



National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - March 2015

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This month, we recognise the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence on the 20th of March 2015. This is an opportunity for the community to bring the issue of cyberbullying into the spotlight, debate the major concerns and discuss opportunities to overcome this problem. Over the past several years, the main focus of this day has been on empowering bystanders: those people who are not actively engaged in the cyberbullying but could take an active role in preventing and/or overcoming the issue. In this edition of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter, we're going to look at the question "Why should I do something about a problem that doesn't affect me?"

We need to give a voice to those who can't speak for themselves

Sometimes, those people who are being cyberbullied do not have the strength, courage or knowledge to defend themselves. They can feel powerless to do something against the cyberbullying and may feel as though they are all alone. As bystanders, we make up the largest group of people who can make a stand against cyberbullying. Most of us do not cyberbully, nor are we cyberbullied ourselves, but the majority of us are aware of it going on and there is great strength in our numbers. As a collective, we can do great things.

Speaking up for others doesn't necessarily mean we have to put ourselves in a situation where we might be the next target of cyberbullying. We can give a voice to those who can't speak for themselves by telling them that we are a source of support for them, guide them to professional support services and encourage them to report their cyberbullying to the site on which it has occurred. Collectively speaking against cyberbullying can also help us to raise awareness of the issue and encourage people to take positive steps to overcome it.

Time2Talk

In this section we look at ways to start talking with children and young people about their use of technology.

Do you know how to report cyberbullying on the sites, games and apps you use?

Would you report cyberbullying that you see happening to someone else?

Who could you encourage your friends to speak to if they are being cyberbullied?

What is your ideal vision of what social spaces online should look like?

Reciprocity

If it were to happen to you, you'd appreciate someone helping you out. It's the same rule we've all heard thrown about, "treat others how you would like to be treated." we'd all like to think that someone would help us out in our time of need, but why should we expect the kindness of strangers if we don't show that same kindness ourselves? We're often keen to speak up about our rights, yet we forget that our rights are dependent upon us fulfilling our responsibilities. We need to take less and give more.

We can treat people how we would like to be treated by treating any reports of cyberbullying respectfully and with dignity. Not blaming the person who has been cyberbullied, nor demonising the technology but tackling the anti-social online behaviour head-on. We also need to be mindful that the person engaging in the cyberbullying might also need our support to overcome their involvement. Just as we would want someone to acknowledge the harm we might have felt, we need to recognise the harm of cyberbullying on others and, best we can, support them in minimising and overcoming that harm.



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The systems are built on community regulation

Most social spaces online do not have an overarching monitor or authority figure, but rely on self-report and community regulation. We willingly enter these social spaces knowing that we have a responsibility to maintain positive interactions and that inappropriate behaviour will not be dealt with unless we report it. Unfortunately, few of us actually read the terms and conditions of the social spaces we enter online and forget that we enter into a contract to behave appropriately in exchange for being able to utilise that social space.

You may like to think of these social spaces like a massive beach, except there aren't enough lifeguards to watch over all the swimmers. Instead, those of us who choose to swim at the beach take up the responsibility to keep an eye out for other swimmers and call for help when it is needed from the lifeguards who may not have otherwise noticed.

We can keep an eye out for other users and report cyberbullying on behalf of someone else so that it is brought to the attention of the administrators of the site. Most sites, games and apps allow you to make reports on behalf of others without identifying you to the people involved.

It does affect us as a society

We determine the norms in our community and we are responsible for upholding the values we want our society to run by. Saying that "cyberbullying doesn't affect me" is like saying "car accidents don't affect me." You may not be directly involved by the accident, but you may be caught up in the traffic behind it, or have your insurance premiums raised because there are more claims in your area, or have a longer commute if the council lowers speed limits in accident-prone areas, or pay higher taxes to improve roads or install more safety cameras or deploy more police. Cyberbullying affects us all and we have a responsibility to safeguard the values we collectively hold and address those incidents which subvert those values.

As bystanders, we can all be positive role models and behave the way in which we expect others to behave. Instead of burying our heads in the sand, we should equip ourselves with the skills and knowledge to prevent and address cyberbullying and create positive social spaces online.

You can find out more information on cyberbullying on our ThinkUKnow website at <http://www.thinkuknow.org.au>

Further information on the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence can be found on the Bullying No Way! website at <http://bullyingnoway.gov.au>

ThinkUKnow Announcements

- Last month we announced that the Commonwealth Bank has joined the ThinkUKnow partnership. We are very excited to have them on board as they will bring amazing talents to the initiative. Stay tuned for some other exciting news in the coming months!
- You may have noticed a few changes on our website lately as we've just undergone a redevelopment. You will find that you no longer need to be a ThinkUKnow member to access our resources which are now freely available under a Creative Commons licence. If your website links to any of our resources, we encourage you to check that the link is still active and redirect to the new page if required.

For more information visit www.thinkuknow.org.au