



Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying

Essential Question: How does online cruelty affect the people involved?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: Students learn about the dynamics of online cruelty and how it affects all of the people involved. They begin by exploring a scenario from the TV show *Friday Night Lights* in which a teen girl creates a hate website about another girl. Students take the perspective of different characters and brainstorm alternative decisions each character could have made. Finally, students discuss what actions they can take when they encounter online cruelty in their own lives, including how to be an upstander. (Note: The term *online cruelty* encompasses what is often referred to as “cyberbullying,” but it covers a broader range of behaviors and may speak more effectively to teens than the term *cyberbullying*. We use the term *online cruelty* throughout this lesson.)

objectives

Students will:

- Articulate why it’s important to consider the perspectives of others in online (and offline) communities
- Consider the motivations and feelings of all the parties involved in an incident of online cruelty
- Draw conclusions about how they should respond when someone is the target of online cruelty

Materials and Preparation

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Materials

- **Taking Perspectives Student Handout**
- **Taking Perspectives Student Handout – Teacher Version**
- **Friday Night Lights Video Clips**

Preparation

- Copy the **Taking Perspectives Student Handout**, one for each of six groups (you may also distribute one per student).
- Preview the **Friday Night Lights Video Clips**, and set up to be viewed by the class. (Note: This video portrays a cyberbullying situation. They include some sexual references, including “whore” and “slut,” and the term “jackass” is used once. If you do not feel comfortable showing this material, describe the scenario and have your class complete the handout based on your description. The use of these clips does not constitute an endorsement of the show.)

Parent Resources

- Send parents the **Cyberbullying Parent Tip Sheet – High School**

Differentiated Instruction

For visual learners, have students draw an image of a character from *Friday Night Lights* showing the character’s feelings or traits.



Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying

Key Vocabulary

- **Perspective:** The view or outlook of someone, based on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and background
- **Target:** A person who is the object of an intentional action
- **Offender:** A person who intentionally commits acts to hurt or damage someone
- **Bystander:** A person who passively stands by and observes without getting involved
- **Upstander:** A person who supports and stands up for someone else

teaching plans

Introduce (5 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary word **perspective**. Explain to students that in any situation, the people involved generally hold different perspectives, which influence the way they feel about the situation and how they react to it. Students may be familiar with the alternate term *point of view*, which is often used in relation to literature.

ASK *Have you ever had a conversation with someone when you had a different point of view? What happened? How did you feel?* (Students might note that they may not have realized someone had a different point of view or felt differently about something. Or that hearing a different point of view from another person might be uncomfortable, as we like people to have the same opinions as us. But it could help them understand the other person's perspective better than before, which can strengthen the relationship or their understanding of the situation.)

ASK *Why is it important to understand someone else's perspective?* (Understanding someone else's perspective can help us understand how others feel, help us have empathy for them, and help clear up misunderstandings.)

EXPLAIN to students that they will be viewing some video clips that show how different characters react or think about an incident of online cruelty (cyberbullying).

Teach 1: Introduce Characters (10 minutes)

INTRODUCE the class to the TV show *Friday Night Lights*. Explain to the class that the show takes place at Dillon High School, in a fictional small town in Texas, where much of the activity revolves around the school's football team, the Panthers.

Introduce the class to each of the characters in this story. Write their names on the board.

- **Lyla:** Lyla is head of the cheerleading team at Dillon High School. Her boyfriend was the football team's quarterback. Recently, she cheated on her boyfriend with another football player named Tim. Her classmates participated in a website that slams Lyla for her behavior.
- **Brittany:** Brittany is Lyla's alternate on the cheerleading team. She set up a website where she and others at school slam Lyla.
- **Tim:** Tim is a player on the football team. He secretly dated Lyla while she was still seeing the team's quarterback, who was his friend.



Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying

- **Tami:** Tami is the school's guidance counselor. She often has to intervene in interpersonal conflicts at the school.
- **Ben:** Ben is Brittany's father.
- **Buddy:** Buddy is Lyla's father and a successful car dealer in the town of Dillon.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary words **target**, **offender**, **bystander**, and **upstander**, and write them on the board. Tell students that they will be figuring out who is playing these roles in the situation they'll view on *Friday Night Lights*.

