

Bullying and Violence Prevention: Ryan Halligan

Lesson Title: Cyberbullied Shoes

Grade Level: High School



Project and Purpose:

Students practice empathy by considering more than one side of a story.

Essential Question:

How does looking at something from a target's point of view affect the way we think about cyberbullying?

Materials:

- Substitution stories — cut up so each pair receives only one story
- Discussion / Response page

Procedure:

1. Ask students to define cyberbullying and list different ways cyberbullying can happen.
2. Discuss how some cyberbullying uses the direct attack method through: messaging; stealing passwords; blogging; Internet polling; sending rude, threatening, or inappropriate emails, photos, and messages; or impersonating the target by creating fake social media sites. Ask students for examples of each. (**Note:** The Resources section provides a list of sites that provide detailed descriptions of the aforementioned methods.)
3. Discuss how cyberbullying can happen via proxy: a cyberbully manages to get other people to do the dirty work so they appear to be clean. Sometimes this is done by falsely 'alerting' an ISP (Internet Service Provider) that the target has posted inappropriate materials or language on a site; sometimes people pose as others and instigate a group of people against the target; and sometimes they go on group sites and post inflammatory statements against the group and then provide personal information about the target. Experts say cyberbullying by proxy can often be the most dangerous.
4. Ask students to discuss how cyberbullying of any kind affects the target's emotions, sense of well-being, and behavior. How does it affect the family members of the target? Friends? Other students? Community?
5. Ask students if they think cyberbullies stop to think about the effects of their actions. Why or why not?
6. Tell students that experts say most people who participate in cyberbullying in any way lack empathy. What is empathy? (*Merriam Webster definition: the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.*)

7. Often when people talk about empathy they use the metaphor of “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes” to consider something from another person’s point of view or perspective.
8. Explain how students will put themselves in the shoes of a cyberbully’s target through substitution stories.
9. Pair students up and give each pair one of the substitution stories. For each story, one person will read in the first person by filling in the blanks with first person personal pronouns (I/me/my). The second person in the pair will read the same story filling in the blanks with the name of the most important person in his or her life as well as the appropriate personal pronouns (he/she/they/his/her/their). They will discuss the story using the questions provided on the Discussion/Response page.
10. Give pairs enough time to go through their stories and then have them find another pair who had the same story, encouraging them to compare and contrast their responses.
11. Gather back as a group and ask volunteers to share the discussions they had with both groups and how discussing with the second group changed or supported their original thoughts.

Conclusion:

Review the themes of the lesson. Ask students if they ever stop to consider the emotions of the target when they encounter cyberbullying. Why or why not? How might they use empathy—stand in the victim’s shoes — the next time they encounter cyberbullying?

Resources:

- www.cyberbullying.org
- www.stopcyberbullying.org
- www.stopbullying.gov

Cyberbullied Shoes: **Substitution Stories**

Make multiple copies and cut stories apart. Distribute one story to each pair of students.

Substitution Story #1

_____ was about to post a picture from Saturday night's party on Facebook when _____ noticed some troll had hijacked the site and posted a bunch of nasty pictures about _____. _____ had not been to those places or done those things! Every one of the photos had been photoshopped!

Substitution Story #2

_____ loved all the gossip on Yik Yak—until _____ noticed _____ own name being tossed around in rumors and other lies. Suddenly _____ realized: if _____ could read them, that means everyone else could, too—and the responses were piling up. Each comment was worse than the first one, even some pretty hateful things from friends.

Substitution Story #3

_____’s life became a living nightmare. _____ had confided in a former friend that _____ almost went too far on a date — but saying “No” stopped everything. None of that mattered. Word went out over every social media site that _____ was easy, ‘doable,’ and ready to do it with anyone. _____ had NOT done it and was NOT giving it away, but the messages kept coming, and people started harassing _____ at school and anywhere _____ went.

Substitution Story #4

_____ suddenly started receiving threatening texts and messages saying, “You cannot hide from us,” and “You think you can say that @\$% and get away with it?” from members of a hate website. More and more messages, each one more graphically threatening than the last, started pouring in, nonstop. _____ never would and never had posted anything on one of those sites! Who was posing as _____ and saying this kind of stuff online? And why? Who had _____ ticked off enough to do this?

Cyberbullied Shoes:

Discussion Questions and Response Page

Student Name

1. What do you think happened that instigated the cyberbully to do this?

2. What emotions are being experienced by both the target and the cyberbully? Why?

3. What should the target do? Do you think the target will do anything or tell anyone? Why or why not?

4. What are possible consequences for the cyberbully?

5. What would you do in this situation if you were...

The target?

The person's best friend?

Neither a friend nor an enemy but someone browsing through the site?

6. How would a dose of empathy help everyone involved in this situation?
