

Cyber-Bullying

When the Internet was first created, it was used by the military to contact troops and send confidential information; the world's first communication device. Years later, the general public began to use it to communicate with ease and to store data for all aspects of daily life. Today, things have changed greatly. We now can communicate, read, work, play, and express our emotions and thoughts with ease. It's a digital realm, yet with every world come aggressors. Today, what our community calls "cyber-bullying" has become an impending issue in our society today.

Cyber-bullying is the act of harassing and harming people via the Internet. This is not just simply an occasional threat on a social chatting site; it can go up to the extent of destroying a victim's dignity and self-esteem. In the end, suicide may even be the result of a tiny yet powerful insult made on the Internet. Even if these things start out small, it can soon evolve into cyber-stalking, the act of harassing another individual in a way prohibited by the law (not that cyber-bullying should not be against the law).

Seneca once said: "All cruelty comes from weakness". Could he be right? Cyber-bullies find refuge behind the veil of the Internet, and they take advantage of the choice to stay anonymous in order to say and do things they would never do in person. The effects of the "old-fashioned" bullying remain same on the Internet, but the bully feels bolder and secure while bullying via the Internet, and hence making it both widespread and easy to do. Throughout the Internet we can find racial slurs, horrendous insults, and phrases and discussions only the dimensions of the Internet can hold.

Of course, it didn't take long for the modern world to realize the effects of cyber-bullying. With bullying-related suicides being the 3rd most common reason for teen deaths, most school programs put up cyber-bullying programs in order to halt the spread of these crimes into their own schools. Many parents are becoming concerned for their child's safety on the Internet and demanded change on Internet etiquette policies in schools and households. The government has also taken the initiative to make sure these schools have proper punishments for cyber-bullying and to prevent this from turning into criminal harassment in the future years. However, it is not all they can do. Making cyber-bullying an expulsion-worthy action may suppress bullying between students, but making every kind of digital harassment illegal would be the best way to completely eradicate cyber-bullying altogether.

Imagine being under the control of strangers. Imagine yourself shaken and distressed by pixelated messages on a screen. Imagine finding a great amount of pressure from the influence of a new technology. The perils of the Internet is experienced by all, and felt by some to be very deep and harmful. Nonetheless, it can be eradicated with small steps and, ultimately, experienced by none and felt by none. This revolution may just start with you.

Internet bullies rely on the reactions and emotions produced by their words and insults. Ignore all of them. They have no rights in ruining your day, dignity and self-image, and perhaps may not even be intentional. Insulting them back would also be considered cyber-bullying. Of course, in cases where you are slandered publicly, considered a scapegoat, or tagged in offensive images by fellow peers or acquaintances, it is wise to report these actions immediately to your school or moderators of the specific site. The best way to stand up to a cyber-bully is when he or she is currently targeting another victim. Bullies tend to only cause trouble to one individual, and when other bystanders come in to turn the tides, the bully may back off in fear of being humiliated or reported. When someone else sends you files and images with emails and other communication, be cautious of potential threats stored within such files. Sending inappropriate images and transferring computer viruses intentionally is also considered cyber-bullying, and may have extensive damage on your computer and your life.

Take care to make sure that you don't become a cyber-bully yourself. On social websites, monitor your words toward others, especially when you are joking around or being sarcastic. Lack of body language and tone may morph your sentence into one that sounds monotonous and has malicious intent. Your words may have a huge impact on another's life, and so you should really think before you type and send. In the physical world, you can always apologize and make up for hurtful words and actions, but on the Internet, you can never really undo your actions.

Even if a person does his or her best to resist cyber-bullying and support the victims of such acts, it may not be enough to eliminate cyber-bullying. One entire community must be educated and wary of cyber-bullying, its effects and its intentions in order to fully protect its members from it. Organize meetings. Open "cyber-bully free" fairs. Treat cyber-bullying as you would to violence and drug abuse, because it's just as harmful. One by one, everyone must know the effects, how to react to harmful words and works and be educated on how to prevent the spread of these actions if we are to truly cope with cyber bullying and prosper within the digital realm.

