

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, RI.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:

Who is doing the cyberbullying in this story?

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?

Who are the bystanders?

The students at school who witnessed the abuse and kids online who viewed the video.

What would you do if you were a bystander?

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.

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

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.

What would you say to Kevin or do for him to show your support for him?

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.

What could you say to the other kids at school who viewed the video and left cruel comments?

I could let them know that they are followers. I could tell them how Kevin feels.

How could you have involved a trusted adult?

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.

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.

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 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.

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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

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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.