



What are the definitions & modalities of cyberbullying?

THIS WILL HELP YOU:

1. Identify the different modalities of cyberbullying;
2. Recognise who cyberbullies, bystanders and recipients are;
3. Identify the differences between cyberbullying and bullying; and
4. Understand what cyberbullying looks like in higher education.

*You can learn how to prevent and respond to cyberbullying by reading our **How To** fact sheet.*

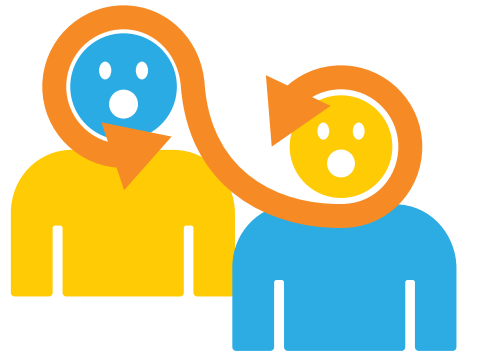
WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying (also called online bullying, online harassment or cyberstalking) can be defined as intentional, repeated and aggressive online exchanges that can happen anytime, anywhere. Often, cyberbullying represents a power imbalance where the recipient has difficulty resisting these exchanges. Cyberbullying can include hurtful moving or still images and words. At times, cyberbullying involves direct messages between two people. At other times, it involves content that is shared with larger audiences. Although some people misunderstand cyberbullying acts as entertaining pranks, they can have very serious repercussions, especially for those directly involved. People who are involved in cyberbullying can be defined as cyberbullies, bystanders, or recipients (victims).

1. WHAT ARE THE MODALITIES OF CYBERBULLYING?

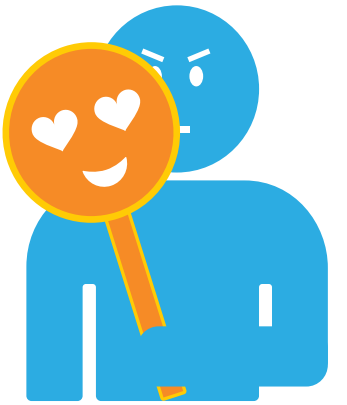
DESCRIBING CYBERBULLYING

Some people refer to cyberbullying as online stalking or harassment, but there are other qualities to cyberbullying that have been described in research. This section lists some of the more common modalities to help you understand cyberbullying.



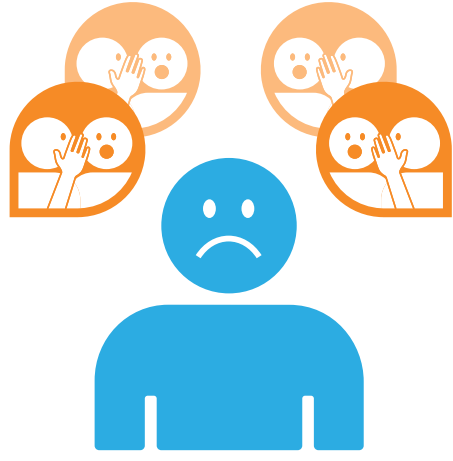
MALICIOUS FACE-SWAPPING

Also called morphing, face swapping occurs when images of a person that have been morphed or swapped with another body (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2018).



CATFISHING

Deceiving people into emotional relationships by devising fictitious online identities (Chisholm, 2014, p.79).



DENIGRATION

Spreading rumours online to harm reputations or relationships (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).



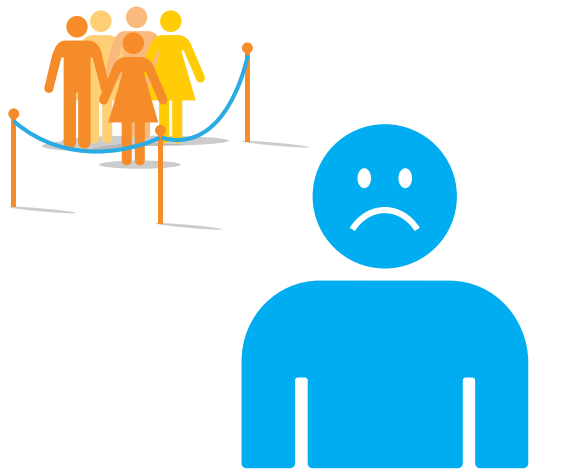
FLAMING

Electronic messages that include fuming and discourteous language (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).



