ONLINE BEHAVIOUR AND CYBERBULLYING

SAFETY > 4.3 PROTECTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

TARGET GROUP	AGE GROUP	PROFICIENCY LEVEL	FORMAT	COPYRIGHT	LANGUAGE
All, School drop outs, Students (primary school), Students (secondary school)	Children, Teenagers	Level 1	Activity sheet	Creative Commons (BY-SA)	English, French

The facilitator will explain through this activity how we identify cyberbullying and the best reaction to that kind of online behaviour, as a victim or as a witness.

General Objective	Knowledge acquisition
Preparation time for facilitator	less than 1 hour
Competence area	2 - Communication & collaboration
Time needed to complete activity (for learner)	0 - 1 hour
Name of author	Adrien Tellier
Resource originally created in	French

WORKSHOP DIRECTIONS

1 Introduction

This activity is meant to grow awareness in a young audience of behaviours adopted online, particularly concerning cyberbullying. This should enable them to understand, through applied examples, that behaviours and emotions are not the same when considering online interactions. It will also invite them to reflect on the ways they could react when faced with cyberbullying, whether participants are victims or witnesses. This workshop has three parts:

- An offline activity during which participants will play out a situation
- A debate on the meaning of cyberbullying
- A walking debate about different situations and behaviours to adopt (20/30mins)

Facilitation tips: This is about growing awareness of cyberbullying and is meant neither to victimise nor to incite guilt in participants. It doesn't require much preparation time: you should be simply aware of the content of the roadmap. These activities were initially conceived for children. It can otherwise be adapted to other age groups. In this case, we advise you to skip (or remove) the first part which works less well with adolescents or adults. To feel more comfortable on the subject of cyberbullying, we advise you to read '[Cyberharassment](#)' in advance of this workshop.

2 Role-playing game

This role-playing game is taken from Canada's Center for Digital and Media Literacy – Media Smarts – from a lesson plan called 'Introduction to Cyberbullying: Avatars and Identity'. This has the goal of bringing the understanding that what we say and how it is perceived is different in the context of indirect interactions, when a filter – for example a screen or computer – separates communicators.

By turns, participants (2 or 3) will stand before the rest of the group. They should then choose a funny-sounding word which they will then use – without smiling or laughing – to answer every question asked by others. The objective of the group will be to make the standers laugh by asking whatever funny questions they can come up with.

Funny questions: What's your mother's middle name? What's your shoe size? What does your shower gel

smell like? What did you eat for breakfast this morning? What do you put on your sandwiches? What's your dog's name? etc.

Funny words: Platypus, karaoke, lickety-split, bumbershoot, duckwalk, shenanigan, kerfuffle, lummox, muggins, mcgillycuddy

Things to notice: Are they laughing? Why is it funny? Are they uncomfortable? If so, why? Does their body language suggest irritation? Now try the same exercise except this time having 2 or 3 participants hide their face with a mask, a book, a sheet or whatever else they can use to hide their face so as to no longer be able to see the others. Now they will have to respond to the rest by writing the response-word on the board.

Things to notice: Why are they now less inclined to laugh? What's changed? They are no longer interacting directing – there is a now filter. The emotions felt are now different and the same is experienced online. You will not see the face of the person you are interacting with. You won't know if they're stressed, angry or sad. This ability to put yourself in the other's place and to feel what they feel is called empathy.

3 Discussion

Reflect on what just happened. **Do participants see the link between what they just did and how the internet changes human interaction?** Online, we don't see the people we're speaking with – we usually don't know what they look like. On the other hand, we feel more free to say things online. Online, people tend to feel less personally involved in their statements and feel less held back.

Definition of cyberbullying The Canadian professor Bill Belsey proposed the following definition in 2003: 'Cyberbullying involved use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group which is intended to harm others'. We are talking essentially about 'bullying 2.0'. Information travels very quickly online. As opposed to 'offline harassment', the sources of cyberbullying can multiply rapidly and easily. This is exemplified in a dangerous phenomenon: when the individual victim can quickly feel that the entire world is against them.

