Submit*
THE DOCUMENTARY

THE WAY WE HURT EACH OTHER HAS EVOLVED™

SUBMIT THE DOCUMENTARY
Educational Film Guide

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THE ~~VIRTUAL~~ REALITY OF CYBERBULLYING™

1. Whenever possible, the facilitators should view the film prior to showing it to an audience. In that way, they will have had a chance to process their own reactions, and anticipate concerns that may be expressed in discussion.

2. Ensure that you have developed and identified a "safe space" for viewing of this film. The film may evoke powerful emotions and trigger past traumas for some viewers; thus, it is important to provide an environment that is safe and comfortable for viewers to watch the video. Some strategies for creating safety include:

   a. Discussing ground rules for discussions before and after the film. Talk beforehand with individuals who are likely to be affected (e.g. students who have been victimized) and ensure they are prepared for the experience.

   b. Have counselors available during and after the screening to provide support as needed, and have a list of local counselors and resources available if follow-up counseling is indicated.

   c. Using the preview questions below, prepare the audience for viewing.

3. If possible, know the rates and types of cyberbullying most pravelant at your school (from recent surveys?). Be prepared to discuss the school or district's anti-bullying policy and whether or how cyberbullying is included. What is the law in your state about cyberbullying and to whom does it apply? What is the process your school follows when dealing with bullying and cyberbullying incidents? Knowing these facts can help you tailor the viewing experience to your setting and can help you facilitate a meaningful discussion after.

   1. Be aware that in some locations, laws and policies specify that schools can intervene in cyberbullying only when school computers are used, or the incident occurs at a school activity, etc. Since most cyberbullying will not meet those narrow restrictions, educators may believe cyberbullying is out of the range of their authority. However, based on legal precedent (Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 1969), courts are likely to uphold school intervention if an incident causes a "substantial disruption" to the educational process. Even if the incident does not meet that standard, educators need to assist students who have been victimized and educate all students about strategies to protect themselves from cyber-harm

PREVIEW QUESTIONS:

Before the video is shown, it would be helpful to involve the audience in a brief discussion about the topic. A brief discussion would allow viewers to begin thinking about cyberbullying and to potentially challenge their own views and preconceived notions while viewing the video. Some of these questions include:

1. What is cyberbullying?

2. How common is cyberbullying in the United States? In your state? In your school?

3. Why do you think cyberbullying is so harmful?

4. What makes cyberbullying different than in-person bullying? Is one worse?

5. Who gets cyberbullied? Who does the cyberbullying?

POST VIEWING:

Although it is likely that the video will be screened in a large-audience setting, you may want to arrange for smaller groups for post-viewing discussion. If that is planned, try to transition to the small groups in a way that does not break the mood or focus. Perhaps there are areas within the large viewing setting that can be quickly re-arranged to form smaller groups. If that is the choice, be sure to have a facilitator who has prepared for the discussion and is comfortable with a personal and perhaps emotionally-laden discussion. A counselor should be available if assistance is needed.

If necessary, the discussion can be conducted in the large-group setting. Be alert to the viewers who do not share but have strong reactions. They may be shy or concerned about an emotional display in that setting. Note who those persons are, and be sure to contact them immediately afterwards to determine whether they may not support and/or a referral for ongoing services. Because the film may elicit strong emotional reactions on the part of some viewers, it is important to have counselors or other mental health professionals available should the distress be severe.

If individuals choose to reveal their own role in cyberbullying others or in being victimized, they should be allowed to share and ask what they need to make amends (bully) or to re-cover (victim). It is important that victims not engage in self-blame, and that bullies accept responsibility not just for what they have done, but for what they will do going forward.

Once the video has completed, you will want to "debrief" and discuss the implications of the video with the students. SUBMIT has elicited strong emotions from many youth so you should expect that viewers may experience intense emotions. Here are some ways to facilitate an open conversation to ensure students feel supported:

1. Ask students how they feel after watching the movie. Did anything in particular stand out or surprise them? Do these stories match with their experience in their school?

