, one for each student.
• Review the Dial It Down Student Handout – Teacher Version.

Family Resources
• Send home the Cyberbullying Family Tip Sheet (Middle & High School).

Key Vocabulary –
target: a person who is the object of an intentional action
offender: a person who has malicious intent to hurt or damage someone
bystander: a person who does nothing when they witness something happening
upstander: a person who supports and stands up for someone else
escalate: to increase or make more intense
de-escalate: to decrease or make less intense
**introduction**

**Warm-up (5 minutes)**

**EXPLAIN** to students that online cruelty, also referred to as cyberbullying, takes place whenever someone uses digital media tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset or harass someone else, often repeatedly.

**SHOW** students the video, “Ricardo’s Story – Making Fun of Others Online.”

**ASK:**

*Do you think Ricardo is a cyberbully? Why or why not?*

Guide students to recognize that Ricardo probably is a cyberbully because he openly criticizes people online. On the other hand, we do not know how mean his comments were, and if he might change his behavior in the future.

*What does Ricardo mean when he says that information “gets around really quick”?*

Guide students to think about how information generally travels faster and reaches more people on the Internet than offline, and that this fact potentially makes the impact harsher.

*Ricardo thinks that harassing others on Internet, rather than in person, appeals to some teenagers because they can’t be attacked back physically. What do you think?*

Guide students to think about how people may cyberbully online because they do not have to face their target and can “hide” behind their computers. On the other hand, conflicts that start online often go offline at some point.

*Have you ever encountered online cruelty? How do you think someone might feel after being the target of it?*

Sample responses:
- Upset
- Alone
- Trapped
- Hurt
- Angry

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary words **target** and **offender**.

**DISCUSS** with students how the targets of online cruelty may feel they can be bombarded with negative comments at any time, anywhere. And when more offenders join in the online cruelty, the situation gets even worse.

**teach 1**

**Watch Stacey’s Story (15 minutes)**

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary terms **escalate**, **de-escalate**, **bystander**, and **upstander**.

**SHOW** the video, “Stacey’s Story – When Rumors Escalate,” and answer the following questions about online cruelty as a class.
ASK:

Who was involved in the story and what roles did they play? Who was the target? Who were the offenders? Were there bystanders and/or upstanders?

Sample responses:
- **Target**: Stacey, whose intentions are misunderstood and who feels beaten down by being picked on offline and online
- **Offenders**: The girl who misunderstood Stacey’s intent, as well as her friends who led the cruel online behavior
- **Bystanders**: All of the people who might have stepped in but did not, including Stacey’s cousin and others at school or online
- **Upstander**: Stacey’s mom, who empathized with Stacey and encouraged her to seek help from the school

How do you think the online cruelty might be different from offline behavior?

As Stacey says, most of the comments were made anonymously and from “miles away.” Students should recognize that it may be easier for offenders to be cruel when they are not face to face with their target. Students should also understand that it is easy for online cruelty to spread quickly, both because of the technology and because of the herd mentality.

What do you think you might have done if you were Stacey? What could you have done if you wanted to be an upstander in this situation?

Invite student responses, and then guide students through the chart that follows.

DISCUSS the following ways that targets and upstanders can help de-escalate online cruelty.

### How Targets and Upstanders Can De-escalate Online Cruelty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGETS</th>
<th>UPSTANDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ignore and block the bully.</strong> Offenders often want attention. Take it away and they may give up.</td>
<td><strong>Stand up to the offender when appropriate.</strong> If you see something negative, say something. Make it clear that you think online cruelty is wrong, and tell the offender to back off. (It may be easier to do this if you have good standing with the offender.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Save the evidence.</strong> You may need it later for documentation.</td>
<td><strong>Point out the bully’s motivation to the target.</strong> Comfort the target by explaining that many offenders act cruelly just to gain control, power, or status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change your privacy settings.</strong> Allow only people you trust to see or comment on your pages.</td>
<td><strong>Help the target advocate.</strong> Help the target find friends and school leaders who can help de-escalate the situation. It’s easier to stand up to cruelty when you are not alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tell trusted friends and adults.</strong> Create a support network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASK:

Have you or a friend ever experienced a situation similar to Stacey’s? How might the strategies in the chart have helped you in that situation?

What prevent a bystander from taking action? What advice would you give someone to convince them to be upstanding?