CYBERSTALKING

Habitual online harassment and defamation (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).



EXCLUSION

Exclusion happens when one or more people maliciously exclude someone online (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).

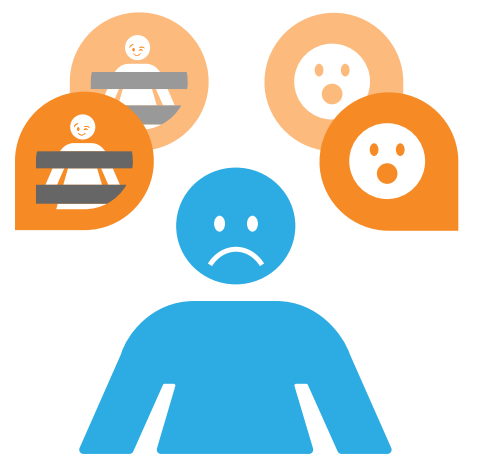
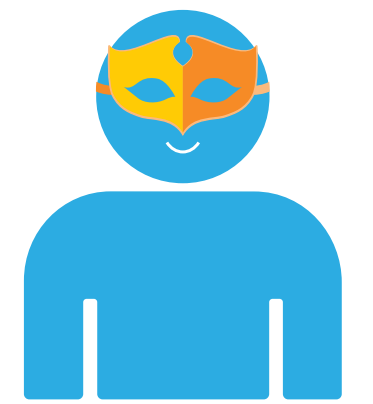


IMAGE-BASED ABUSE

Distributing humiliating and/or sexually suggestive pictures online (Chisholm, 2014, p.79). This includes revenge porn, the sharing of private, sexual material without a person's consent (Myers & Cowle 2017).



IMPERSONATION

Masquerading as someone else and breaking into someone's account; impersonating a person and posting inflammatory material as that person to damage their status or relationships (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).



TRICKERY

Also called outing, trickery happens when someone is persuaded to declare secrets online. Then, those secrets are circulated online (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).



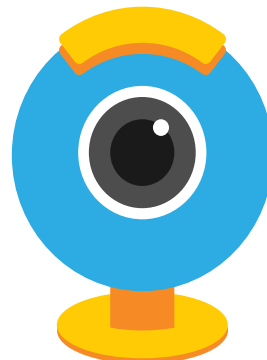
SHOCK TROLLING

Spiteful and aggressive messages intended to aggravate or degrade someone in order to incite a reaction (Chisholm, 2014, p.79).



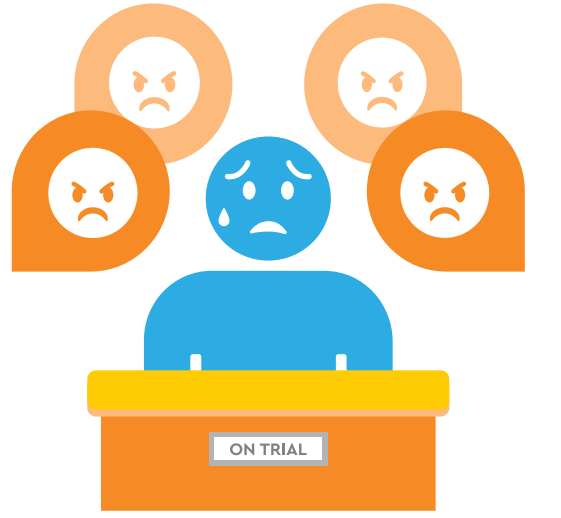
HARRASSMENT

Harassment occurs when people send continuous, offensive and rude messages to others online (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).



