

Cyber Bullying has been called 'an old problem in a new guise'



It's unfortunate that the harassment tactics of bullies that has being existent probably for all time, now surfaces in the dark side of modern technology, giving rise to Cyber Bullying.

The significant growth of such technology has led to a rapid and extensive growth in the use of email, texting, chat rooms, and mobile phones including mobile phone cameras, and social media processes that are all so common in today's world.

It is now through these methods that many bullies have found an outlet for their often insidious and almost always destructive behaviour.

Who are the Cyber Bullies?

Some research has shown that there is a reasonable relationship between some aspects of bullying in a physical environment and Cyber Bullying, although this was primarily found with males rather than females: males have been found to be more likely to be bullies and the victims of bullies in both cyber and traditional bullying, while females were more likely to be Cyber Bullies rather than bullying in the physical environment.

However, and perhaps more interesting was that research suggests that cyber bullying appears to be composed of its own unique characteristics: that is, many who commit acts of Cyber bullying are unlikely to commit such bullying behaviour in the physical environment. The reasons being suggested are related to the level of anonymity and impersonation via the Internet, with a decreased fear of being caught. This apparently, gives cyber bullies an opportunity to be more aggressive than they may be in 'real life'.



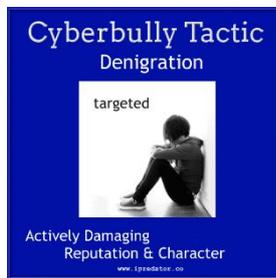
So, let's define Cyber Bullying

This form of bullying is defined as intentionally and repetitive aggressive behaviour designed to hurt or humiliate an individual who is likely to feel powerless to defend himself or herself. Such aggressive behaviour is likely to occur over a long period via the use of electronic forms of contact and may be verbal, (such as ridiculing, insulting or mocking the individual), relational (excluding the individual from a specific peer group), or indirect (such as spreading rumours or gossip about the individual).

Forms of Cyber Bullying

There are many types of cyber bullying:

cyberstalking: defined as the repeated and intense harassment and denigration that may include threats or create significant fear;



harassment: repeatedly making insulting or denigratory comments about an individual, such as spreading rumours or gossip to damage the person's reputation;

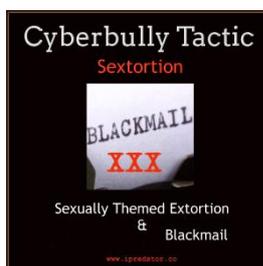


outing: sharing an individual's secrets or awkward experiences to deliberately embarrass the person;

flaming: the use of electronic means to swamp an individual with angry and vulgar language;

exclusion: deliberately and cruelly excluding an individual from a specific physical or online peer group or activity;

image-based abuse: when someone shares intimate, nude or sexual images of an individual without the permission of that person.



Other common forms of Cyber Bullying include online gaming abuse, 'slut' shaming, sexting, and Phishing.

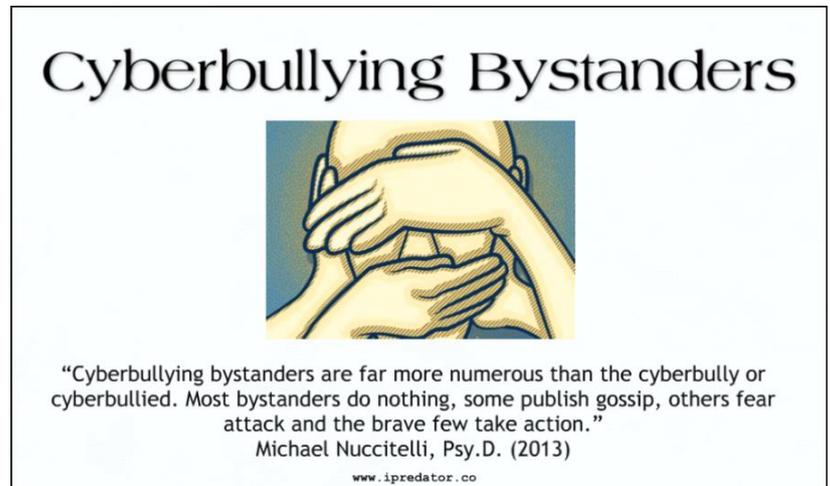


The Cyber Bullying Cycle

There seem to be three main roles identified within the bullying cycle: the bully, the victim, and the bystanders. It is generally accepted that the bully adopts a stronger and more aggressive role in what seems to be a need for power.

Through the act of bullying, the bully attempts to raise his or her self-esteem and perhaps social status, while pulling down the social status and personal identity of the victim. This is why it is thought that bullying usually takes place in the presence of others.

The victims are perceived by both the bully and the bystanders as being of a lower status, and frequently powerless to defend themselves.



It is unfortunate that bystanders to the bullying frequently do little or nothing to intervene and prevent such bullying, either because of their own fear of being bullied, a sense of powerlessness in themselves, or that the bullying allows them to take on a higher status than the victim. The passivity of these onlookers provides a means of support for the bully.

This 'doing nothing' may be viewed as an indirect form of bullying.

Let's talk about Image-based Abuse

This behaviour appears to be happening with increasing frequency: it refers to the distribution of intimate, nude or sexual images without the consent of those in the images. It includes both real and altered 'photo-shopped') images, drawn pictures and videos. In addition, it can also include the threat of such an image or video being distributed. In some cases this image-based abuse is referred to as revenge porn, although the majority of this form of abuse is not related to revenge.

It seems that much image-based abuse is yet another form of Cyber Bullying and occurs as a means of attempting to humiliate or denigrate the individual.

What to do if you are the Victim of Cyber Bully

Perhaps the most important response you can make is to tell someone you trust and who will listen to you: we know that when someone faces bullying alone the impact appears to be significantly greater on the individual's emotional health and well-being.

If you have no one that you can turn to in person, it is vital that you reach out to one of the support counselling services available free of charge, and some 24 hours a day. Check the website of the Office of the eSafety commissioner.



The second most important response is to try to remain calm, and preserve evidence: this means to take a screenshot or other evidence of the bullying so that you can report this to appropriate authorities. The Office of the eSafety Commissioner (see reference at end of this paper) has information on how to collect evidence.

Next, it is important to report the issue to appropriate authorities: this may be school authorities, university or college administration, the police, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, or workplace supervisors.

If the Cyber Bullying you are experiencing relates to image-based abuse, you can take action to get image or video removed from the website or social media application. Again, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner has good information on useful links for removing images.

If you have been subjected to Internet or cyber bullying, try to become aware of the impact on your emotional or psychological health; reach out and seek counselling support if you are feeling anxious, depressed or otherwise vulnerable as a consequence of this abuse.

Steve Jobson
Principal Psychologist
inSyncforlife.com.au

⁽¹⁾ Cyber Bullying: An Old Problem in a New Guise? Marilyn A. Campbell ^(a1)
<https://doi.org/10.1375/ajgc.15.1.68>

⁽²⁾ Clin Pract Epidemiol Ment Health. 2015; 11(Suppl 1 M4): 58–76. Published online 2015 Feb 26.
doi: 10.2174/1745017901511010058

⁽³⁾ Office of the eSafety Commissioner: safety.gov.au