Have students apply what they have learned to personal experiences, without using real names.

Bystanders may hesitate to get involved in a cyberbullying situation because they don’t want to become targets themselves. Encourage students to put themselves in a target’s shoes. What would it feel like if nobody wanted to help them out when they needed it most? Remind students that they can show support in many ways, even simply by listening to a target about his or her experience.

teach 2

Create “Dial It Down” Maps (20 minutes)

EXPLAIN to students that they are going to map out two stories. One will show how online cruelty escalated in “Stacey’s Story.” The other will show how it might have de-escalated if Stacey had some upstanders on her side.

Note: You may choose to have students create their maps based on other stories about cyberbullying and online cruelty, rather than on Stacey’s Story. You can have students research news stories on their own, or you can assign stories from this set of scenarios, created by the Cyberbullying Resource Center (www.cyberbullying.us/Cyberbullying_Scenarios.pdf).

DISTRIBUTE the Dial It Down Student Handout, one for each student.

ARRANGE students in pairs. Have one student complete the left-hand column of the handout for Stacey’s Story to show how the situation escalated. Have the other one fill in the Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying version of her story to show how the situation could have been de-escalated.

INSTRUCT students to turn their handouts into maps, using elements such as size and color to indicate escalation and de-escalation, and arrows to show the flow of events.

INVITE students to compare their results with their partners. Then have volunteers share their maps with the class.

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.
ASK:

What are some roles that different people play in cyberbullying situations, and how would you describe each one?

Sample responses:
- Target: The object of the online cruelty
- Offender: The person who tries to hurt or harass the target
- Bystander: A person who does nothing when they see something happening
- Upstander: A person who supports and stands up for someone else

What are some ways that online cruelty and cyberbullying can escalate, or intensify?

Sample responses:
- When multiple people become involved in the cruelty or bullying
- When the online cruelty becomes public, through posts, tagging, and comments.
- When people start sending threats

Why is it important to be an upstander rather than a bystander?

Students should understand that bystanders are effectively allowing the target to be hurt and degraded by others; upstanders take whatever action they can to stop this unacceptable behavior.

Extension Activity

Explain to students that online cruelty has, in a few cases, led to teen suicides, attempted suicides, or teens stating that they want to take their lives. But make sure students know this is not the norm. Then show students one of the following videos: two are about a teen who took his or her own life after becoming the target of online cruelty, and one is about a teen who makes a plea to the bullies. Have students break into small groups and record their ideas about what factors escalated the cruelty to such a serious level, and what might have de-escalated it. Invite students to share their findings with the class. Then discuss as a class what steps they should take if they believe a classmate is seriously distressed or depressed as a result of cyberbullying. Students should understand that in such situations, in addition to trying to de-escalate it, they need to tell trusted adults what is going on.

- ABC News, “Cruel Kids, Tragic Ends”
  http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/video?id=2443795
- The Westport Patch, “Westport Student Issues YouTube Plea to Bullies”

At-Home Activity

Have students review the school’s bullying policy. If your school does not have a policy, have students find a sample policy online. Instruct them to study the policy and determine if there are clear guidelines for identifying and dealing with online cruelty in the school. Encourage them to suggest things they would like to see added or changed. You may wish to share these suggestions with administrators.
Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty

Directions

Fill out the chart after watching the video, “Stacey’s Story.” One partner should complete the boxes on the left to show how the situation escalated. The other partner should complete the boxes on the right, which shows the initial incident, an escalating incident, and then two de-escalating incidents. Keep in mind that the incidents might not happen one after the other, even though they are shown this way.

After completing the chart, turn what you’ve written above into a diagram or map. Show how situations can escalate or de-escalate, using colors, shapes, and arrows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stacey’s Story</th>
<th>Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial incident (what happened first?):</td>
<td>Initial incident (what happened first?):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalating incident #1:</td>
<td>Escalating incident:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalating incident #2:</td>
<td>De-escalating incident #1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalating incident #3:</td>
<td>De-escalating incident #2:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Directions

Fill out the chart after watching the video, “Stacey’s Story.” One partner should complete the boxes on the left to show how the situation escalated. The other partner should complete the boxes on the right, which shows the initial incident, an escalating incident, and then two de-escalating incidents. Keep in mind that the incidents might not happen one after the other, even though they are shown this way.

