



Cyberbullying

Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty

Students Handouts and
Supporting Materials for Teachers

Elementary Level Lesson: Building a Foundation for Safe and Kind Online Communication

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Resources for Educators: "Feathers" Stories

There are many versions of the "Feathers" story, which uses the imagery of feathers scattered by the wind as a metaphor for the dangers of gossip and the irretrievable nature of unkind words that have been dispersed in the community. The original story has been attributed to the Hasidic Rabbi, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, but can be found in the folklore of various faith traditions as well as in literature on peace education and conflict resolution. Below is one version of the story as well as additional sources that are all appropriate for young children.

The Chicken Story — A Tale of Regret

Once there was a foolish woman in a small village, who spread some gossip about another woman in the village. Before long the foolish woman began to feel remorse about what she had done, so she went to the wise man of the village to ask him what she could do to make things right. The wise man listened carefully to her story, thought for a moment, and then told her to go to the market and buy a chicken. On the way home from the market she was to pluck that chicken letting the feathers fall along the path. The next day she was to come back and see the wise man again.

The foolish woman did as the wise man suggested. She bought a chicken and plucked it on the way home. When she came to him the next day she told him that she had done what he asked her to do. The wise man said to her, "Now, I want you to go home today by the same road you took yesterday, and pick up every single feather you dropped along the path." The woman was distraught, and protested that there was absolutely no way she could find and pick up all those feathers. The wind would have surely blown them everywhere!

The wise man quietly responded, "You are correct...and you see, just as you can never retrieve all those feathers, there is no way you can ever restore the reputation of the woman whom you harmed with your words."

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Additional Sources of "Feathers" Stories

- Cyberbullying: Feathers in the Wind (video version)
NetSmartz, <http://www.netsmartz.org/resources/reallife.htm>
- Feathers: A Jewish Tale from Eastern Europe by Heather Forest (picture book version)
August House Publishers, Inc., 2005, 32pp, ISBN: 0874837553
- Feathers in the Wind and Other Jewish Tales by Susan Stone (audio version)
2001, ASIN: B00005M0U6
- Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling, and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment, Vol. 1 by Ed Brody et al. (eds.) (short story version)
New Society Publishers, 2002, 296pp, ISBN: 0865714479
- Wisdom Tales From Around the World by Heather Forest (short story version)
August House Publishers, Inc., 1996, 156pp, ISBN: 0874834791
- Yettele's Feathers by Joan Rothenberg (picture book version)
Hyperion Books for Children, 1995, 32pp, ISBN: 0786800976

Emoticons

- :-) happy
- :(sad
- :'(upset (crying)
- :-|| mad
- :-@ furious (screaming)
- :-D laughing
- =:O frightened
- :-/ confused
- :-o surprised
- >O hurt (ouch!)

How to Handle Hurtful Messages

These tips can help you to make good choices when faced with hurtful online messages.

1. Never talk to people you don't know online.

2. If you receive a bullying message:

- ↪ Do not answer, but save it .
- ↪ Sign off of the computer right away.
- ↪ Tell a grown-up about the message.



3. If you receive a hurtful message from a friend or classmate:



- ☆ Think before answering. Sometimes it is better to share your feelings face-to-face.
- ☆ If you answer online, be careful with your words. Remember that you can't take them back.
- ☆ Keep the message private. Never pass around messages that might hurt others.

How to Handle Hurtful Messages

Online bullying and unfriendly messages can make us feel sad, angry, ashamed, and confused about how to respond. The following tips will help you to make positive choices when faced with online bullying and other hurtful messages.

1. Never respond to messages from people you don't know.
2. If you receive a bullying or threatening message from anyone:

✎ Do not respond, but save 📁 or print it 🖨.

✎ After you save the message, sign off of the Web site, chat room or instant messaging area right away.

✎ Then tell a trusted adult (such as a parent or teacher) about the message.

★ An adult can help you to block the addresses of people who are not friends and who are sending hurtful messages.

★ A trusted adult will also report online bullying to others if needed, such as the school principal, the bully's parents or the police.

3. If you receive an angry or hurtful message from a friend or schoolmate:



★ Think carefully before responding. Decide if it would be better to respond face-to-face rather than online.

★ If you decide to respond online, take a few minutes to think about and organize your message before sending. Remember that your message can't be taken back once sent, and that it can be saved or forwarded to others. Don't write anything that you may be sorry for later.

★ Remember that the person reading the message can't see or hear you. Use signs like :- (for sad or :-/ for confused to make your emotions clear.

★ Don't write words in all capitals (it's like shouting) or use your words in ways that carry anger.

★ Keep the message private and don't forward to others. If you need advice from a friend about how to handle a tough situation, talk in person. Never pass around messages that might hurt or embarrass others.



Scenarios: Online Bullying and Social Aggression

- 1.** You find out about a Web site created to make fun of you. It includes embarrassing photos and nasty comments about your family because they are from Mexico and speak English with an accent. It also includes your e-mail address and encourages visitors to send mean messages to you. How do you respond?
- 2.** You have been receiving hurtful e-mails for the past few weeks from an address you don't recognize. At first they just include insults about being fat, so you ignore them. But now they are coming more often and include threats that make you feel unsafe. How do you respond?
- 3.** Your parents agree to hold your birthday party at your favorite laser tag place, but because of the expense you are only allowed to invite three friends. One of your classmates is angry that he is not included and posts a mean message about you on his online journal. Other kids at school spread the posting around and it finally lands in your inbox. How do you respond?
- 4.** A group of girls have created a private chat room, where they talk about what they're going to wear to school and make social plans for the weekends. You try to join, but are rejected. When you IM a friend to ask why you have been excluded, she replies that some of the girls think you're weird because of the thick glasses you wear. How do you respond?
- 5.** You are IMing one evening with a friend, who asks you what you think of a classmate. At first you don't reply, but she keeps asking, writing things like, "Isn't she stuck up?" You finally write back that you agree and then get an angry message from the classmate, who has been secretly sitting beside your friend the whole time. How do you respond?

6. You get an e-mail from an unknown sender with an embarrassing photo of you. You can tell that the picture was taken during recess when you were trying out some silly dance moves, but it has been changed to make you look ridiculous. A classmate tells you the name of an older student who he says took the picture with a cell phone. How do you respond?

7. After telling your friend a personal secret and making her swear not to tell anyone, you read about your secret in another classmate's online journal. How do you respond?

8. You get an angry e-mail from a friend who accuses you of spreading rumors about him. You deny it and he forwards messages from your account, saying that he is poor, dirty and wears the same clothes every day. You know that you never sent the messages and figure that someone must have stolen your password and pretended to be you. How do you respond?

9. You have a disagreement with a teammate at practice, and the coach ends up benching your teammate for the next game. That night you receive furious IMs from the teammate, calling you names and telling you that you've ruined everything. At first you don't reply, but the messages keep coming and get more and more angry. How do you respond?

How Would You Respond?

