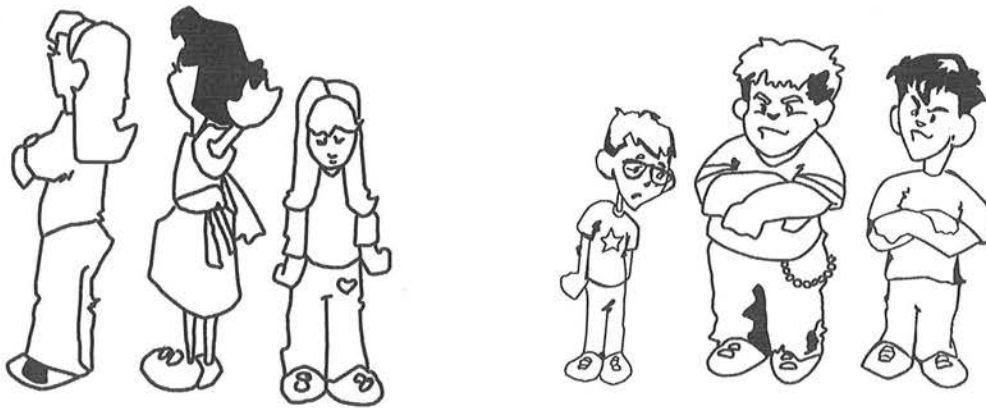


the bully, the bullied, and the not-so-innocent bystander

by
Barbara Coloroso



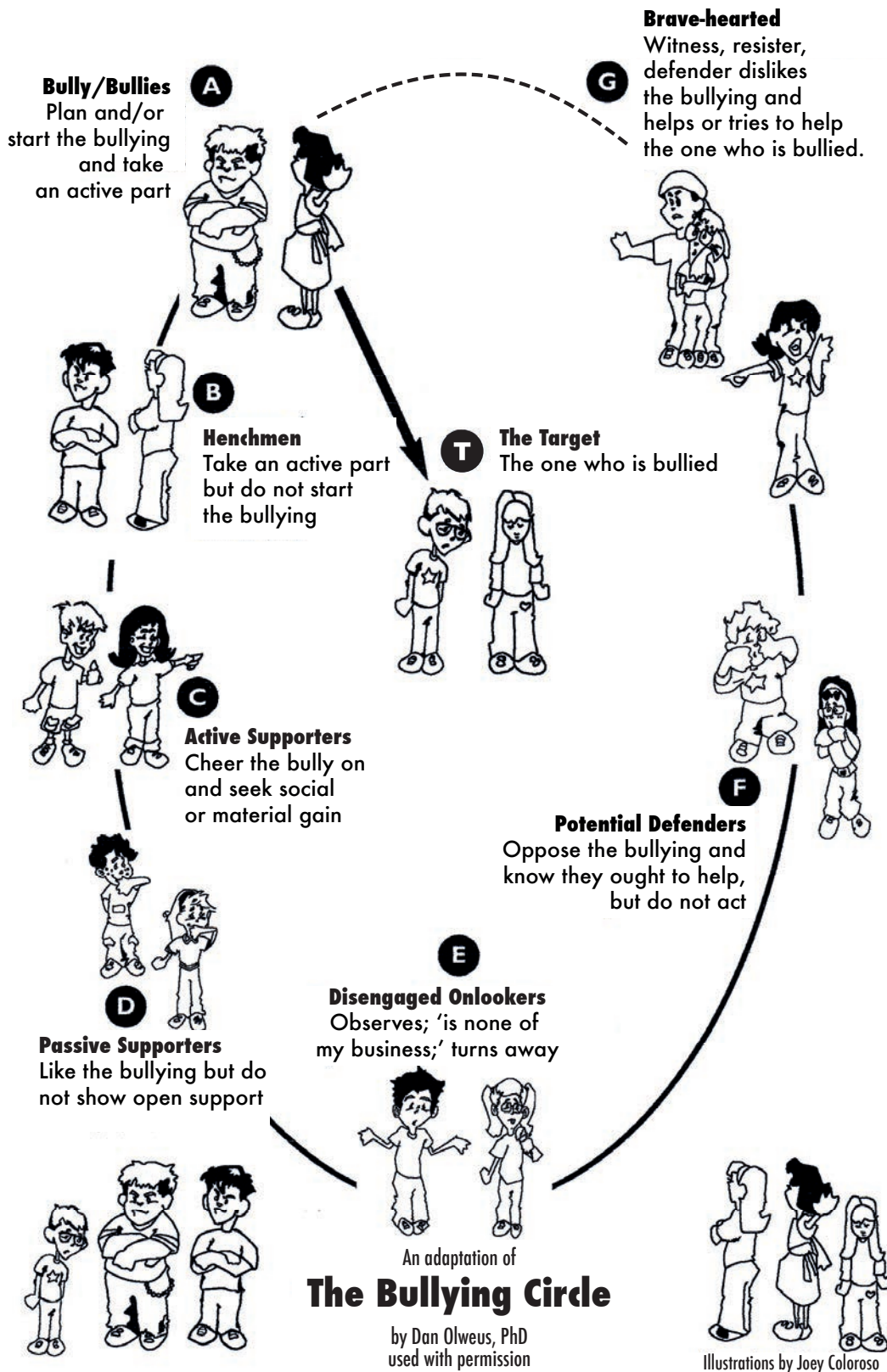
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the bully