Teach 2: Taking Perspectives (25 minutes)

ARRANGE students into six groups, and assign each group one of the six characters.

DISTRIBUTE the **Taking Perspectives Student Handout**, one per group (or student).

WATCH the *Friday Night Lights Video Clips*.

INVITE each group to complete their student handout, writing their answers on the back of the handout or on blank paper (each group answers a different set of questions about their assigned character). Have them note any differences in perspectives among members of their group.

ENCOURAGE volunteers from each group to share their responses on the handout with the class. Use the **Taking Perspectives Student Handout – Teacher Version** for guidance with answers.

If there's time, **DISCUSS** some or all of the following questions with the class, using them to spark a larger conversation about online cruelty and its consequences. You can also have students discuss in groups.

- *Are actions in an online community (like the slurs on the website) different than actions taken offline (like the notes left on Lyla's locker at the school)? Why, or why not? (Help students discuss the differences between online and offline cruelty. Online actions can spread easily, can be seen by large audiences, are persistent, and hard to control. The target can feel more powerless than if the situation is a face-to-face encounter or confined to school.)*
- *How are anonymous actions – like posting on a website or leaving a note – different from things done face-to-face? (You may have to define the word *anonymous* as “without any name or identifying information.” Students should discuss how anonymity makes people act in ways they wouldn't in person. People can hide behind anonymity. Participants in an a situation of online cruelty may act differently if they put themselves in the shoes of the target and take the target's perspective about how they would be affected.)*
- *Imagine you were a bystander at this school, watching this situation unfold. What do you think you would have done? Do bystanders have a responsibility to do anything? (Discuss with students their responsibilities as digital citizens. Students should be aware that even when they are not directly involved in incidents of online cruelty, they play a role and are accountable for their actions. Most often, they will face a choice between becoming upstanders or remaining bystanders. Encourage students to explain how the choice they make can affect the situation as a whole.)*



Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying

BRAINSTORM with the class ways they can be upstanders when it comes to online cruelty. Write answers on the board.

ASK *How can upstanders help those who face online cruelty? How can they help defuse online cruelty before it escalates?* Sample responses:

- **De-escalate when possible.** If you have good standing with the offender and are comfortable, politely tell the offender to back off.
- **Point out the offender’s motivation to the target.** Comfort the target by explaining that many offenders act this way in order to gain control, power, or status.
- **Tell the target you’re there for them.** Just by offering a helping hand, you let a target know he or she is not alone and that you’re not okay with what’s happening.
- **Help the target.** Help the target find friends and school leaders who can help de-escalate the situation.

(Note: If a student says that an upstander should retaliate, be violent or hateful, or use online cruelty towards the offender, explain why this is not a good solution. It can escalate the situation and make it worse.)

Wrap Up and Assess (5 minutes)

Use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives. You could begin by having students write responses individually, and then share their responses in small groups or as a class.

- *What should you think about before you post anything about another person online, in an instant message, text, or any other kind of digital message?* (Students should recognize the importance of considering other people’s perspectives, respecting other people’s feelings, and possible outcomes of their actions.)
- *Someone posts a picture of your friend with some nasty comments, and other kids make fun of him or her. What would a bystander do in this situation? What would an upstander do? What would you do?* (Students should understand that they are responsible for their actions as members of an online community, and that they can make the important decision to be an upstander rather than a bystander.)



Extension Activity

In groups, students write a segment of a television script that includes at least two of the characters from *Friday Night Lights* to demonstrate how at least one of the characters could have made a different choice (for example, moving from bystander to upstander). They can write this by hand, on a word processor, the class blog, or on a website where they can view each other’s scripts. (If your students are not familiar with the format of scriptwriting, explain that they need to write the characters’ names followed by the lines they speak. They can also describe the scene or other actions of the characters in brackets.)

 If your students have Internet access, you can alter this activity by having them use the free online tool Xtranormal (www.xtranormal.com) to make an animated movie with characters just by typing in their script.



Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying



Homework

Have students interview a parent, older sibling, or other adult relative about bullying, harassment, or cruelty that they or someone they knew experienced when they were in high school. Sample questions:

- *What happened? How did you (or the person you knew) feel?*
- *What did you do in response? What do you wish you had done?*
- *What did others do in response? What do you wish they had done?*

Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

1. Creativity and Innovation

- b. create original works as a means of personal or group expression

2. Communication and Collaboration

- a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media
- d. contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems

3. Research and Information Literacy

- b. locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media

4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

- a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation
- b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project
- d. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

5. Digital Citizenship

- a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
- b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity
- c. demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning



Taking Perspectives

Name(s) _____

Class _____

Date _____

Directions

After watching the *Friday Night Lights* video clips, take the perspective of one of the characters. First, determine what role your character plays in the situation: **target**, **offender**, **bystander**, or **upstander**. Then use the character quotation and the questions as a guide to help you understand your character’s perspective. For each question, write a paragraph response on the back of this sheet or on blank paper.

1. Lyla: *“Let them say what they are going to say. And I’ll just tough it out.”* Role _____

- What do you think motivates Lyla to visit the website? How do you think she feels when she sees the site? When she’s taunted at school?
- From Lyla’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?

2. Brittany: *“Is it wrong that I’m enjoying this?”* Role _____

- What do you think motivates Brittany to create the website? How do you think she felt when she created it?
- From Brittany’s perspective, what outcomes did she expect the website to have?

3. Tim: *“Let ‘em talk, Lyla. I don’t care.”* Role _____

- What do you think motivates Tim to sit down with Lyla in the school cafeteria? How do you think he feels when she tells him he can’t help?
- From Tim’s perspective, what is the impact of the website?

4. Tami: *“What’s the matter? Well, that’s just bush league.”* Role _____

- What do you think motivates Tami to speak with Lyla? How do you think she felt when she found out about the situation?
- From Tami’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?

5. Ben: *“I felt like I owed you an apology in person.
Lyla doesn’t deserve this, no matter what she did.”* Role _____

- What do you think motivates Ben to speak with Buddy about the website? How do you think Ben felt when he talked with Buddy?
- From Ben’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?

6. Buddy: *“Stuff on the Internet? What are you talking about?”* Role _____

- What do you think motivates Buddy to visit the website? How do you think it made him feel when he saw it?
- From Buddy’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?



Taking Perspectives

Name(s)

Class

Date

Directions

After watching the *Friday Night Lights* video clips, take the perspective of one of the characters. First, determine what role your character plays in the situation: **target**, **offender**, **bystander**, or **upstander**. Then use the character quotation and the questions as a guide to help you understand your character’s perspective. For each question, write a paragraph response on the back of this sheet or on blank paper.

1. Lyla: *“Let them say what they are going to say. And I’ll just tough it out.”* **Role: target**

- *What do you think motivates Lyla to visit the website? How do you think she feels when she sees the site? When she’s taunted at school?*

(We are not sure why Lyla visits the site, but she probably wanted to see what was being said about her. The site made Lyla upset, as she is seen crying in the clip. Being taunted at school upsets Lyla, as she is shown wanting to quit the cheerleading team and sitting alone at lunch.)

- *From Lyla’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?*
(Lyla appears humiliated and feels like her reputation is ruined. She may feel a lack of control about what’s being said by everyone at school, and that she can’t get away from it or stop it. She might feel ashamed because she doesn’t tell her dad about it and avoids telling Tami until Tami confronts her.)

2. Brittany: *“Is it wrong that I’m enjoying this?”* **Role: offender**

- *What do you think motivates Brittany to create the website? How do you think she felt when she created it?*
(Although we aren’t sure exactly what motivates Brittany to make the website, it might be because she is jealous of Lyla, or she wants to damage Lyla’s reputation and social status. Or perhaps she likes Tim or Lyla’s boyfriend. But we do know Brittany’s intention is to hurt Lyla.)

- *From Brittany’s perspective, what outcomes did she expect the website to have?*
(By creating a hate website where anyone can “slam” Lyla, it seems Brittany is trying to hurt Lyla on a public scale and ruin her reputation.)

3. Tim: *“Let ‘em talk, Lyla. I don’t care.”* **Role: bystander**

- *What do you think motivates Tim to sit down with Lyla in the school cafeteria? How do you think he feels when she tells him he can’t help?*

(Tim likely feels guilty about what’s happening to Lyla because he played a part in their relationship. He might feel somewhat at fault, powerless, and angry that he’s not able to help her.)

