



Cyberbullying

Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty

Students Handouts and
Supporting Materials for Teachers

Secondary Level Lesson: Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty: Challenging Social Norms

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Online Behavior: What Do We Think?

For each of the statements below, circle the numbers that most closely correspond with both your own belief and the belief you feel is typically held by members of your peer group.

1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=unsure; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree

1. I have a free speech right to say whatever I want online.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Your response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Your peers' typical response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. On the Internet it is okay to reveal personal secrets for others to see.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Your response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Your peers' typical response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. What happens online should stay online.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Your response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Your peers' typical response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. What happens online is mostly a game, so no one can really get hurt.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Your response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Your peers' typical response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

If the Internet was a Neighborhood



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Background for Educators: Social Norms Theory

Social norms are people's beliefs about the attitudes and behaviors that are normal, acceptable, or even expected in a particular social context. In many situations, people's perceptions of these norms will greatly influence their behavior. When people misperceive the norms of their peer group—that is when they inaccurately think an attitude or behavior is more (or less) common than is actually the case—they may choose to engage in behaviors that are in sync with those false norms.¹ Pluralistic Ignorance is the term that is used in academia to discuss social norms theory and refers to the incorrect belief that one's private attitudes, judgments or behavior are different from others.

Social norms theory has been most commonly applied to the problem of excessive alcohol consumption on college campuses. Many studies have shown that college students overestimate how much their peers drink. Prevention experts have argued that this misperception of the norm drives greater alcohol consumption. A growing body of evidence suggests that providing information to students about accurate drinking norms is associated with decreased drinking on campus.²

With regard to cyberbullying, many youth may falsely believe that online rumors, teasing and cruelty are approved of by their peers and that it would invite ostracism to refuse to participate in or to take a stand against such behavior. This misperception may cause young people to avoid acting as an ally to the targets of cyberbullying and to even engage in negative behaviors with which they privately feel uncomfortable. Over time, online social aggression may become normalized for youth, and they may become desensitized to its damaging effects on others. However, interventions that correct students' misperceptions by demonstrating that most young people don't find online cruelty to be "cool" could provide students with the awareness and confidence needed to avoid cyberbullying behavior and to speak out against it.

¹ From Higher Education Center. Social Norms and Social Marketing, www.edc.org/hec/socialnorms (accessed January 2008).

² Ibid.

Challenging Social Norms at Rutgers University



**Yes, 2/3 of Rutgers Students Stop at 3 or Fewer Drinks.
Almost 1 in 5 Don't Drink at All.
*We got the stats from you!***

Challenging Social Norms at University of Missouri-Columbia

*Making good choices
can be*
LOTS OF FUN!

Smart Ride
429.4961

Life **SKILLS**

A.D.A.P.T.

Most MU students don't drink and drive
Most MU students drink 0-4 drinks per week

MISSOURI

It's a great time to be a Tiger

Internet Safety Strategies for Students

Before going online...

- ☑ Talk with parents/guardians about rules for going online, such as the time of day and length of time you can be online, and sites you are allowed to visit. Do not visit other areas or break these rules without their permission.
- ☑ Remember that no message is completely private, including e-mail and text messages. Your school and adult family members may be watching your online activity, and police can recover all messages, even if you have deleted them. If you are using the Internet to harm others, chances are you will be caught and punished.
- ☑ Be aware that many Internet Service Providers have rules about online behavior. If you break them, your account—and every account in your home—could be canceled. If you break the law, you may also be reported to the police.
- ☑ Make sure that you limit your internet use to a reasonable amount of time and ask yourself if you are keeping a healthy balance between online and in-person activities.



While online...

- ☑ Never share private information about others and never say things that might violate the safety or rights of others, even if you mean it as a “joke.”
- ☑ Limit the amount of personal information you share online and don’t post your full name, school name, home address, phone number, and personal photos in places where strangers can find them.
- ☑ Never share passwords, account IDs or PINs with others (even your best friend), with the exception of your parents/guardians—never hide this information from them.
- ☑ Don’t leave cell phones or other personal electronics (such as a laptop, iPhone, Blackberry, PDA, etc.) out of your sight.
- ☑ Remember that some people are dishonest about their identity online. Avoid chatting with strangers on the Internet. A friend you meet online may not be the best person to talk to if you are having problems.
- ☑ Never send your picture or personal information to someone you only know online, and never meet an online friend in person without a parent’s/guardian’s permission.
- ☑ Do not open messages or attachments from people you don’t know.

If you are the target of online bullying or aggression...

- Don't respond to bullying or inappropriate messages, but save them as evidence.
- Discuss any online incidents that make you feel uncomfortable with a trusted adult, such as a family member, teacher or school counselor.
- Always report online bullying, hate incidents, inappropriate sexual activity and threats of harm to self or others to an adult family member (such as a parent), school authorities and the police.
- Block the e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers of people who are sending unwanted messages; if the messages continue, an adult family member can help you to change your phone numbers, e-mail addresses or screen names.
- File complaints with e-mail services, Internet Service Providers, Web sites, cell phone companies, etc. Service providers can find the offenders, cancel their service, and report them to the police if necessary.
- When in doubt about what to do, log off the computer and ask for help from a trusted adult.