Bullies come in all shapes and sizes. Some are big; some are small; some bright and some not so bright; some attractive and some not so attractive; some popular and some disliked by almost everybody.

Bullying is a conscious, willful and deliberate hostile activity, intended to harm.

The Four Markers of Bullying

1. An imbalance of power
2. Intent to harm
3. Threat of further aggression
4. When bullying escalates unabated—terror

Bullying is not about anger, or even about conflict. It's about contempt—a powerful feeling of dislike toward someone considered to be worthless, inferior or undeserving of respect. Contempt comes with three apparent psychological advantages that allow kids to harm others without feeling empathy, compassion or shame. These are:

1. A sense of entitlement—the right to control, dominate, subjugate, and abuse another human being
2. An intolerance toward difference
3. A liberty to exclude—to bar, isolate, and segregate a person deemed not worthy of respect or care

Seven Steps to Stop Bullying

1. Discipline (including the three Rs: restitution, resolution, reconciliation)
2. Create opportunities to “do good”
3. Nurture empathy
4. Teach friendship skills
5. Closely monitor TV viewing, video games and computer activities
6. Engage in more constructive, entertaining, energizing activities
7. Teach ways to “will good”

the bullied

The one thing that all kids who are bullied have in common is that a bully or a bunch of bullies has targeted them. Each one was singled out to be the object of scorn, and thus the recipient of bullying, merely because he or she was different in some way.

The Warning Signs

1. Shows an abrupt lack of interest in school, or refuses to go to school
2. Takes an unusual route to school
3. Suffers drop in grades
4. Withdraws from family and school activities
5. Is hungry after school
6. Steals money from home
7. Makes a bedline to the bathroom when arriving home
8. Is sad, sullen, angry, or scared after receiving a phone call or email
9. Does something out of character
10. Has torn or missing clothing
11. Uses derogatory or demeaning language when talking about peers
12. Stops talking about peers and everyday activities
13. Has physical injuries not consistent with explanation
14. Has stomachaches, headaches, panic attacks, is unable to sleep, sleeps too much, is exhausted
15. Plays alone, or prefers to hang with adults

Why Kids Don't Tell

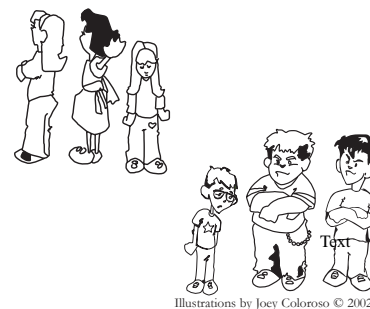
1. They are ashamed of being bullied
2. They are afraid of retaliation
3. They don't think anyone can help them
4. They don't think anyone will help them
5. They've bought into the lie that bullying is a necessary part of growing up
6. They might believe that adults are part of the lie—they bully too
7. They have learned that “ratting” on a peer is bad, not cool

the bystander

Bystanders are the third group of players in this tragedy. They are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully, through acts of omission and commission. They stand idly by or look away, or they can actively encourage the bully or join in and become one of a bunch of bullies. Injustice overlooked or ignored becomes a contagion that infects even those who thought they could turn away.

Standing Up and Speaking Out

Bullying is challenged when the majority stands up against the cruel acts of the minority. Establishing new norms, enforcing playground rules, and increasing supervision are policy decisions that can help reduce the incidents of bullying. Since much of the bullying goes on “under the radar of adults,” a potent force is kids themselves showing bullies that they will not be looked up to, nor will their cruel behavior be condoned or tolerated. Kids need not be bystanders. They can become active witnesses, standing up for their peers, speaking out against injustices, and taking responsibility for what happened among themselves.