- *From Tim’s perspective, what is the impact of the website?*
(Tim might be worried about the impact of the site on Lyla and her reputation. He might also be concerned how this situation will affect his relationship with Lyla’s boyfriend on the football team. Additionally, Tim might be worried about the website harming his reputation.)



Taking Perspectives

4. Tami: *“What’s the matter? Well, that’s just bush league.”*

Role: upstander

- *What do you think motivates Tami to speak with Lyla? How do you think she felt when she found out about the situation?*

(As a guidance counselor, Tami is responsible for helping students with their problems and promoting the well-being of students. Tami was probably very concerned about the situation because it involves many students at school – and even parents – and affects the school’s climate and community.)

- *From Tami’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?*

(Tami is likely concerned about the effects of the website on Lyla. Tami might also be worried about law enforcement getting involved, or negative publicity for the school.)

5. Ben: *“I felt like I owed you an apology in person.*

Lyla doesn’t deserve this, no matter what she did.”

Role: bystander

(could also be considered an **upstander** for telling Buddy)

- *What do you think motivates Ben to speak with Buddy about the website? How do you think Ben felt when he talked with Buddy?*

(Ben said that he was apologizing on behalf of his daughter, Brittany. Perhaps Ben is embarrassed at his daughter’s behavior, and feels an obligation to tell Buddy before he finds out another way.)

- *From Ben’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?*

(Ben might be embarrassed at Brittany’s actions and worried about the effect on Lyla, her family, and their reputation.)

6. Buddy: *“Stuff on the Internet?*

What are you talking about?”

Role: bystander

(Buddy is a bystander because although he knows about the site, he does not approach Lyla or try to help her.)

- *What do you think motivates Buddy to visit the website? How do you think it made him feel when he saw it?*

(Buddy was probably curious to know how bad the website was and to determine the possible effects on Lyla. From Buddy’s reaction to the clip, he was upset about the online cruelty towards his daughter. But considering that he didn’t approach Lyla about it, he may have felt powerless to help her, embarrassed to talk to her, or uncertain about what to do.)

- *From Buddy’s perspective, what are the possible consequences of the website?*

(Buddy is likely concerned about the effect the site has on Lyla’s emotional well-being, reputation, and potentially on his family’s reputation, as he’s a well-known car dealer in town.)



Lesson Assessment

Name

Class

Date

1. Someone’s “perspective” is their outlook, based on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and background. What is another way to say “perspective”?

- a) Point of view
- b) Stereotype
- c) Morals
- d) Race

2. Read the following story. Then use the chart to label the role that each person plays.

Raul is captain of the hockey team. His girlfriend dumps him and starts dating his teammate, Nick. Raul feels that Nick “stole” his girlfriend, and decides to get back at him. Raul starts a website where he uploads photos of Nick that show him spray-painting a park bench, which is illegal. Soon, everybody at school knows about Raul’s website. Raul’s teammate, Andrew, tells him that he should take it down because it’s bad for Nick and the whole team.

Who is the target ?	
Who is the upstander ?	
Who is the offender ?	

3. Read the following scenario and then choose the best answer.

Avery and Alannah were competing for the last spot on the soccer team. On the final day of tryouts, Avery stole Alannah’s cleats so she couldn’t play. Avery ended up getting picked for the team. To get back at Avery, Alannah started a webpage dedicated to hurting Avery.

True or false: This is NOT an example of cyberbullying.

- a) True
- b) False



Lesson Assessment

1. Someone’s “perspective” is their outlook, based on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and background. What is another way to say “perspective”?

- a) Point of view
- b) Stereotype
- c) Morals
- d) Race

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**. Understanding that everyone has a different **point of view**, or perspective, might help explain why they act the way they do.

2. Read the following story. Then use the chart to label the role that each person plays.

Raul is captain of the hockey team. His girlfriend dumps him and starts dating his teammate, Nick. Raul feels that Nick “stole” his girlfriend, and decides to get back at him. Raul starts a website where he uploads photos of Nick that show him spray-painting a park bench, which is illegal. Soon, everybody at school knows about Raul’s website. Raul’s teammate, Andrew, tells him that he should take it down because it’s bad for Nick and the whole team.