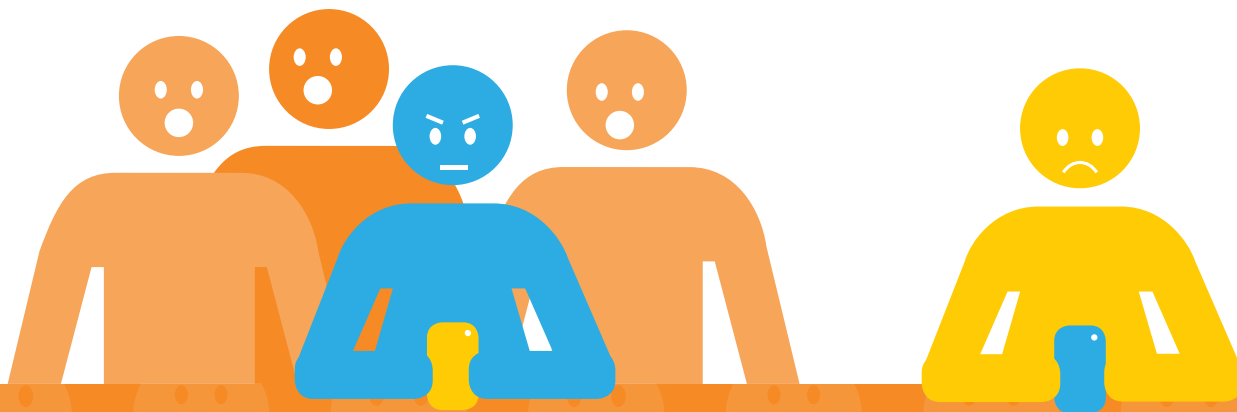
RATTING

Remote controlling the computer or webcam without a person's knowledge or consent and controlling the operations of their computer (Chisholm, 2014, p.79).



HAZING

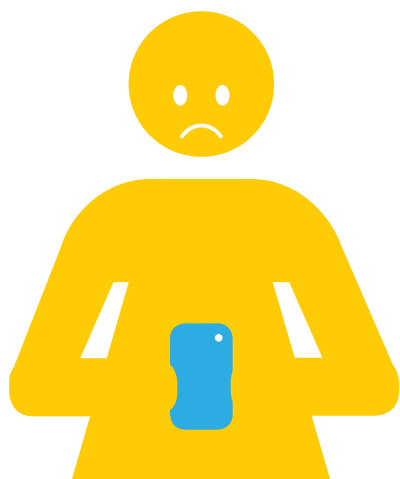
Specific harassment inflicted on new or potential group members before they are accepted into the group (Young-Jones et al, 2015).



2.

Who is involved in cyberbullying?

THE RECIPIENT



Recipients of cyberbullying are often referred to as victims. Recipients are people who experience oppression due to online behaviour. In some cases, it is difficult for recipients to defend themselves because they lack resources, skills or support. Recipients respond differently to cyberbullying. Some may try to avoid the conflict and do not report their experience because they believe others will view them as incompetent or unprofessional, or because they do not think they will be supported. Others may try to win over bystanders and take away the cyberbully's power or cyberbully others. Yet others might react calmly and appear to not take the bullying seriously.

THE CYBERBULLY



Cyberbullies are people who assert power or strength over others using online methods. There can be one or more cyberbullies, and more than one recipient of cyberbullying. Cyberbully actions can cause harm to recipients on a social, psychological or physical level. Common characteristics of a cyberbully are similar to that of a traditional bully and can include: a lack of empathy or concern for the recipient's feelings; different, individual interpretations of social rules and convention; reactive or proactive attitudes towards being bullied themselves. It is possible for cyberbullies to crave vengeance, seek out an online audience and/or oppress others using superior technical, verbal and intellectual skills.

3.

2.

Who else is involved in cyberbullying?



THE BYSTANDER

There are different definitions of Bystanders. The Prevent Cyberbullying project defines bystanders as people who witness and do not stand up against cyberbullying. These people can be passive or active and are often influenced by a sense of anonymity, self-preservation and 'crowd behaviour' (Dickerson 2016). When bystanders witness cyberbullying, they can feel powerless and unable to stop the bullying without making it worse or becoming the next target. This is often due to a lack of knowledge or skills to intervene effectively. Other bystanders might blame the recipient and even approve of or participate by cheering on the cyberbully. However, each bystander has the potential to show empathy and become upstanders (defenders) who stop the cyberbullying and/or help the recipient. If you would like to learn how to become an upstander, [read the How To fact sheet.](#)

3.

