

Overview of Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats

Flaming –

Flaming is a heated and short-lived argument that occurs between two or more protagonists. Flaming generally includes offensive, rude and vulgar language, insults and sometimes threats. A longer series of such messages is called a “flame war”.

Harassment –

Harassment is repeated, ongoing sending of offensive messages to an individual target. Harassing messages are generally sent through personal communication channels, including e-mail, instant messaging, and text messaging. Harassment can also occur in public communication environments.

Denigration –

Denigration is speech about a target that is harmful, untrue, or cruel. This harmful speech may be posted online or sent to others. The purpose for sending or posting the material is to interfere with friendships or damage the reputation of the target. This activity included spreading gossip and rumors. In the case of denigration, the target is not generally the recipient of the material. The intended recipient of the material is others. However, a cyberbully may denigrate a target in a message sent to a discussion group in which the target participates. A specific subcategory of denigration is the public posting or sending of digital images that have been digitally altered to present a false image, such as placing the face of a target on a sexually explicit image of a body obtained elsewhere.

Impersonation –

Impersonation occurs when the cyberbully gains the ability to impersonate the target and post material that reflects badly on the target or interferes with the target’s friendships. This may occur in the target’s personal Web page, profile, blog or through any form of communication. Frequently, the exchange of passwords allows a cyberbully to gain access to the target’s account on a system and as the target.

Outing and Trickery –

Outing is publicly posting, sending or forwarding personal communications or images, especially communications or images that contain intimate personal information or are potentially embarrassing. A common form of outing is when a cyberbully receives an e-mail message from a target that contains intimate personal information and then forwards the message to others.

Trickery can also occur as part of outing. An innocent target can be tricked into thinking that a communication or sending of images is private, when the cyberbully intends to

trick the target into communicating or disclosing something embarrassing that will then be disseminated to others or used as a threat.

Exclusion –

Exclusion cyberbullying is related to the designation of who is a member of the in-group and who is an outcast. Exclusion may occur in an online gaming environment, group blogging environment, or any other password-protected communication environment. Exclusion may also occur in the context of instant messaging by pointedly excluding someone from the buddy list of a group of students.

Cyberstalking –

Cyberstalking is repeated sending of harmful messages that include threats of harm, are highly intimidating or extremely offensive, or involve extortion.

Cyberthreats –

Cyberthreats are either direct threats such a statements of intent to hurt someone or commit suicide or distressing material that provides clues that the person is emotionally upset and may be considering hurting someone, self-harm or suicide.

How to counteract cyberbullying and cyberthreats

They are real people –

Provide real-life examples where others have been severely emotionally or physically harmed by cyberbullying.

What You Do Reflects on You – What is your internalized personal moral code? Does what you are doing in cyberspace accurately reflect that personal moral code?

Think First -

- Am I being kind and showing respect for others and myself?
- How would I feel if someone did the same thing to me or my best friend?
- What would my mom (or dad, guardian, or other adult who is important in my life) think?
- Is this action in violation of any agreements, rules, or laws?
- Would is be okay if I did this in the real world?
- Am I trying to rationalize a wrong act?
- How would I feel if everyone could see me?
- How would this action reflect on me?

**This information was taken from the book “cyberbullying and cyberthreats” by Nancy E. Willard. Copyright 2007. It is published by research press. The web address is www.researchpress.com