Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying

Essential Question

How does online cruelty affect the people involved?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to …

- 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: Downloaded video from the AG Video Folder:
"Cyber Bullying Virus"

Warm-up *(5 minutes)*

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **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.

ASK:

Have you ever had a conversation with someone where 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.
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.

teach 1

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms by writing them on the board or have students write them down in groups.

- **target**

- **offender**

- **bystander**

- **upstander**

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▶ **SHOW** the **"Cyber Bullying Virus"** video.

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 also can have students discuss in groups.

ASK:

Are actions in an online community (like the slurs on a website) different than actions taken offline (like the notes left on lockers at 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 are 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 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 school, watching a situation like the one on the video unfold. What do you think you would have done? Do bystanders have a responsibility to do anything?	Discuss students' 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 choices they make can affect the situation as a whole.

BRAINSTORM ways to 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?

Students should be aware of the following tips:

- **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.

closing

Wrap-up *(5 minutes)*

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

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.

Aside from a target, who else can be impacted by online cruelty? Who else could be involved, implicitly or explicitly?

Encourage students to think about the different characters in the "**Cyber Bullying Virus**." Online cruelty can affect family, friends, significant others, and teachers, as well as the dynamic of groups within and outside of schools, like sports teams, neighborhoods, etc.