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if your child is bullied

Don'ts

1. Don't minimize, rationalize, or explain away the bully's behavior.
2. Don't rush in to solve the problem for your child.
3. Don't tell your child to avoid the bully.
4. Don't tell your child to fight back.
5. Don't confront the bully or the bully's parents alone.

Do's

1. I hear you; I am here for you; I believe you; you are not alone in this.
2. It is not your fault.
3. There are things you can do.
4. Report the bullying to school personnel.

how to report

1. Arrange a meeting for you and your child with the appropriate person at the school.
2. Bring to the meeting the facts in writing—the date, time, place, kids involved, and the specifics of the incidents—and the impact the bullying has had on your child as well as what your child has done to try to stop the bullying that didn't work.
3. Work with your child and school personnel on a plan that addresses what your child needs right now in order to feel safe, what she can do to avoid being bullied and to stand up to any future bullying, and whom she can go to for help.
4. Find out what procedures the bully will be going through and what kind of support the school is expecting from the parents of the bully.
5. If you feel the problem is not being adequately addressed by the school, know that you can express your concerns and let the teacher and/or administrator know that you will take the next step to the school district board office and if necessary—especially in the cases of serious abuse and racist or sexist bullying—to the police.

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teasing/taunting

Teasing

1. Allows the teaser and person teased to swap roles.
2. Isn't intended to hurt the other person.
3. Maintains the basic dignity of everyone involved.
4. Pokes fun in a lighthearted, clever, and benign way.
5. Is meant to get both parties to laugh.
6. Is only a small part of the activities shared by kids who have something in common.
7. Is innocent in motive.
8. Is discontinued when person teased becomes upset or objects to the teasing.

Taunting

1. Is based on an imbalance of power and is one-sided: the bully taunts, the bullied kid is taunted.
2. Is intended to harm.
3. Involves humiliating, cruel, demeaning, or bigoted comments thinly disguised as jokes.
4. Includes laughter directed *at* the target, *not with* the target.
5. Is meant to diminish the sense of self-worth of the target.
6. Induces fear of further taunting or can be a prelude to physical bullying.
7. Is sinister in motive.
8. Continues especially when targeted kid becomes distressed or objects to the taunt.

four most powerful antidotes to bullying

Strong sense of self, being a friend, having at least one good friend who is there for you through thick and thin, and being able to successfully get into a group—and get out when it does not serve you well.

flirting/sexual bullying

Flirting

1. Allows and invites both persons to swap roles with ease.
2. Isn't intended to hurt the other person—is an expression of desire.
3. Maintains the basic dignity of both persons.
4. Is meant to be flattering and complimentary.
5. Is an invitation to have fun together and enjoy each other's company.
6. Invited sexual attention.
7. Is intended to make the other person feel wanted, attractive, and in control.
8. Is discontinued when the person who is being flirted with becomes upset, objects to the flirting, or is not interested.

Flirting has playfulness about it that sexual bullying does not. It is never intended to harm and is an invitation for two people to get to know each other better. As with any other invitation, it can be accepted or rejected—and the person who initiated the flirting honors either response.

Sexual Bullying

1. Is based on an imbalance of power and is one-sided: the bully sexually taunts, the bullied kid is demeaned and degraded.
2. Is intended to harm and exploit.
3. Is invasive and intended to assert the status of the bully.
4. Is intended to be degrading and demeaning.
5. Is intended to express control and domination.
6. Is intended to violate the boundaries of the target.
7. Is intended to make the other person feel rejected, ugly, powerless, or uncomfortable.
8. Continues especially when targeted kid becomes distressed or objects to the sexual comment.

In sexual bullying there is no invitation—just an attack. The target is embarrassed, humiliated, and shamed and tends to feel powerless. It is not the intention of the bully to engage in healthy sexual flirtation with another person—the attack is meant to hurt. If the target protests, he/she is often labeled a “bitch” who is uptight and can't take a joke.

caring schools

1. Gather information about bullying at school directly from students.
2. Establish clear schoolwide and classroom rules about bullying.
3. Train all adults in the school to respond sensitively and consistently to bullying.
4. Provide adequate adult supervision, particularly in less structured areas, such as on the playground and in the lunchroom.
5. Improve parental awareness of and involvement in working on the problem.

re-writing the script

The bully, the bullied, the bystander—the interactions involved in such role-playing, though commonplace in our culture, are not healthy, not normal, certainly not necessary, and in fact are devastating to the children playing them. We as parents and educators can rewrite the script and create for our children alternative, healthier roles that require no pretense and no violence. With care and commitment, we can rechannel the behaviors of the bully into positive leadership activities; acknowledge the nonaggressive behaviors of the bullied child as strengths that can be developed and are honored; and transform the role of the bystander into that of a witness, someone willing to stand up, speak out, and act against injustice. A daunting task, but a necessary one.