### Stacey’s Story

**Initial incident (what happened first?):**

Offender mistakenly thinks Stacey is trying to flirt with her boyfriend, who is actually Stacey’s cousin.

**Escalating incident #1:**

The offender says, “Stay away from my boyfriend” and “Oh, you better watch out.”

**Escalating incident #2:**

Friends of the offender post a threatening message saying they want to pick a fight with Stacey.

**Escalating incident #3:**

The online cruelty becomes public, through posts, tagging, and comments.

### Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying

**Initial incident (what happened first?):**

Offender mistakenly thinks Stacey is trying to flirt with her boyfriend, who is actually Stacey’s cousin.

**Escalating incident:**

The offender’s friends post mean bulletin messages about Stacey.

**De-escalating incident #1:**

One of Stacey’s friends sees the exchange and privately messages the offender to clear up the misunderstanding and to urge the offender to back off.

**De-escalating incident #2:**

Stacey changes her privacy settings so only friends can send her messages or post on her profile.

After completing the chart, turn what you’ve written above into a diagram or map. Show how situations can escalate or de-escalate, using colors, shapes, and arrows. (Students should create maps or flow charts that clearly show movement from one incident to the next. They may show one incident breaking off into many, or they may use color or size to indicate an intensifying or waning situation.)
1. Reflect on each of these statements about the Internet. Circle three statements that support the idea that the Internet makes bullying easier and a bigger problem.

   a) Information can spread very quickly on the Internet.
   b) If you say something mean online, you don’t have to worry about getting in a physical fight.
   c) You can find lots of information on the Internet.
   d) Anything someone says could stay on the Internet for a long time.
   e) You can get support from groups on the Internet.
   f) Parents, teachers, and students all use the Internet.

2. Mei keeps getting mean comments on her Twitter posts. Cara, Mei’s good friend, has seen the comments and wants to help. What can both girls do to make the situation better?

   a) Mei could delete her Twitter account. Cara could let Mei use her Twitter account so that Mei can still post, but no one knows it’s her.
   b) Mei could ignore and block the bully. Cara could comfort Mei.
   c) Mei could tell the bully to back off, and Cara could post mean things about the bully on Twitter.
   d) Mei could tell the bully to back off, and Cara could get a group of friends to post embarrassing photos of the bully.

3. A(n) ____________ helps to de-escalate, or lessen the impact of online cruelty by supporting and standing up for the person who is bullied.

   a) bystander
   b) upstander
   c) target
   d) offender
1. Reflect on each of these statements about the Internet. Circle three statements that support the idea that the Internet makes bullying easier and a bigger problem.

a) Information can spread very quickly on the Internet.
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c) You can find lots of information on the Internet.
d) Anything someone says could stay on the Internet for a long time.
e) You can get support from groups on the Internet.
f) Parents, teachers, and students all use the Internet.

**Answer feedback**
The correct answers are a, b, and d. Bullying and online cruelty can be intensified online because information on the Internet can be anonymous, public, and can last a long time.

2. Mei keeps getting mean comments on her Twitter posts. Cara, Mei’s good friend, has seen the comments and wants to help. What can both girls do to make the situation better?

a) Mei could delete her Twitter account. Cara could let Mei use her Twitter account so that Mei can still post, but no one knows it’s her.
b) **Mei could ignore and block the bully. Cara could comfort Mei.**
c) Mei could tell the bully to back off, and Cara could post mean things about the bully on Twitter.
d) Mei could tell the bully to back off, and Cara could get a group of friends to post embarrassing photos of the bully.

**Answer feedback**
The correct answer is b. Oftentimes bullies want attention, so it’s best to ignore them. The best thing for Mei to do is to block and ignore the bully, and the best thing for Cara to do is to offer support and comfort to her friend.
3. A(n) __________ helps to de-escalate, or lessen the impact of online cruelty by supporting and standing up for the person who is bullied.

a) bystander  
b) upstander  
c) target  
d) offender

Answer feedback
The correct answer is b. An upstander does something to help or support the target of bullying.
What’s the Issue?

Spreading rumors and bullying is nothing new. Kids have always found ways to be cruel to one another, but computers, cell phones, and digital technologies make bullying easier and more widespread. Kids now use their cell phones and computers to hurt, humiliate, and harass each other, and it’s starting at younger ages. Cyberbullying is defined as repeatedly sending or posting harmful or mean messages, images, or videos about someone else using the Internet, cell phones, or other digital technologies. Kids may call each other names, say nasty things about one another, threaten each other, or make others feel uncomfortable or scared.