Answer feedback

Who is the target ?	b) Nick
Who is the upstander ?	c) Andrew
Who is the offender ?	a) Raul

3. Read the following scenario and then choose the best answer.

Avery and Alannah were competing for the last spot on the soccer team. On the final day of tryouts, Avery stole Alannah’s cleats so she couldn’t play. Avery ended up getting picked for the team. To get back at Avery, Alannah started a webpage dedicated to hurting Avery.

True or false: This is NOT an example of cyberbullying.

- a) True
- b) False**

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **b, False**. It is never okay to use the Internet to intentionally hurt someone. If someone upsets you, “getting back at them” will only make the situation worse.



Common Sense on Cyberbullying

Some Facts

- Approximately 20 percent of kids ages 10 to 18 say they have been cyberbullied sometime in their life (Cyberbullying Research Center, Hinduja and Patchin, 2010)
- About one in five teens ages 11 to 18 have admitted to cyberbullying others (Cyberbullying Research Center, Hinduja and Patchin, 2009)
- Teens ages 14 to 17 experience the most instances of online harassment and bullying (Pew Internet and American Life, 2007)

What's the Issue?

Cyberbullying is the use of digital media tools, such as the Internet and cell phones, to deliberately humiliate and harass others, oftentimes repeatedly. Though most teens do not do this, those who do are often motivated by a desire for power, status, and attention – and their targets are often people they are competing with for social standing. Cyberbullies often take advantage of the Web's anonymity to antagonize someone without being recognized.

Cyberbullying can take a variety of forms, such as harassing someone, impersonating someone, spreading rumors, or forwarding embarrassing information about a person. A bully's mean-spirited comments can spread widely through instant messaging (IM), phone texting, and by posts on social networking sites. This can happen rapidly, with little time for teens to cool down between responses. And it can happen anytime – at school or at home – and oftentimes it involves large groups of teens.

Why It Matters

Cyberbullying is similar to face-to-face bullying, but online tools magnify the hurt, humiliation, and social drama in a very public way. Whether it's creating a fake Facebook or MySpace page to impersonate a fellow student, repeatedly sending hurtful text messages and images, or spreading rumors or posting cruel comments on the Internet, cyberbullying can result in severe emotional and even physical harm.

And though anyone can spot bullying behavior in the real world, it's much more difficult to detect it in the online world. Sometimes an entire social circle will get involved, and then it becomes harder for an individual teen to disengage from it. In fact, whole groups of teens may be actively or passively participating, and the target can feel that it is impossible to get away from the bullies. In addition, hurtful information posted on the Internet is extremely difficult to remove, and millions of people can see it.

The following tips can help you recognize the warning signs of cyberbullying and serve as a guide for talking to your teens about preventing it.



Common Sense on Cyberbullying

common sense says

- **Recognize context.** Cyberbullying is often not thought of as “cyberbullying” to the teens involved. Even though an incident has a history, a story, and nuance, rather than referring to it as “cyberbullying,” try the words “digital cruelty,” “abuse,” or “being mean” online.
- **Help teens understand when behavior crosses the line.** Help your teen tune into his or her own feelings. If they feel emotionally or physically scared, it’s time to get help.
- **Encourage empathy.** Help teens understand the detrimental impact of cyberbullying on people who are targeted, now and later in life. Encourage them to listen to targets and to become their allies.
- **Be realistic.** Teens have their own social dynamics that often don’t include parents, so helping them directly may be difficult. Encourage teens to find friends or other trusted adults to help them through the situation, even if it’s not you. Websites are often slow to respond, if they respond at all, but reporting an incident to a website administrator can be an empowering step.
- **Remember that your teen might be the bully.** Teens can take different roles in cyberbullying at different times. A teen who is cyberbullied might turn around and cyberbully someone else to feel powerful again. Ask questions to understand what role or roles your teens are playing.
- **Tell them to disengage.** Encourage your teens to ignore and block the bully, and even log off the computer for a while. Point out that cyberbullies are often just looking for attention and status, so don’t let them know that their efforts have worked.

Families Can Talk About It

- *You seem down. What’s going on at school? Is anything upsetting happening online?*
- *I’m here for you and so are your friends. Talk to me anytime.*
- *Are there any teachers at school who have dealt with these kinds of situations before? I think you should tell one of them about what’s been happening.*
- *Bullies want attention, power, and status, which explains why they need to cause drama.*
- *I saw a news story about a teen who was bullied online. What would you do in that situation?*