2. Which stories particularly affected you? How were you affected?

3. What is the message you will take away from this film?

4. What do you want parents and educators to learn from this film?

5. What types of things can we do to stop cyberbullying? Who is responsible to make it stop?

6. What are students willing to do to reduce bullying and cyberbullying at their school and in their communities? What would be a first step? Whose assistance and support will be needed? How can you keep the impact of this film from fading?

If time permits, the following questions should stimulate fruitful discussion:

For Students:

Megan Meier ended her life because she could not face the pain of rejection by someone she knew only online. It was only after her death that her parents learned that Josh Evans was not a real person, and that his page was created by the parent of a friend of Megan's in order to find out what Megan was saying about her daughter.

1. How can teens who meet someone online verify that the person is who they say they are?

2. Most teens will have several romantic relationships before they settle on a life partner. What do they need to be able to endure the inevitable break-ups without feeling as though they cannot go on?

3. Sameer Hinduja, one of the experts featured in the video, says that he wondered why there wasn't more support for Megan. Do you agree that Megan lacked support? What kinds of support do kids that age need?

4. Tina Meier, Megan's mother, said that Megan was naïve and unprepared for the potential challenges of social networking websites. What does someone need to be prepared to participate in those sites? Many children younger than 13 are now on Facebook. What would you want them to know?

5   The parents of Megan, Hope, and Johanna were obviously devastated by their children's suicides. Is there anything they could have done to prevent those tragedies?

6. Hope Witsell was persuaded on several occasions to send revealing photos to a boy. What do you think makes girls vulnerable to such appeals from boys? Do you think girls like Hope really believe no one but the recipient will see the photo? In Hope's case, the school suspended her for a week for her action, and also prohibited her from participating in an extra-curricular activity. Do you think that was a good approach? What should the school have done?

7. Several of the experts said that kids don't tell adults about being cyberbullied because they think adults over-react. They also said adults don't know enough about technology to be helpful. What do you think would need to happen for kids to think of adults as resources that can be helpful?

8. Do you think schools are doing enough to help kids manage their digital words? What is the role of schools in this problem? What about the legal system? Do you think more laws would be helpful?

For Parents:

1. It must be hard to see the pain of the parents who lost their children due to cyberbullying. All seemed to be concerned parents. What do you think parents need to know and do to prevent such tragedies? Is parental monitoring a solution? What else needs to happen? How can parents partner with schools to make a difference? Kids fear adults (including parents) would "over-react" if they knew some of the experiences their kids had with technology. What would an appropriate reaction be? How can you inoculate your kids against painful experiences (such as break-ups) they are likely to experience during adolescence?

For Educators:

1. In the video, we see that parents and schools don't seem to know what to do. If kids are to stand up against cyberbullying, does the school have a role? What do you think your role should be? What assistance and resources do you need to be effective in this role?

Some youth, teachers, parents, and community members will likely want to do more after watching this video. Here are some recommendations that you can spread to stop bullying:

Recommendations for Community Members

Advocate for inclusive school and state-wide anti-bullying policies. Community members can be advocates for youth by supporting legislation and policy that will protect youth from bullying, including cyberbullying. As adult advocates, your support of anti-bullying policies that protect youth from being bullied or experiencing discrimination on the basis of their identities (such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability) is an effective way to reduce bullying and improve school safety for all youth. Contact your state legislators, superintendent, and school board members to advocate for inclusive anti-bullying polices at the state and local level.

Advocate for bullying prevention and intervention programs. Many youth do not know how to identify bullying in their schools, and so they may be less likely to stop it. We recommend that community members support school-wide and community-wide anti-bullying programs for youth of all ages.

Recommendations for Schools & Educators

Offer professional development for school personnel on how to intervene and stop bullying and cyberbullying. Through regular training and professional development, educators should be given the tools to effectively intervene and prevent bullying in their classroom and school. Particularly with respect to cyberbullying, it is imperative that educators engage with technology and use it in their teaching so students see them as potential helpers. Consider training in non-punitive strategies to respond to bullying and cyberbullying, as there is strong evidence that zero-tolerance policies and traditional punitive responses are not effective.

Track and monitor bullying in your school. Bullying is a local, state, and national problem, and students are bullied for a variety of reasons. If schools systematically track and monitor bullying and cyberbullying, more effective and targeted prevention and intervention programs can be implemented to address the specific types of bullying experienced by students within each unique school. Youth can establish school-specific networks to counter cyberbullying. Students should be encouraged to pursue projects that will help reduce bullying.

