



LESSON ON EMPATHY

GRADES 7-12

MATERIALS:

- Projector for power point
 - This can be taught in 1 class or divided up into 2 classes.

1. WHAT IS EMPATHY?

1. Begin lesson by brainstorming what empathy is. Write responses on the board.
2. Power Point:
 - Show video on Empathy (2:53):
 - Discussion to follow:
 - What is the difference between empathy and sympathy?
 - Empathy fuels connection – it is feeling with people.
 - Sympathy drives disconnection.
- What are the 4 qualities of empathy?
 1. Perspective taking.
 2. Staying out of judgement.
 3. Recognizing emotion in other people.
 4. Communicating what you've notice.



2. EMPATHY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Discuss how social media has changed friendship groups. Walk through the points on the power point.
 2. Watch Insta-lie to see how people inaccurately portray themselves on social media.
 3. Discuss question “does it make it harder for us to have empathy when a person’s life (as portrayed on social media) seems so great?”
 4. Lack of empathy (not being able to feel with someone) and the anonymity of posting on social media has increased bullying behaviours.
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3. BULLYING

1. Discuss traditional bullying – read the definition from the power point out
2. Ask “how has bullying evolved with the use of social media?”
 - look for responses such as it’s easier to say mean things when you are not physically in front of someone.
 - people can post mean things or make fun of other people’s posts, etc.
3. Watch Connected (you may want to turn the subtitles on as there are some strong accents).
4. Ask: What is Cyberbullying?
 - discuss points from slide

Teacher back ground: Retrieved from

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/teen-angst/201205/cyberbullying-versus-traditional-bullying>



According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), cyberbullying is the "most common online risk for all teens and is a peer to peer risk." In traditional bullying, you're usually working with a bully, victim, or bystander, but that's not the case in cyberbullying. In fact, it's not uncommon to play multiple roles such as cyberbully, target, and witness. Previous research indicates that cyberbullying is rarely pre-meditated like traditional bullying, where the bully plans his or her line of attack. In many cases, cyberbullying is done impulsively and not planned out like in traditional bullying where the bully pre-meditates the next attack. Also, traditional bullying has the following characteristics that may not be present in cyberbullying cases:

- A need for power and control
- Proactively targeting the victim
- Aggression

So, just what is cyberbullying? By definition, it's the deliberate and repeated harm inflicted through the use of cell phones/smartphones, computers/tablets, and other electronic devices (including Wi-Fi gaming devices). It's an easier way to bully because unlike traditional bullying, it doesn't involve face-to-face interaction. Teens can become desensitized to a computer screen and say or do things they wouldn't do to a person's face. The computer desensitizes teens and decreases the level of empathy they feel toward the victim. Plus, when they can't see the person's reaction to what they post or text they may not know if they've gone too far.

It appears that today's youth don't equate joking around with bullying. Even though they do it jokingly, it can cut the receiver deeply. By definition, a joke is something that is supposed to be funny, but here's the magic question: "Who's laughing?" Ask any teen who's been cyberbullied and they probably won't see the humor in the situation. Plus, when something is posted online, it can be humiliating.

That old saying "www" means the "whole world's watching" holds true, and cyberbullying victims know it.

The bottom line is that cyberbullying hurts.



5. Ask “What can we do to try and prevent posting something that may be hurtful to someone or myself?”

- Walk through the points listed on ‘Think Before You Post Online’ slide.

6. Watch “Promise”. Ask: “What are some things you can do to help prevent cyberbullying?”

7. Knowing that being empathetic decreases bullying activities, “How can we encourage people to develop empathy?” – break into pairs and practice empathetic listening.

SUGGESTED END ACTIVITY: EMPATHETIC LISTENING IN FOUR STEPS

Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-bullied-brain/202211/replace-bullying-empathic-listening> on Dec. 12, 2022

Teacher knowledge:

Psychologist Dr. Lee-Anne Gray founded a school whose mission is “Empathic Education for a Compassionate Nation.” She teaches the art of empathic listening and it is a powerful technique to dismantle normalized bullying in our society.

Bullying is described in [research](#) as “unempathic” and “callous unemotional.” It is frequently characterized by *not* listening; instead, it uses words as weapons to spread rumours, humiliate, ostracize, shame and hurt. The target is meant to be silenced, not heard. The refusal to listen empathically is arguably as damaging as the spewing and hurling of language designed to belittle and disempower.



While most if not all are accustomed to bullying behaviour, few of us have been taught empathic listening. Here is a Dr. Lee-Anne Gray exercise that all of us can do, practice, and ultimately teach to others, especially those who use bullying as a way to interact with targets.

The following exercise can be used to start teaching empathy.

Empathic Listening in Four Steps

Step One Set a compassionate intention to assure the empathic exchange results in a caring response. Establish who will begin as speaker and who will begin as listener.

Step Two The speaker shares thoughts, ideas, feelings, stories, on any subject of their choice for a minute or so. The empathic listener pays close attention with the knowledge that their role is to repeat back what the speaker has shared. The empathic listener can only listen. They cannot interject, vocalize any sound, offer support, disagreement, or any other response.

Step Three The empathic listener repeats as closely as possible what the speaker said, and the speaker continues for the next minute or so. Again, the empathic listener repeats as closely as possible what the speaker said. This pattern continues until the speaker says: “I feel heard.”

Step Four Now the roles change. The speaker becomes the empathic listener, and the listener becomes the speaker until once again the speaker says: “I feel heard.”

