No Cyberbullying or Sexting: Prevention Strategies for Tweens, Teens, Educators, and Parents

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Session Objectives

• Overview of social media popular with youth along with statistics of usage.
• Definitions of Cyberbullying and Sexting
• Specific cases to the misuse of social media for cyberbullying and sexting.
• Prevention Resources for Youth
  • Includes peer programs to educate tweens and teens about immature, impulsive, and dangerous uses of social media.
• Prevention resources and initiatives for educators and parents/guardians of youth.
92% of teens (13-17) go online daily
24% of teens report being online almost constantly
12% report once-a-day use
(Lenhart, 2015; Pew Research Center).
73% of teens have a smartphone; 15% a basic phone
(Anderson, 2015; Pew Research Center)
Median number of texts sent per day is around 60
(Lenhart, 2012: Pew Research Center)
Cyberbullying Defined

• Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to intimidate, harass, victimize, or bully an individual or a group of individuals (Bhat, 2008)

• Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p.5)
Elements of Cyberbullying

• Harm to victim or target
• Power imbalance
  • Cyberbullies more powerful than victims
  • Power may come from anonymity, information, social status
• Repetition
  • Technology aids in this
• Often a sexual component
  • Adds to shame and secrecy on the part of victims
Four Roles in Cyberbullying or Sexting Situations

(a) active or initiating cyberbully or sexter
(b) secondary cyberbully or sexter
(c) observer
(d) target
Sexting Defined

• Sexting is the sending or receiving of sexually-explicit or sexually-suggestive images or video via a cell phone (Patchin & Hinduja)

• Sexting has become a part of many relationships – for teens and adults

• Considered as a normal expression of sexuality

• Examples of normalization
  • Cosmopolitan – How to send sexy texts and messages
  • Bustle – 50 Example Sexting Ideas You Can Use Right Now

• Problems related to misuse of images and videos
Problems Related with Sexting

• Images, Videos, and Words are out of the sender’s control as soon as they are sent
• Revenge Porn – sharing of intimate images and videos after a break-up
• Nonconsensual Porn – taking and sharing of images and videos taken without the target’s knowledge or consent
  • Distribution of sexually graphic images of individuals without their consent.
• Sexting Laws in some states
Typical Behaviors of Targets of Cyberbullying & Sexting

• Seek help from friends
• Hide from adults such as parents and personnel at school
• Keep to self (don’t tell anyone including friends or significant adults)
• Attempt to ignore
Why Do Youth Engage in Cyberbullying and Sexting? How Can Education Help?

• EMPHASIZE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR
  • Media literacy initiatives could and should pay much more attention to the ethical use of technology. Using real-life cases and discussing the ethical dimension would help young people pause before they engage in forwarding, etc.

• MORAL COMPASS
  • Create educational programs that teach our technologically savvy youth the difference between right and wrong BEFORE they are confronted with a situation in which they have to make a decision
Why Do Youth Engage in Cyberbullying and Sexting? How Can Education Help?

• LURE OF INSTANT CELEBRITY STATUS
  • Education programs should focus on secondary cyberbullies as they can expand the reach of the primary cyberbully and thereby increase the harm to the victim. If no one jumped on the bandwagon, the harm could be minimized.

• IMPULSIVITY
  • Again, education using case studies and teaching decision-making models and evaluating consequences is important.
Why Do Youth Engage in Cyberbullying and Sexting? How Can Education Help?

• LACK OF EMPATHY
  • We have to make conscious efforts to teach relational skills that we previously thought were a distinguishing and natural feature of being human.

• LIMITED CONSEQUENCES OR LEGAL REPERCUSSIONS
  • One of the reasons that cyberbullying and other unethical uses of media continues is that perpetrators do not fear the consequences of their actions. Having societal and legal sanctions enforced consistently can help redress this perception.
Psychological Toll of Cyberbullying & Sexting on Targets

• Depression
• Anxiety
• Anger
• Shame
• Hurt
• Low self esteem
• Self blame
• Suicidal Ideation

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PREVENTION:  
A Core Concept in Counseling  

• Primary Prevention  
  • Occurs before the fact  
  • Attempts to reduce new occurrences of a disordered behavior  
  • Includes doing something in the present to prevent something undesirable from happening in the future  

• Prevention conducted to reduce risk factors while building protective factors  
• Involves reducing negative influences
Prevention at School & Home

