**Trolling and Cyberbullying – A Self-Defense Training**

A 50-minute high school-level teaching module  
Version 1.0

A project by the Intergalactic Defenders of the Digital Universe

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This is intended to be a living document. Feedback, suggestions, and reports of your experience using these materials are welcome and encouraged. Please contact us at

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**Desired learning outcomes**

This module does not aim at fostering analysis of the social/psychological impacts of the internet and does not aim at an analysis of related laws.

Desired outcomes:

* Be able to identify different forms of cyberbullying.
* Develop strategies to prevent cyberbullying.
* Develop strategies to counteract cyberbullying.
* Be able to promote understanding of these issues among peers.

**Lesson materials**

**Introductory discussion lead by the instructor (10 minutes.)**

* What social media do you use? [Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Vine, YouTube…]
* Can you think of a case when social media interactions made your day?
* Can you think of a case when somebody was exposed to annoying posts or humiliated on social media?
* **Trolling** is done to draw entertainment from interactions with the victim and from the victim's distress. Trolls crave big reactions.
* The troll creates disruptions concerning persons the troll does not know.
* Some people engage in trolling because of underlying psychological disorders.
* A person’s bad mood can make them more likely to troll others on a particular day.
* The victim needs to choose the right strategy of dealing with the trolls or ignoring them, because law enforcement will often not get involved.
* **Cyberbullying** is aimed at hurting the victim through personal attacks online.
* Revenge porn -- posting intimate pictures/videos of a victim in order to shame them and to cause loss of respect among the peers -- is an extreme form of cyberbullying.
* Cyberbullying is a violation of the rules of the social platform and may be a crime. It should be reported to the social platform and to authorities.
* **Doxing** means exposing personal information of the victim (address, email, telephone, …), which may expose the victim to bullying in the real world.

**Video 1.**   
While watching, think about these issues:

* How to avoid making comments which can be perceived as cyberbullying? (Think before you post)
* How to help somebody who has been cyberbullied? (Talk to them; have lunch together,...)

“Teens talk on cyberbullying” (5:14) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adV0rxAdJV8>

**Video 2. (optional)**

While watching, think about these issues:

* What kinds of online behaviors are not a joke? (threats, abuse, doxing, …)
* Who is helping this victim of cyberbullying? (authorities/police, family, …)

“Internet trolls ruined my life” (1:58) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_MWX7I3VDA>

**VIdeo 3. (optional)**

While watching, think about these issues:

* What is sexting?
* Can we be sure our messages/posts are private and will remain private?
* Does a person who made an error of judgment deserve abuse?

“Ally's Story: Second Thoughts on Sexting” (2:36) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsfcN2Hi_ts>

Discussion/answers:

**Small group discussions (20 minutes.)**[ The class is divided into groups of 4-5 students. Each group receives the same set of questions to discuss/answer. Each group selects a secretary who keeps track of time and notes who volunteered

to present conclusions to the entire class. The following is distributed or displayed on a screen for everybody to see.]

**Index card 1.** (About 3 minutes.)

Front:

Example. A student has a pacemaker and a scar from the surgery visible while at the swimming pool. Somebody posted a picture captioned “There is a cyborg in our school”.

Back:

What different reactions would you expect from your friends?   
Would they depend on how well your friends know the subject of the post?  
Would they depend on how much they like the subject of the post?

Would they depend on their relation to the author of the post?

**Index card 2.** (About 3 minutes.)

Front:

Example. An ex-girlfriend in a post tells about the depression of her “lazy bum ex-boyfriend”.

Back:

What reaction would you expect from the students in your school?

**Index card 3.** (About 3 minutes.)

Front:

Example. A grieving family posts a memorial for a family member who passed away. People post false, inappropriate, hurtful messages.

Back:

Could this be prevented?   
How could social media users react?

**Index card 4.** (About 2 minutes.)

Front:

Example: In a post, somebody tells you that your classmate’s parents are divorcing.

Back:

What would you say to the victim?

**Index card 5.** (About 2 minutes.)

Front:

Example: Someone posts a picture of another person taken secretly in the bathroom.

Back:

Who should be notified about this incident? Who should notify them?

**Index card 6.** (About 2 minutes, optional)

Front:

Example: Somebody snapped a picture of your classmate picking their nose, and posted it.

Back:

What would you say to the victim?

**Index card 7.** (About 5 minutes.)

Front:

Imagine that your friend sometimes makes posts which have unintended harmful consequences, and she regrets that.

Back:

When your friend asks you for advice, what advice would you give?

**Presentations of conclusions and further discussion lead by the instructor**

**(20 minutes.)**

* Five ways to stop cyberbullying (1:16) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zASfp7_-lhg>
* How to beat cyberbullies: (5:07) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jwu_7IqWh8Y&t=219s>
* Propose strategies to avoid being accidentally a troll/cyberbully.
  + Before you post a comment about another person/group, ask yourself if you would tell the person(s) **exactly** the same thing in a face-to-face conversation in a public setting. Also ask yourself if you would talk the same way to a friend or person you respect. Does your comment contain anything of violent or sexual nature?
  + Before you post a comment about another person/group, ask yourself how you would feel if you received this comment yourself.
  + We have the power to recognize negativity and its consequences. Recognize stereotypes and slurs and do not propagate them.
  + It is a human tendency to join others in their actions but we can recognize trolling/cyberbullying and do not contribute to “pileups” – amplifications/liking of the initial post.
* Propose strategies to reduce your risk of being cyberbullied.
  + Control/limit access to your posts on the social media platform.
  + Do not post deeply personal thoughts. Consider other means of communication to confide in, and confide only in close/trusted/tried friend(s).
* Propose strategies to counteract trolling/cyberbullying of others.
  + If you know the victim, reach out through various channels with your support.
  + Report it to the platform.
  + Notify a trusted adult and get advice.
* Propose strategies to counteract trolling/cyberbullying aimed at you.
  + Do not respond to annoying/hurtful posts aimed at you.
  + Talk to an adult (parent, teacher, coach, …) to get advice.

**Possible assignments**

[The assignments are designed to reinforce strategies from the class and to have some social impact.]  
  
Discuss these issues with a friend who is not in this class, without asking any intrusive questions, and write a short report on the outcomes, without any identifying information about the person you talked to.

If you are a Teacher Candidate, propose discussing this topic to your supervising teacher. If approved, prepare an appropriate modification of this module and a lesson plan.