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reasons and excuses

The question that begs to be asked: “Why would 81 percent of the kids who would not instigate bullying be so willing to become a part of the attack or turn a blind eye to the plight of the targeted child?” There are a few valid reasons and lots of excuses.

The four reasons most often given for not intervening:

1. The bystander is afraid of getting hurt.
2. The bystander is afraid of becoming a new target of the bully.
3. The bystander is afraid of doing something that will only make the situation worse.
4. The bystander does not know what to do.

As legitimate as they are, these reasons do not shore up the self-confidence or self-respect that is eroded when a child witnesses a bullying incident and is unable or unwilling to respond effectively to stop the cruelty. All too often these fears and lack of skill can turn into apathy—a potent friend of contempt. Contempt grows best in a climate of indifference.

Bystanders have more excuses than valid reasons for not intervening. These excuses help poison the social environment, increasing the likelihood that bystanders will side with the bully and eventually assume the role of bullies themselves. They include but are certainly not limited to these nine:

1. The bully is my friend.
2. It's not my problem! This is not my fight!
3. She is not my friend.
4. He's a loser.
5. He deserved to be bullied, asked for it, had it coming.
6. Bullying will toughen him up.
7. Kids have a deeply embedded code of silence.
8. It's better to be in the in-group than to defend the outcasts.
9. It's too big a pain in the brain. Added bonus—the headache is gone.

Taken together, these reasons and excuses contribute to the erosion of civility in peer group interactions. When civility is diminished, it is replaced by a false sense of entitlement, an intolerance toward differences, and a liberty to exclude that allow kids to harm another human being without feeling empathy, sympathy, compassion, or shame. This erosion of civility also erodes kids' ability to communicate, negotiate, and compromise—three vital skills necessary for solving problems, resolving conflicts, and reconciling differences peaceably.



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The Net Neighborhood

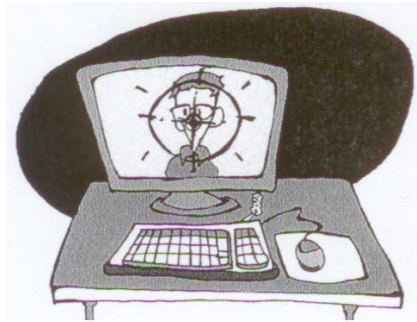
Children are doubling up on their media exposure—watching TV while plugged in to the Internet, text messaging while listening to music—and packing as much as 8.5 hours of media exposure into 6.5 hours a day, seven days a week. Kids are plugged in, turned on, and tuned out for the equivalent of a forty-five-hour workweek, every week.

Media technology has the power to help define reality for our kids; it also has tremendous influence on who our kids become and what kind of world they inhabit.

Connecting to the Internet is like opening the door to a new--and vast--city.

- Some parents look at the ugly and absolutely scary stuff out there and refuse to let the Internet be a part of their family life at all.
- Some parents are so ill-informed and have so little desire to be computer literate that they allow their children to roam any and all streets, back alleys, and freeways of the Internet.
- Some parents who know how ignorant they are, make an effort to learn at least as much as their young children know, and more—especially about *Net safety and Net etiquette*.

They realize the Net is here to stay, and that teaching children to use it to their advantage, to get the most out of it, and to be safe requires the same tools that other communication and relationship skills require.



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Cyberbullies

Bullies are using high tech tools to threaten, stalk, ridicule, humiliate, taunt, and spread rumors about their targets. The characteristics of bullying—imbalance of power, the intent to harm, the threat of further aggression, and the creation of terror—are magnified with the user of electronic technologies.

Faceless and nameless electronic transmissions make it easy for bullies to torment their targets anywhere and at any time.

Bullies are:

1. emboldened by apparent anonymity afforded them in cyberspace
2. removed from the immediate reaction of the target,
3. far often not held accountable for their actions.

Faceless and nameless electronic transmissions make it easy for bullies to torment their targets anywhere and at anytime, with apparent anonymity, distributing of irretrievable messages worldwide.