Recommendations for Youth

Speak up and speak out. Youth can also help stop bullying and cyberbullying in their schools by speaking up, and by reporting acts of bullying to teachers and school staff. No form of bullying is okay, and when youth speak up and out against acts of bullying, it benefits everyone.

Get educated and active. Youth should advocate for and seek out opportunities to learn more about bullying. Youth have the power to create safer schools for all students. Youth can advocate for inclusive anti-bullying policies, organize school assemblies, invite guest speakers, design class projects, and start/join school clubs that oppose bullying and promote safe schools.

Know basic digital safety strategies. At a minimum, everyone should know how to block a sender (online or on phone), report abuse, set privacy settings, print evidence of offensive or harassing content, and when cyberbullying crosses the line into illegal activity.

Recommendations for Parents

Youth are very reluctant to tell adults about incidents of cyberbullying for two reasons:

> 1) they fear that the adults will restrict their access to the technology,
>
> *and*
>
> 2) they believe adults don't know enough about technology to be helpful.

Thus, as parents, it is helpful to

1. Do not threaten your child with removal of technology as a disciplinary tool.

2. Be informed. Read some of the books below. Learn to use technology.

3. Ask your child about what's happening with technology at his/her school. Do not interrogate, but a friendly, "You know, I heard about this thing called sexting. Do you know anything about that? Does that happen at your school?"

4. If you and your child have both seen SUBMIT, that provides an excellent vehicle for discussion. Take opportunities such as this to have meaningful conversations. News stories sometimes provide opportunities to discuss the topic of cyberbullying.
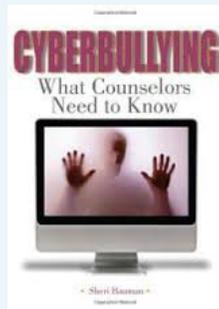
Bauman, S. (2011). *Cyberbullying: What counselors need to know*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association. This book provides an overview and history of the problem, and how it is related to other aggressive and bullying behaviors. It includes specific details (including screenshots) about how to handle several types of cyberbullying. Prevention strategies are covered as well. This is written for counselors, teachers, parents, and the general public.
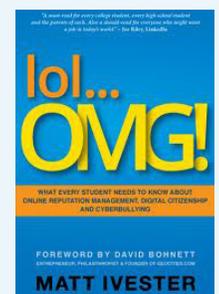
Ivester, M. (2011). *lol … OMG!* Reno, NV: Serra Knight Publishing. This book is directed towards college students but is very appropriate for high school students (and their teachers). The author created a (now closed-down) college gossip site, so his knowledge is that of an insider. His straightforward style is a must-read for anyone who uses technology and wants to be safe doing so.
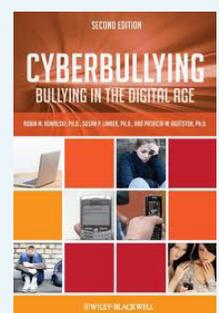
Kowalski, R. M., Limber, S. P., & Agatston (2012). *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the digital age (2nd ed.)* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell. Now its second edition, this book includes both theoretical and practical information about cyberbullying, and includes findings from the authors' own research. It provides thorough information about gender and ethnic differences, has solid recommendations for parents and teachers.

Sabella, R. A. (2008). *GuardingKids.com*. Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corp. Although written several years ago for parents, there are many valuable ideas that are applicable today. This book includes a section on gaming, often overlooked. It also talks about human solutions in addition totechnological ones, which is an important concept in prevention and intervention.
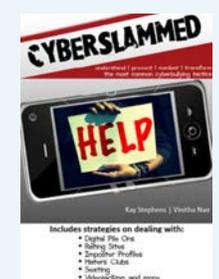
Stephens, K. & Nair, V. (2012). *Cyberslammed*. Rockland, ME: Time Warner Cable. This book covers several less well known types of cyberbullying (rating sites, sexting, digital pile-ons) and provides detailed strategies for managing these. It presents a series of lessons that teach the strategies students need to know. I particularly recommend the section on sexting, which is a serious problem.