When is cyberbullying actually cyberbullying?

Ages 16+

THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

When is cyberbullying actually cyberbullying?

OBJECTIVE

To be able to recognize when cyberbullying is happening.

OUTCOME

To recognize the difference between a joke and cyberbullying.

You look different in
that picture

I think you forgot to turn on the flash on your camera because the picture came out quite dark

You look great

4

I heard what you said to Matt about me

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MATERIALS

A copy of the 4 comments above for the first activity (you can use the accompanying slides), 3 sheets of paper and a pen for the second activity.

INSTRUCTIONS   ACTIVITY 1

1. Introduce the exercise to the class, and present the objective and outcome.

2. Show the following comments to the class and ask them to think of variations of the same comment as a friendly comment, a flirtatious comment, a joke and a rude comment:

- "You look different in that picture."
- "I think you forgot to turn on the flash on your camera because the picture came out quite dark."
- "You look great."
- "I heard what you said to Matt about me."

3. Encourage the students to read out some of their different comments and make them aware that the rude comment is the version depicting cyberbullying.

4. End the exercise by telling the class how easy it can be to write hurtful comments, but that we all have a choice to write friendly comments too.

ACTIVITY 2

5. Ask one student to volunteer to act as a cyber victim and then ask them to step outside of the room.

6. Choose 3 other students to each write the same mean comment in their own way on a sheet of paper. Ensure that only one of the comments has "lol" written at the end, as this one will appear as being the jokey comment, for example: "Fatty lol," "You smell lol." Then get the students to fold up their comments and hand them to you.

7. Tell the 'cyber victim' to come back inside and give them each of the papers to open (start with the one that says "lol" in it) and read them one-by-one.

8. Ask the 'cyber victim' to share with the other students how it made them feel to read each comment. Prompt the 'cyber victim' by using the following questions:

– "Did you notice a difference in how you felt when reading the first comment from the second and the second from the last?"

– "Do you think you can guess who wrote the comments?"

– "Would you feel better knowing who wrote the comments and why?"

– "Did you believe what the comments said?"

9. End the exercise by reassuring the student who volunteered to be the cyber victim that the comments are not true. Make a point about how one comment can be taken as a joke, but receiving the same comment again and again can lead to cyberbullying especially if they get worse and make the receiver feel really upset. So therefore, everybody should be careful how they phrase what they are saying so that the comment appears helpful and not rude.