Children’s increased access to digital technology has created more pathways to communicate — for both good and for bad. Although cyberbullying is typically associated with tweens and teens, more cases are now being reported with younger children. Cyberbullying is especially disturbing because it is constant, inescapable, and very public. It can happen anytime — at school or at home — and can involve large groups of kids. The combination of the boldness created by being anonymous and the desire to be seen as “cool” can cause a kid who normally wouldn’t say anything mean face to face to show off to other kids by cyberbullying someone. Younger kids may bully to get attention, because they think it will make them popular, or because they want to look tough and make others afraid of them. And because it happens online, it can easily go undetected by parents and teachers.

Why Does It Matter?

Cyberbullying is a growing problem among younger kids. Younger kids are starting to use online communication and at the same time they are exploring ways to test other people’s reactions. For instance, kids who send a mean message might not fully understand how another person might react to that message. What’s more, hurtful information posted on the Internet is extremely difficult to prevent or remove, and anyone can see it. Imagine being publically humiliated in front of everyone you know. Such behavior usually happens when adults aren’t around, so parents and teachers often see only the anxiety or depression that results from their kids being hurt or bullied. Parents can help by becoming aware of the issue, learning to identify the warning signs of bullying, and helping kids to understand how to be respectful to others online.

What Families Can Do

• Make a list together of how talking online is different than talking face to face. Get kids to think about how it might be easier to say things online you wouldn’t say in person, and how this may be good sometimes and a problem at other times.

• Practice writing a text or chat message to a friend. Model for your child how to compliment people and how to avoid mean words or behaviors.

• Point out that it’s important to stick up for others, online as well as in the real world. Discuss ways they can support friends who are bullied and report bad behavior they see online.
common sense says

Limit online socializing. Because there is more risk for bullying on sites where kids can openly communicate, avoid open and free chat sites and look for those that offer prescripted or prescreened chat options, like Webkinz or Club Penguin.

Explain the basics of good behavior online. Remind your kids that being mean, lying, or telling secrets hurts — both online and offline. And remember to praise your child when you see good behavior.

Remind your kids not to share passwords with their friends. A common form of cyberbullying is when kids share passwords, log on to another child’s account, and pretend to be that person. Kids can protect themselves by learning that passwords are strictly private, and they should be shared only with their parents.

Make sure they talk to someone (even if it’s not you). A child should tell a parent, teacher, or trusted adult if he or she is being bullied online. Tell your child that this isn’t tattling, it’s standing up for him- or herself.

Advise them on how to handle cyberbullying. Even though they might be tempted to, your child should never retaliate against a cyberbully. They can stop the cycle by not responding to the bully. Also remind them to save the evidence rather than delete it.

Establish consequences for bullying behavior. If your child is mean to or humiliates another child, consider taking phone and computer privileges away and discuss what it means to be respectful to others.
What’s the Issue?
Cyberbullying is the use of digital media tools, such as the Internet and cell phones, to deliberately humiliate and harass others, oftentimes repeatedly. Though most teens do not do this, those who do are often motivated by a desire for power, status, and attention — and their targets are often people they are competing with for social standing. Cyberbullies often take advantage of the Web’s anonymity to antagonize someone without being recognized.

Cyberbullying can take a variety of forms, such as harassing someone, impersonating someone, spreading rumors, or forwarding embarrassing information about a person. A bully’s mean-spirited comments can spread widely through instant messaging (IM), phone texting, and by posts on social networking sites. This can happen rapidly, with little time for teens to cool down between responses. And it can happen anytime — at school or at home — and oftentimes it involves large groups of teens.

Why Does It Matter?
Cyberbullying is similar to face-to-face bullying, but online tools magnify the hurt, humiliation, and social drama in a very public way. Whether it’s creating a fake Facebook or MySpace page to impersonate a fellow student, repeatedly sending hurtful text messages and images, or spreading rumors or posting cruel comments on the Internet, cyberbullying can result in severe emotional and even physical harm.

And though anyone can spot bullying behavior in the real world, it’s much more difficult to detect it in the online world. Sometimes an entire social circle will get involved, and then it becomes harder for an individual teen to disengage from it. In fact, whole groups of teens may be actively or passively participating, and the target can feel that it is impossible to get away from the bullies. In addition, hurtful information posted on the Internet is extremely difficult to remove, and millions of people can see it.