School
• Educate students, teachers, & parents about misuse of social media

Home
• Parents must educate and set firm limits for online behavior

Peers
• Peer Education can be very beneficial

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Tips to Keep in Mind with Prevention Education

• Create an environment that allows students to share, take risks feel safe & respected
• Include some synchronous interaction and group assignments
• Model interactions and ask thought-provoking/probing questions
• Use introductory/ice-breaker assignments
• Promote student engagement, allow unique perspectives and give timely feedback
• Share teaching responsibilities with students and consciously build community
• Use communication and collaboration tools and facilitate personal connections

Peer Prevention

• *How can teens and tweens be part of the solution?*

• That’s Not Cool Ambassador Program
  • 1 in 4 dating teens is abused through technology
• Be a Leader – EmbraceCivility.Org
• Invent! – Trisha Prabhu – Invented ReThink at age 13 after learning about the suicide of 12 year old Rebecca Sedwick

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PREVENTION BY EDUCATORS: Elements to Include in Education, Preventative Programming, and Anti-Bullying Policies

• A definition of cyberbullying and behavioral examples of types of actions that constitute cyberbullying
• Knowledge and understanding of the types of ICT used to cyberbully
• The roles in cyberbullying, including that of active cyberbully, secondary cyberbully, observer, and target, and what actions each one can take to prevent cyberbullying (i.e. a clear list of do’s and don’ts)
• Specific safety and reporting features associated with each type of technology; the Australian office of e-Safety has developed an excellent guide
PREVENTION BY EDUCATORS: Elements to Include in Education, Preventative Programming, and Anti-Bullying Policies

• Specific actions students should take if they are cyberbullied. These actions could be taking screen shots, printing evidence, speaking to trusted adults, and not retaliating as this often escalates the cyberbullying.

• Behavioral examples of types of actions that are to be taken to curb cyberbullying

• An understanding the detrimental psychological, social, and academic effects of cyberbullying experienced by targets of such attacks

• Reporting procedures for cases of cyberbullying and encouragement of observers to step forward to stop the harassment

• Clear consequences for those who engage in cyberbullying (Bhat, Chang, & Linscott, 2010, p. 39)
Prevention Resources:
Bully Stoppers – Victoria, Australia

• Examples of programs in USA and Australia
• Bully Stoppers – aim is to ensure schools are safe and supportive places
• Supports students, parents, teachers and principals to work together
• Goal is that all are empowered to help reduce the incidence of bullying in schools
Prevention: Psychoeducational Groups for Children

• Benefits of Groups
  • Promotes security and comfort
  • Enhances learning of practical ways to handle problem situations
  • Allows members to share with one another and learn through peer modeling and feedback
  • Provides resources for children to learn how to help themselves

(Gladding, 2009)
Psychoeducational Groups for Children

• Children should be free to decide whether to talk
• Leader should work at creating conditions that promote positive exchange
• Nonverbal messages in children may be as important as verbal messages; look for incongruences
• Action Oriented techniques such as role playing and “I” statements help children orient both verbal and nonverbal messages
• Materials (videos, exercises) should not detract from meaningful process

(Gladding, 2009)
In addition...

• It is vital to use materials that young people can relate to
  • Recent
  • Age appropriate
  • Relevant to their experience

• Discussions in sub-groups work better than large group discussions

• Structure is valuable, especially for processing

• Pros and cons to groups separated by gender

• Active methods such as role play and rehearsal help solidify learning
Overview of Prevention Group

• Session 1- Cyberbullying Defined
• Session 2- Empathy
• Session 3- Cyberbullies, Victims and Bystanders
• Session 4- Empowering the Bystander
• Session 5- Why do people cyberbully?
• Session 6- Responding to Cyberbullying
Overview of Group Lessons

• Videos provide “Real-Life” stories of cyberbullying
• Process Questions encourage member interaction
• Cyberbullying Facts and Strategies help children make positive informed decisions
• Additional exercises and questions help deepen group discussions.
Prevention Strategies for Parents

- Know how teens and tweens communicate
- Accept that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a BIG part of teens and tween’s social life
- Teach right and wrong, ethical and non-ethical decision-making regarding the use of ICT
- Discuss cyberbullying and sexting, using teachable moments based on events reported in the media or incidents in the community
- Have clear agreements (contracts) regarding the use of ICT, and follow through on consequences for non-compliance
- Avoid knee-jerk reactions when help is sought such as blaming or digital “grounding”
Intervention Strategies vs. Prevention Strategies