For example, when some personal and/or embarrassing information concerning them becomes known by hundreds or thousands of people. These people may then belittle or act in a hostile way towards the victim. It is important to emphasise that the majority of online interactions are positive and serve digital communication well. Cyberbullying is not ubiquitous but it is important to be aware of it.

Ask participants to give examples of acts of online harassment. You could list their answers on the board. The answers might be some of the following:

- Sending or forwarding cruel or threatening messages
- Posting photos or comments that may embarrass or humiliate
- Creating a website to mock
- Posting insults on someone's social media account
- Creating false accounts on social media platforms to ridicule others
- Spreading secrets and rumours about people online
- Filming someone without telling them and sharing the results on social media

4   Walking debate

A walking debate invites participants to reflect on questions differently. They should form a line before you propose various statements (listed below). They can then take one step forward if they agree, or take one step backwards if they don't agree. After each question, they can debate their respective positions and explain their points of view. In this case the facilitator must mediate. After each response, they can propose the ideas listed after each statement below.

- **My friend is a victim of cyberbullying. They don't want me to talk about it. I shouldn't talk about it out of fear of making the situation worse.**

If you are afraid of aggravating something, you can at least talk to the victim privately. You could talk about the situation to their parents or talk privately to the bully where possible. Point out to participants the information presented in the category 'Going further' at the bottom of this workshop plan, especially the listening tools and advice for the victim, witness or even the harasser.

- **I posted a video of myself dancing and my friends are mocking me about it. If a comment hurts me, I should react by insulting the person who wrote it.**

Whether or not the video (or whatever else) was posted by you, you still have rights online!

- Image rights, saying that your images/videos can't be forwarded without your agreement
- Right to be forgotten, article 17 of the EU's GDPR. This consists of allowing under-18s online to demand the minimisation or deletion of their information in an online context.

Responding to the harasser using their own methods can make the situation worse. If you react, if you show you are insulted – this may be exactly what they want. In some cases, if you don't respond or respond in an unfazed way, keeping in mind that such actions often provoke discomfort, the bully will feel idiotic and will tire of their behaviour. These you could also do the following:

- Keep proof of the harassing interactions
- Block the harasser from your social media pages
- Where possible, report the actions to staff at your school, to your relatives or even the police if the situation is serious

- **On Facebook, a friend insulted one of our classmates. I liked their comment, so I'm therefore in on the bullying.**

You may feel that a comment or a like has no importance. However, cyberbullies feed off support they may have and the popularity they can get from this kind of behaviour. If they get no reaction, they will not be encouraged to continue. Drawing attention to the behaviour of cyberbullies may certainly contribute to its influence or continuation.

- **The best student in class keeps posting their results online. Today, I was sick of it and so commented on one of their posts saying that they may be intelligent but they are not attractive and that the whole class hated them.**

This is frustration and jealousy. This kind of comment brings nothing of any value to the poster. It may be 'just a joke', but these kinds of statements can really hurt someone. If their behaviour really bothers you, why not send them a (non-insulting) message in private or simply block their posts?

Facilitation tips: If you want to take this further, you can continue on with what was worked on today with your group (over one or several sessions) – on each participant's experiences and how this workshop made them feel.

5   Going further

There are many resources online dealing with the issue of cyberbullying:

- kooth.com, Kooth provides free online mental health services for children. It is a platform where they can speak freely and anonymously to professionals.

- cyberbulling.org This is a online research centre of cyberbullying containing a wealth of information on the subject. The link here leads to a list of platform-specific links allowing users to report instances of cyberbullying depending on where it happened.

- https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbullying Media Smarts has a whole section dedicated to cyberbullying which, like cyberbullying.org, compiles multiple resources for the teachers, counsellors as well as parents for combatting cyberbullying.

There are also a number of great examples of youth literature dealing with the subject of harassment:

- *Matilda*, Roald Dahl
- *Blubber,* Judy Blume
- *Freak the Mighty*, Judy Blume
- *The Name Jar,* Yangsook Choi
- and many more