The following tips can help you recognize the warning signs of cyberbullying and serve as a guide for talking to your teens about preventing it.

What Families Can Do
You seem down. What’s going on at school? Is anything upsetting happening online?
I’m here for you and so are your friends. Talk to me anytime.
Are there any teachers at school who have dealt with these kinds of situations before? I think you should tell one of them about what’s been happening.

Bullies want attention, power, and status, which explains why they need to cause drama.
I saw a news story about a teen who was bullied online. What would you do in that situation?
Recognize context. Cyberbullying is often not thought of as “cyberbullying” to the teens involved. Even though an incident has a history, a story, and nuance, rather than referring it as “cyberbullying,” try the words “digital cruelty,” “abuse,” or “being mean” online.

Help teens understand when behavior crosses the line. Help your teen tune into his or her own feelings. If they feel emotionally or physically scared, it’s time to get help.

Encourage empathy. Help teens understand the detrimental impact of cyberbullying on people who are targeted, now and later in life. Encourage them to listen to targets and to become their allies.

Be realistic. Teens have their own social dynamics that often don’t include parents, so helping them directly may be difficult. Encourage teens to find friends or other trusted adults to help them through the situation, even if it’s not you. Websites are often slow to respond, if they respond at all, but reporting an incident to a website administrator can be an empowering step.

Remember that your teen might be the bully. Teens can take different roles in cyberbullying at different times. A teen who is cyberbullied might turn around and cyberbully someone else to feel powerful again. Ask questions to understand what role or roles your teens are playing.

Tell them to disengage. Encourage your teens to ignore and block the bully, and even log off the computer for a while. Point out that cyberbullies are often just looking for attention and status, so don’t let them know that their efforts have worked.
No Bully, Common Sense Media, and the California-based law firm Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost believe that promoting social and emotional learning, creating a school climate where respect for diversity and skills is valued, and educating students, families, and faculty about how to behave ethically online are the best ways to prevent cyberbullying. However, we recognize that incidents may still occur. The chart below can help you respond to these incidents, although it does not constitute legal advice.

Responding to Cyberbullying: Guidelines for Administrators

Report of cyberbullying where student(s) used a cell phone or online digital media to threaten, humiliate, or isolate another student.

Member of school staff meets with the target and/or parent/guardian to explore whether this is cyberbullying. Consider the questions below in determining how best to proceed.

Did cyberbullying occur on campus, at school event, or on school-issued device?

Did cyberbullying occur off-campus and create substantial disruption to the school's operation?

Did cyberbullying occur off-campus and cause no substantial disruption to the school's operation?

Did student conflict occur between students of equal power who used no violence, bullying, or harassment?

Preserve evidence; e.g. sequester computer, take screen shots, store evidence provided by target, or take custody of cell phone if reasonable cause. Consider the questions below in determining next steps.

Is this student being bullied through severe or repeated cyber actions done intentionally to harm or distress the student? This may be occurring along with physical, verbal, or relational bullying.

Is this harassment because of a protected characteristic (e.g. actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity or expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation) or because of association with students who have these characteristics?

Have school rules or Ed Code been violated? School may give consequences to bully alongside a Solution Team® for target but may only punish students for off-campus speech when it causes substantial disruption to school operation.

Is this sexual harassment? E.g. unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature or gender based that is so severe as to make the school environment hostile or abusive.

Is this a crime under state or federal law? E.g. making a criminal threat, obscene, threatening, or repeated phone call(s) or sexting (sending obscene materials).

School may only offer non-punitive response (e.g. Solution Team®)

Contact local law enforcement and, if child abuse, fulfill any CPS reporting requirements.

Engage students in conflict-resolution process.

Meet separately with bully and target and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to further support student in positive social interactions at school. Connect to counseling services and outside resources to remedy any mental health or family challenges and build social and emotional skills. If student or parent/guardian are dissatisfied, inform them of next steps in the complaint process.

Visit www.commonsense.org/educators for cyberbullying prevention resources and classroom lessons on digital citizenship.

Go to No Bully (www.nobully.com) to learn about Solution Team®, a non-punitive approach to addressing bullying.

Contact Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost (fagenfriedman.com) for legal advice.