

World Wide Web of Hurt

By Tamekia Reece

What you need to know about cyberbullying

One day last year, Jake H., of Chicago, was shocked by what he saw on his Facebook page. "Some girls had made a video yelling things like 'you're ugly,' 'you're fat,' 'no one's ever going to like you,' and 'you're stupid,'" says Jake, who was 13.

Even worse, other people had clicked *Like* on the video. The girls, along with some of Jake's friends, had left mean messages on his profile page. "A bunch of people were angry at me, but I had no clue why," he says. "I was sad, crying, and freaking out because my friends were writing this stuff." Jake missed a few days of school because he felt so bad.

The online attack didn't last long. After talking to a couple of his friends, Jake found out why everyone was mad. Someone had made a profile in his name and sent mean notes to his friends and to one of the most popular girls in school. The girl made the video as revenge, and other kids joined in.

After he explained he didn't send the messages, everyone apologized. It still hurt, though. "They had already said all of this stuff, and it was all over my Facebook page," Jake says. "It changed the way I thought about things." He also worried because his so-called friends had joined in the attack.

Technology can be fun and a positive way to learn, express yourself, and keep up with friends. But as Jake found out, it can also be used to hurt others.

Are online bullies really bullies?

Threatening, humiliating, or harassing another person using a computer, a cell phone, or another electronic device is *cyberbullying*. So says Ross Ellis, founder of STOMP Out Bullying. That's a national program that helps kids and teens fight bullying of all kinds. Just like face-to-face bullies, cyberbullies are scary and hurtful on purpose.

What might a cyberbully do?

- Send e-mails, instant messages, or text messages with name-calling or threats

- Start rumors about someone on sites such as Facebook or MySpace
- Create a profile in someone's name (or a similar name) to say hurtful things to others
- Post someone's photos or personal information (such as a phone number or an address) online
- Steal someone's password and post embarrassing things on that person's profile while pretending to be him or her

Why do people cyberbully?

Cyberbullying happens for many reasons. Peer pressure is one. "If all of a kid's friends are picking on someone online, they might try to encourage that kid to do it too," says Sameer Hinduja. He's a psychologist and coauthor of *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying*. Being bored and starting drama for entertainment is also common. Other times cyberbullying is used to get revenge on someone.

Another reason a kid might become a bully is insecurity. "Sometimes people don't feel good about themselves, so they feel the need to tear down others in order to lift themselves up," Hinduja explains.

Does cyberbullying hurt others?

Cyberbullying isn't physical, but it still causes pain. Bullying victims deal with anger, sadness, fear, embarrassment, ruined reputations, and low self-esteem, Hinduja says. And because some posts stay online forever, the bully's words may affect the person for a long time.

Sometimes cyberbullying even makes people want to hurt themselves. In January 2010, a 15-year-old Massachusetts girl took her life because she couldn't stand the real-life and online bullying from classmates. Then, in September, a college student in New Jersey did the same after his roommate spied on him with a video camera and posted the embarrassing videos without his permission. And those are just two cases.

Can cyberbullying get you in trouble?

Definitely! "What you put online is never truly anonymous," says Jeff Lanza, a retired FBI special agent. With enough effort, someone can find out who sent the message or created the profile used to cyberbully someone, he says.

If you're caught, your punishment could mean being booted from school activities such as sports or music, being suspended, or having your phone or

computer taken away by your parents. Or you could face much bigger trouble. You could be charged with a crime or your parents could be sued, says Lanza. Different states have different laws depending on your age and the type of bullying. Several teens involved in bullying cases have been charged with crimes.

What do you do if you're being cyberbullied?

If you're being cyberbullied, there are things you should do.

- Do not respond to e-mails or messages that are mean to you.
- Save messages so you'll have proof when you talk to an adult.
- Block the person from your online networking profiles, your phone, your e-mail, and your instant message list.
- Tell a trusted adult—such as a parent, a teacher, or a counselor—about the bullying. Adults can help by talking with other parents or school officials, or contacting Web sites or cell phone service providers to have messages removed, Hinduja says.