Ways and Means of Cell Phone Bullying

Many models of today's cell phones are actually powerful, miniature, handheld multimedia computers that kids can use to talk to one another, chat via IM, send text messages with still and video images, chat online, surf the Internet, download songs, and watch TV.

Bullies use any and all of the following to target their peers:

- Abusive, insulting, or threatening voice messages.
- Abusive, insulting, or threatening text messages.
- Silent calls.
- Stolen identity--sending text message through a Website using the name and phone number of the target in order to get the target into trouble, spread a rumor, or tempt others to retaliate against an unsuspecting target.
- Numerous calls or text messages to a cell phone in order to run up a large phone bill for the target.
- Photo-bullying—using cell phones to take compromising or humiliating pictures or videos of the target, sending those pictures or videos to everyone in their address books and posting these pictures for perpetuity on file-sharing service (such as Kazaa) for anyone to download or view.

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Internet Gaming

Games played on gaming devices such as Sony PlayStation 2 Network or Xbox Live allow players from around the world to play together or in competition with one another. Cyber bullies who frequent gaming communities taunt, threaten, lock targets out of the game, or hack into their target's account.

Not all Internet games are violent, but those that are, greatly impact the bully, the bullied, and the bystander. Not only do these games normalize violence and make it routine, they set up other people as adversaries, prey, or targets; they may even help create neural pathways that connect violence with pleasure and rewards, rather than fright, sadness, and sympathy.

Stopping Cyberbullying

Whether the cyberbullying is done via the cell phone or any other electronic tool—or combination of tools—the response should begin with the loss of privileges related to the use of those tools. The following steps are the same used to hold any bully accountable for any form of bullying:

- Intervene immediately with discipline utilizing the three Rs: restitution, resolution, and reconciliation.
- Create opportunities to “do good.”
- Nurture empathy and sympathy.
- Teach friendship skills—assertive, respectful, and peaceful ways to relate to others.

- Closely monitor your child's TV viewing, video game playing, computer activities, and music.
- Engage in more constructive, entertaining, and energizing activities.
- Teach your child to “will good.”

The discipline involved is a constructive and compassionate response to cyberbullying that takes into consideration the intent, the severity of the cyberbullying, and the restorative steps needed to help the cyberbully to take on a more prosocial role in the face-to-face encounters with peers and in the virtual neighborhood.

Helping the Cyberbullied

Being targeted in cyberspace can have devastating and sometimes deadly consequences.

- The warning signs that kids exhibit when being cyberbullied are similar to those exhibited if they are bullied in any other way, but the spiral down into depression, illness, and academic failure is usually accelerated when cyberbullying is involved.
- Cyberbullying can and does happen anytime and anywhere—no escape.
- All of the reasons for not telling about being the target of low-tech bullying are the same for cyberbullying.
- Added fear that if targets report being cyberbullied, their parents will take away their cell phones and restrict their computer access.

How to Respond

The situation is often made worse by responding to the cyberbully, whether that response is passive, aggressive, or assertive.

SCBT (Stop, Copy, Block, and Tell a trusted adult.)

- *Stop.* Don't respond.
- *Copy.* Make copies of all messages and pictures, and save cell phone text and voice messages.
- *Block* or filter communications through IM contact list or email.
- *Tell* a trusted adult.

If the cyberbullying is threatening or vicious you may need to do the following as well:

- Change email address, account, username, phone number and/or SIM (subscriber identity module) for cell phone users.
- File a detailed complaint with the school.
- File a complaint with the Website, Internet service provider, or cell phone company.
- Contact the police if the cyberbullying appears to be criminal.
- Contact an attorney. It is possible to seek financial damages from the cyberbully and his or her parents.

Bystanders

They can be willing or unwitting accomplices to cyberbullies. Bullies can use bystanders to do “cyberbullying by proxy.”

From Bystander to Witness

It is never easy to stand up to a bully or defend a target. But just as there are ways to act courageously in the real world, there are ways to stand up, speak out, and defend a target in the cyberworld.

Tactics

- Don't contribute to a blog or Web-poll that denigrates or humiliates a target. Sign off or click "end."
- Don't forward or copy-and-paste derogatory, harmful, or hurtful e-mails, text messages, or pictures to another site.
- Save, copy, and print out such examples of cyberbullying and give them to the target so he or she can be aware of what is happening. Sharing such information in a caring and supportive way will help the target feel less isolated and alone.
- Tell a caring adult you trust who will keep your identity confidential, who will act to support the target, and who will make sure the cyberbully is held to account.
- Tell the cyberbully that you are not comfortable getting involved in the cyberbullying.