The differences and similarities between bullying & cyberbullying

CYBERBULLYING CAN BE ANONYMOUS AND EASILY SHARED WITH OTHERS

Unlike bullying, cyberbullying can be anonymous, easily delivered, saved, and quickly shared within (sometimes large) online communities. Online users can more easily transition between different groups, platforms and incidents where they can be the cyberbully, or the bystander, or the recipient of cyberbullying. This means that it is harder to monitor online behaviour and manage or control cyberbullying; unless the appropriate authorities are made aware of the incident.

CYBERBULLIES AND BYSTANDERS EXPERIENCE ONLINE DISINHIBITION

Cyberbullies and bystanders often don't experience immediate responses from the recipients which can have a disinhibiting effect. Indeed, most online people can do and say things online that can be identified as cyberbullying because they are experiencing online disinhibition. Bystanders can play a key role in cyberbullying. Liking, commenting or sharing the cyberbullying incident can have adverse effects that encourage the spread and impact of toxic online behaviour.

4.



4.

Cyberbullying in higher education

Often, people in higher education settings (universities and vocational institutions) consider technology as a normal part of their life. Students and staff are required to communicate through digital devices almost every day. This, unfortunately, provides a space for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying in higher education can be experienced by all members of the higher education community, including students and staff. Like those who experience cyberbullying in the workforce, recipients in higher education can experience psychological, social, emotional and physical effects that can negatively impact their professional and personal lives. For example, recipients can: experience anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, weight loss or drug abuse; a decline in their academic and work output; loss of good professional reputation; leave their higher education institution.

There is research (listed in the reading list) that describes ways that cyberbullying has been experienced within higher education settings around the world. Although these reports indicate both students and staff experience similar negative impacts to cyberbullying, the type of cyberbullying does vary. For example, students have experienced image-based abuse, impersonation and exclusion from other students; receive hurtful messages from students during group assignments; or harmful feedback on their work from staff. Conversely, staff have experienced cyberbullying from students through hurtful staff evaluations,

harassing text messages and emails, technologically triggered class disruptions, or websites that rate teachers. Administrators and faculty have reported cyberbullying from senior colleagues who exclude, undermine or threaten the loss of promotion, tenure, or contract. There are also incidences where staff have been cyberbullied for their academic work from people outside the university.

READING LIST

- Faucher, C., Jackson, M., & Cassidy, W. (2014). Cyberbullying among university students: Gendered experiences, impacts, and perspectives. *Education Research International*, 2014. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/elibRARY.jcu.edu.au/10.1155/2014/698545>
- Dickerson, Darby, Cyberbullies on Campus. *University of Toledo Law Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2005. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1087800>
- Chisholm, J. F., PhD. (2014). Review of the status of cyberbullying and cyberbullying prevention. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 25(1), 77-87.
- Lai, C.-Y. and C.-H. Tsai (2016). Cyberbullying in the Social Networking Sites: An Online Disinhibition Effect Perspective, 1-6.
- Machackova, H. & Pfetsch, J. (2016). Bystanders' responses to offline bullying and cyberbullying: The role of empathy and normative beliefs about aggression. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 57, 169-176.
- Myers, C.-A., & Cowie, H. (2017). Bullying at University: The Social and Legal Contexts of Cyberbullying Among University Students. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 48(8), 1172-1182. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022022116684208>
- Willard, N. E. (2007). *Cyberbullying and cyberthreats: Responding to the challenge of online social aggression, threats, and distress*. Champaign, IL, US: Research Press.
- Young-jones, A., Fursa, S., Byrket, J. S., & Sly, J. S. (2015). Bullying affects more than feelings: The long-term implications of victimization on academic motivation in higher education. *Social Psychology of Education : An International Journal*, 18(1), 185-200. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/elibRARY.jcu.edu.au/10.1007/s11218-014-9287-1>