In many cases, once you get an adult involved, he or she will be able to handle the situation, and the cyberbullying will end.

It is important to remember that there is help and that bullying isn't your fault. Although Jake's experience with it was short, he'll never forget it. "Being cyberbullied was horrible, and I don't think anyone deserves it," he says.

According to one recent survey of kids ages 10 to 18,

20 percent had been bullied online.

19 percent had bullied someone else online.

9 percent had recently posted mean or hurtful comments online about someone else.

7 percent had recently been the victim of someone else pretending to be them online.

Source: Cyberbullying Research Center

Need More Info About Cyberbullying?

STOMP Out Bullying www.stompoutbullying.org

Cyberbullying Research Center www.cyberbullying.us

WiredKids www.wiredkids.org

Stop Bullying Now! www.stopbullying.gov/

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Which action should a person NOT take if they are cyberbullied?
 - A respond to mean emails or messages
 - B save messages so they will have proof when talking to an adult
 - C block the person from online profiles and contact lists
 - D tell a trusted adult about the bullying

2. Which of the following examples was *listed* as an action that a cyberbully might do?
 - A compliment someone on a site like Facebook
 - B contact an adult for advice about cyberbullying
 - C start rumors about someone during lunch at school
 - D create a profile in someone's name to say hurtful things to others

3. What is the most likely reason that the survey results in the passage might be lower than the actual percentages of kids that have had experiences with cyberbullying?
 - A Some kids surveyed may not want to tell personal information about themselves in a survey.
 - B Some kids surveyed may not want to admit their experiences because they are afraid of the consequences.
 - C Some kids surveyed may not have understood all of the different types of cyberbullying.
 - D Some kids surveyed may not have remembered being cyberbullied or cyberbullying someone else.

4. Read the following sentence: "Threatening, humiliating, or harassing another person using a computer, a cell phone, or another electronic device is *cyberbullying*."

As used in the sentence, **harassing** most nearly means

 - A to help someone
 - B to encourage someone
 - C to compliment someone
 - D to attack someone

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to describe
 - A the website WiredKids and how it helps kids that are cyberbullied
 - B face-to-face bullying and why it is more problematic than cyberbullying
 - C cyberbullying and what can be done about it
 - D the experience of a cyberbully once they were caught

6. How does the passage define cyberbullying?

7. Some people might say that cyberbullying is more harmful than in-person bullying. Does the passage support that idea?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Cyberbullying doesn't cause physical pain, _____ victims feel anger, sadness, fear, and embarrassment.

- A because
- B so
- C unless
- D but

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

In most cases, once an adult is involved, he or she will be able to handle the situation.

Who? an adult

(does) What? _____

When? _____

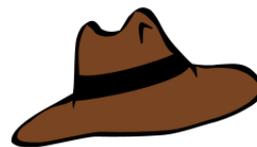
10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: anonymous (a · non · y · mous): not named.

10a. Read the five sentences below and underline the word **anonymous** in each sentence.

1. The history writer did not want anyone to know that he also wrote science fiction, so all of his science fiction books were anonymous.
2. The detective knew the person giving him information was scared that someone would find out he was helping the police, so the detective made sure that person stayed anonymous in all the reports.
3. All of the student comments on the teacher reviews stayed anonymous so grades would not be affected by any negative reviews.
4. The magazine received an anonymous letter to the editor saying that they were the best magazine in the world. The editor tried to find the writer to thank them, but it was impossible
5. The rich person didn't want the people at the charity to know that he was the person that gave an anonymous donation of \$10,000.

10b. What is something someone would wear if they are trying to be anonymous?



11. If a restaurant reviewer wanted to find out how good a restaurant really was, would it be better for them to be anonymous?