Kids have to trust that telling an adult will make a positive difference. Once they have shared information with you, talk with them about what they can do and what you are going to do.

If your child begs you not to get involved, hear them out, and then share your concerns about possible consequences of not acting and the possible actions you both can take.

Three P's: Policies, Procedures, and Programs

Even though most cyberbullying occurs outside of school, it negatively impacts students and the school environment. It has already led to violence—including murder and suicide—in schools throughout the world.

If your school already has an antibullying policy, procedures in place for the bully, the bullied, and bystanders, and programs that help break the cycle of violence and create a more caring, inclusive environment, it is important that an electronic component be added to all three P's:

- Policies must include a sanction against cyberbullying as well as other kinds of bullying. Students and parents need to be informed that cyberbullying will not be tolerated.
- Procedures for restorative justice must be tailored to the unique problems and possible solutions required to repair the damage done through cyberbullying—especially the very public and potentially permanent aspect of it.
- Programs must address what cyberbullying is; how it impacts students; what students are to do if they are targeted or if they are aware of another student being targeted; and ways to use cyberspace in a creative, constructive, and responsible manner.

What is needed is a comprehensive school-led/community-based approach. The adult community

must be educated not only about the dangers of low-tech and high-tech bullying, but also about the world of high tech in general as both an environment and a tool for socializing that the younger generation has fully embraced.

Decoding the Code

Kids use shorthand to quickly send text messages to one another. It is important to know the lingo. A few common codes used:

- HHOJ: Ha, ha, only joking (or JJ: just joking). Both are used to absolve cyberbullies of any responsibility for their taunts.
- LOL: Laughing out loud.
- BRB: Be right back.
- WTGP: Want to go private?
- 9: Parent in the room.
- YRDM: You are dead meat.
- YBS: You'll be sorry.
- ASL: Age/sex/location.
- LMIRL: Let's meet in real life.
- F2F: Face to face.
- SOHF: Sense of humor failure.
- RUITD: Are you in the Dark?

Check out websites such as:

www.netlingo.com
www.common sense media.org
www.StopCyberbullying.org
www.EndRevengePorn.org
www.RedHoodProject.com

- Ask your kids to teach you a few of the shortcuts on the cell phone. It is important that you know and make the effort to keep up with the lingo your kids are using.

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Three P's for a school-led/community based approach

Anti-bullying Policy: Must be clearly articulated, consistently enforced, and broadly communicated. It should include a clear definition of what bullying is, the types of bullying, and the overlays that often increase the cruelty and impact of the bullying.

Sample: Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate activity intended to harm where the perpetrator(s) get pleasure from the targeted child's pain/and or misery. It can be verbal, physical, and/or relational; have as it's overlay race, ethnicity, religion, gender (including sexual orientation), physical, or mental ability; includes all forms of hazing and cyberbullying. It can be and often is continuous and repeated over time, but does not have to be. Once is enough to constitute bullying.

Include in the policy a statement of responsibility of those who witness the bullying to seek to stop it by intervening, helping the targeted student escape, and/or telling a caring adult.

Anti-bullying Procedures: Clearly outline the consequences for the **bully**—and any henchmen or other bystanders who played an active supporting role in the bullying. These procedures should include discipline measures that will be taken to hold the students accountable for their actions. (I recommend some form of restorative justice, i.e. Restitution, Resolution, and if possible, an attempt at Reconciliation at the targeted student's behest.) Procedures for restorative justice are tailored to the unique problems and possible solutions to repair the damage done. It is helpful to incorporate into the plan the six other ways to reform the perpetrator(s). Parent are notified of the bullying and asked to take measures at home that will help in the restorative justice process.

Clearly outline what measures will be taken to keep the **targeted student** safe at school, give him or her tools to stand up to the perpetrators, and support to keep the targeted student from succumbing to the bullying. Identify a person or persons to whom the student can safely report any further bullying incidences. Notify parent(s) of incident and school's plan. Give parent(s) the method to use to report any further targeting of their child. (see how to report)

Programs: Develop programs that back up and reinforce the policy as well as help to create a safe, caring, and welcoming environment for all students.

It is the school culture and social environment that these policies, procedures, and programs create as well as reflect. We can rewrite the script and create for our youth alternative, healthier roles that require no pretense or violence. We can rechannel the behaviors of the youth who bully into positive leadership activities; acknowledge the non-aggressive behaviors of a youth who is bullied as strengths that can be developed and are honored; and transform the role of the bystander into that of witness, resister, and defender. A daunting but necessary task.

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