• Education and Prevention are important
  • Several resources available
  • E.g., http://cyberbullying.org/videos/
  • http://www.nsteens.org/Videos/SplitDecisions

• Intervention is equally important
• Targets of cyberbullying don’t seek help because they believe adults over-react, under-react, or act ineffectively
• They may also keep it to themselves if they are ashamed or blame themselves

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Intervention Strategies Focused on Empowering the Target

• When a student seeks help for cyberbullying, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY
  • Listen...hear the full story
  • Show empathy
  • Establish trust
  • Normalize the reactions being experienced
  • Avoid blame
Intervention Strategies Focused on Empowering the Target: Affective, Cognitive, & Behavioral Strategies

• Affective
  • Encourage student to express emotions of sadness, anger, betrayal, fear, worry
  • Normalize such reactions

• Cognitive
  • Help student to think differently about the situation
    • Stop the blame game
    • Work to reframe irrational beliefs that reinforce the magnitude of harm (I can’t stand-it-itis)
    • Work to reframe irrational beliefs that support lowered self esteem and a loss of control (e.g., awfulization)
Intervention Strategies Focused on Empowering the Target

• Behavioral
  • Do NOT retaliate on ICT
  • Do NOT retaliate in person
  • Do NOT take actions to harm self

• DO seek help from peers, parents, school personnel
• DO have a plan of action
Intervention Strategies Focused on Empowering Schools to Act Effectively in Cases of Cyberbullying

Steps to be taken by school counselor and administrators

• Assess the immediate threat
• Ensure the safety of the target
• Contact parents
• Contact the internet service provider
• Enforce school’s disciplinary policy on bullying immediately and consistently across cases
Intervention Strategies Focused on Empowering Schools to Act Effectively in Cases of Cyberbullying

- Advocate for the target of cyberbullying with school personnel
- Know the district/school anti-bullying policy
- Consult with the target (and parent/s) – recommend a written complaint to school administration (if the cyberbully is known)
- Inform and involve the parents of the cyberbully
- Help the school devise plans to address the issue if the cyberbully is not known but is suspected to be in the school (i.e., interventions within the school community)
Policies Related to Cyberbullying in Schools - Example from Ohio

• Ohio Anti-harassment, anti-intimidation or anti-bullying model policy (per House Bill 276)
• Requires each school district board of education adopt a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student
• Based on premise that all schools in Ohio should provide a physically safe and emotionally secure environment for students and school personnel
Intervention Strategies Focused on Empowering the Target of Cyberbulllying by Involving Law Enforcement

- Build relationships with local police
- Discuss situation with school resource officer (if there is one)
- Some areas have “high-tech crime” units
- Law must be informed in “duty to warn” instances
  - threats of physical harm
  - sexual harassment
  - sexual exploitation
  - posting nude or compromising photographs
  - extortion or stalking behavior
  - hate or bias
Empowering the Target of Cyberbullying by Knowing about facebook

• “Report” link on facebook site
  • Use to report harassment
  • facebook will investigate within 24 hours
• Use abuse@facebook.com for email complaint
  • Facebook will investigate within 24 hours and respond within 72 hours
• Print, take screen shots (print screen key), and save all offensive information
• Block users who are being offensive
• Adjust your privacy settings (profile, search, news feed, wall) and check on them often
• Using fake names or lying about age is a violation of the facebook Terms of Use:


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Links to Resources

• Bully Stoppers, Victorian Department of Education
• Cyberbullying: A Prevention Curriculum for Grades 6-12
  http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/cyber_bullying_curriculum.page
• Cyberbullying Research Center
  http://cyberbullying.org/videos/
• Cyber Civil Rights Initiative
  http://www.cybercivilrights.org/welcome/
• Embrace Civility in the Digital Age
  http://www.embracecivility.org/
• National Center for Missing or Exploited Children
  http://www.nsteens.org/Videos/SplitDecisions
• Stop Bullying
  http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/
• That’s Not Cool: Become an Ambassador
  https://thatsnotcool.com/prevent-violence-online-become-ambassador/
• Trisha Prabhu
  http://www.trishaprabhu.com/index