

Cyberbullying: What about the Bystanders?

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Case Study

- Jamey Rodemeyer – 14 years old
- Anonymously posted comments on his [Formspring](#) account included hate messages such as, “I wouldn't care if you died. No one would. So just do it :) It would make everyone WAY more happier.”
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Pb1CaGMdWk&feature=player_embedded#!

What is a Bystander?

- Essentially, bystanders are '*Non-bullied Witnesses*'
- Driven by some alternate goals:
 - Relational
 - Identity
 - Economic
 - Justice
 - Power-Hostility

Types of Bystanders

Because bullying conflicts are so volatile and aggressive, they spread fear and typically push members into one of three non-bullied bystander groups:

1. those who cluster around and support bullies (bully allies);
2. those who support or protect targets (target allies) and;
3. those who attempt to distance themselves from the bullying conflict (neutral or silent bystanders)

Bully Allies

- **Bully allies**, especially passive bullies and followers are people “who participate in bullying but do not usually take the initiative.

Bully Allies

- **Henchmen/women**, on the other hand, actively take part in bullying conflicts, loyally following the bully's lead and working to undermine, remove, and sometimes even destroy targets' reputations.

Bully Allies

- **Patrons** are those who help bullies ascend to positions of power and persons to whom bullies turn as third-party allies. Bullies often choose these people as a strategic support network.

Bully Allies

- **Pawns** are persons initially loyal to the bullies who side with them in bullying conflicts but later feel or discover they are being used or manipulated. Pawns often emerge later as targets

Target Allies

- Individuals who side with the targets typically believe the abuse is morally wrong or have long-standing friendships with targets

Target Allies

- Neutral bystanders are often considered *secondary* targets because although they were not targeted, their “perceptions, fears and expectations are changed as a result of being vicariously exposed to violence”

Target Allies

- Over time others may join the target's side of the conflict, especially if they shift from being followers, patrons, or pawns to being targets.

Neutral or Silent Bystanders

- Neutral or silent bystanders want to stay out of the conflict because they see targets experiences of being “undermined, disenfranchised, and emasculated” by the bullies and their allies
- The silent onlookers take a Switzerland-type perspective of their role in the conflict.
- They strive to be uninvolved non-combatants.

Why don't cyberbystanders intervene?

(Ellen Kraft, Ph.D.; krafte@stockton.edu)

- Diffusion of responsibility among the crowd
- Disengaged, or enjoy watching the incident
- Afraid of becoming the next victim
- Fear losing technology privileges
- Don't think adults involved will do anything about the situation
- Don't recognize that bullying has occurred
- Bystanders don't see themselves as participants

Cyberbystanders' interventions: What works?

(Ellen Kraft, Ph.D.; krafte@stockton.edu)

- Consider offline intervention to avoid becoming a target by intervening online
- Show disapproval with a simple statement rather than engaging further discussion
- Support, even befriend the target; it gives strength and confidence to respond well.
- Tell a friend who tries to cyberbully to stop
- Refuse to pass along cyberbullying messages

Cyberbystanders' interventions: What works?

(Ellen Kraft, Ph.D.; krafte@stockton.edu)

- Block people online who bully
- Tell involved adults
- Report messages to moderators
- Add moderators to online groups
- Contact the site admins to remove material

These are great intentions...

- ...now, how to make people likely to go along with them via your action plan at school?

Remember

You're implementing an action plan that:

Focuses on persuading, not (only) informing

Is an imposition on its oft-bystanding targets;
they're probably Ok with the status quo
as they understand it.

How many of you are sitting with friends, or people you know and like?

People like Homophily

- A group's cultural values are shared ideas about what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, important or unimportant. They supply the standards we use to evaluate our own and others' actions.
- Values also tempt us to hide within that group and impose judgments on 'outsiders'.

Cultural Values

- **Identity meaning function:** values remind me who I am in this world
- **Explanatory function:** values are implicitly understood; we surmise them about strangers to explain - and judge - their actions.
- **Adaptational function:** values can and do change in response to changing circumstances.
- **Boundary-regulation function:** values distinguish our ingroups from our outgroups

Four levels of communication competence:

- Unconscious Incompetence
- Conscious Incompetence
- Conscious Competence
- Unconscious Competence

Motivation is most important to improved competence.

Without motive to be involved, skill level is unimportant.

Why are you here? What stories or experiences convinced you to spend some of your life on this? How will your action plan compel people to encounter and engage similar stories?

Knowledge of several types is important to competence

- People knowledge
- Self-Knowledge (knowing your own strengths, weaknesses, and how you may be perceived as a communicator).
- Knowledge about others (what motivates thoughts, beliefs, and actions).
- Knowing the relevant communication codes

Attitudes associated with competence:

- Tolerance for Ambiguity
- Empathy: The capacity to imagine oneself in another's role
- Nonjudgmentality: Distinguish between
 - Describing
 - Interpreting
 - Evaluating

Tell me something about this...



Key Skills to Accomplish ANY Action Planning Strategies and Tactics

- **Can meet new situations with mindfulness (new thinking categories)**
- **Can respond to cultural others in non-evaluative ways**
- **Can shift your frame of reference - flexibility**
- **Can show respect and positive regard others will recognize as such**
- **Can adapt appropriately to particular situations**
- **Can convey empathy verbally and nonverbally**
- **Can engage in creative and systems-level thinking**

Which communication skills do you note in this target's response to cyberbullying?

<http://jezebel.com/5946643/reddit-users-attempt-to-shame-sikh-woman-get-righteously-schooled>

- **Standing up to cyberbullying as a bystander (or a target) takes courage and a sense of social responsibility.**
- **Luckily, those are central US cultural values, so lots of people have our backs when we do so.**

Now...

What will you planners set up at your school to make it easier for cyberbullying targets, bystanders, authorities (school and cell- and Internet-service providers) and bullies themselves to do the right things for the situation?