Cyberbullying Awareness

An Informational Report

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Cyberbullying or online bullying can be defined simply as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (Hinduja *&* Patchin, 2015). Cyberbullying is intended to hurt, harass, embarrass, humiliate, exclude or threaten the victim and similar to traditional bullying; there is often a power imbalance between the victim and aggressor (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Cyberbullying causes psychological, emotional and/or relational pain and can have a lasting impact on *both* the victim and the aggressors mental health and overall wellbeing (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). As technology continues to advance and social media becomes increasingly popular, consequently cyberbullying continues to rise as well. It is imperative that awareness is spread and more is done to combat cyberbullying in an effort to protect both the victim and bully from the lasting negative effects that cyberbullying has on one's body, mind and soul. Within this informational report, the writers have outlined a detailed analysis of cyberbullying as it relates to adolescents psychosocial development, the implications of cyberbullying, Covid-19 and its influence on cyberbullying, the role of the youth care worker, and lastly, forgiveness, letting go and resilience.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying dates back to the early 1990s, a time when personal computers became affordable, however cyberbullying really took off in the early 2000's when smartphones became the latest and greatest trend (Team, 2021). Presently, it is estimated that over 90% of adolescents aged 12-17 have access to the internet (Huffman et al., 2017). The anonymity of the web creates the perfect environment for harassment, intimidation and bullying without the threat of many repercussions for the aggressor (Huffman et al., 2017). In some ways, cyberbullying is easier to engage in because it can be done from just about anywhere; it does not involve any face to face

interaction between the victim and aggressor and many societal norms are seen as less relevant when communicating electronically versus in-person (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Furthermore, cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in that there are minimal regulations on most social media sites and most youth use electronic devices without supervision from their parents, caretakers, teachers or other adults (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). The ways in which cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying including the lack of supervision and greater accessibility make it difficult to develop appropriate cyberbullying interventions (Canada, 2018). Fortunately, there are ways in which parents, Child and Youth Care workers and other professionals may be able to grasp a better understanding of why people bully and in turn prevent or mitigate cyberbullying from occurring.

As previously mentioned, the advancement of technology is directly correlated with cyberbullying behaviours. One study conducted found that Canadian parents are more concerned with cyberbullying than they are about teen pregnancy, drug use or alcohol use (Canada, 2018). Astoundingly, almost 1 in 5 teenagers have been victims of online bullying at some point in time and 1 in 6 have participated in cyberbullying behaviours (Canada, 2018). Additionally, more than 37% of Canadian teens reported that someone has said or done something mean or hurtful to them online (Steeves, 2014). A study conducted in 2014 indicated that 65% of cyberbullying incidents were chronic, meaning they lasted longer than a year (Canada, 2018). In this same survey, 70% of youth reported that when they see abusive content online, they report it (Canada, 2018). However, when asked why they might not report, they gave the following reasons: there is no point, reporting would not help, I do not want the person to find out, I am afraid of the negative consequences, it takes too much time, someone else will report this content, and I do not know how to report" (Canada, 2018, para 6). This statistic is significant and demonstrates

that more must be done to spread awareness and support adolescents experiencing cyberbullying to seek help from a trusted source.

Cyberbullying can take place through a vast variety of electronic media including but not limited to: text messages (either including pictures or not), emailing, phone calls, direct/instant messaging on social media platforms (ie. FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat), online gaming sites, video broadcasting websites (ie. YouTube), chat rooms, website forums and other dedicated sites (Info Sheet: Cyberbullying 2018). The most common form of cyberbullying reported is name calling, however, similar to traditional bullying, cyberbullying can be sexist, racist or homophobic amongst others depending on the reason for targeting the victim (Canada, 2018). For example: posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone online, making fun of someone's race/religion/ethnicity or making fun of someone's sexual orientation (Canada, 2018). It is also important to note that sometimes there is no underlying motive for targeting a victim (BearsPaw Media and Education, 2021).

Forms of Cyberbullying

There are a plethora of ways that someone could bully or be bullied that would constitute cyberbullying. The most common forms of cyberbullying include, but are not limited to (BearsPaw Media and Education, 2021):

1. Harassment → Harassment can be defined as continuous or repetitive sending of hurtful or threatening messages to someone with the intent to cause harm.

2. Exclusion → Exclusion can be defined as the act of deliberately leaving someone out. For example: a birthday party invitation may be sent over FaceBook to everyone in the class except for one person.

3. Outing or Doxing → Outing / doxing refers to the act of deliberately sharing personal information about someone without their consent for the sole purpose of embarrassment or humiliation.

4. Trickery → Trickery is similar to outing however there is an added element of deception involved. Trickery is when a bully befriends a victim with the sole purpose of gaining their trust only to share their personal information with others.

5. Cyberstalking → Cyberstalking is a serious form of cyberbullying that can include physical threats to the victim, false accusations and on or offline stalking of the victim as well.

6. Fraping → Fraping is when a bully uses someone else's social media account(s) to post inappropriate content with their name attached.

7. Flaming → Flaming is posting about or directly sending insults and profanity to their target.

8. Denigration → Denigration is when someone (a bully) sends untrue, fake or hurtful information about another person online. Denigration can be done by sharing pictures in which the purpose was to ridicule or hurt the victim.

9. Sexting → Sexting can be defined as the act of sending explicit messages or photos using a mobile device.

10. Video Recording of an assault → When a agressor digitally records an assault on a victim and uploads it to the internet.

Although cyberbullying is a growing concern and more must be done to prevent it, fortunately, some good has come and there have been some laws established in Canada to protect against cyberbullying. One of the most stringent laws has to do with sexting or the

non-consensual distribution of intimate images (including videos) (Government of Canada, 2017). One study conducted found that 20% of teens and 33% of young adults had sent nude pictures of themselves via text or email (Government of Canada, 2017). It is important that adolescents are made aware of the severe consequences the possession and/or distribution of nude photographs can have. The distribution of nude or semi-nude photographs of an individual under the age of 18 can result in *child pornography charges* (Branch, 2021). According to the Criminal Code of Canada child pornography by definition is:

a) a photographic, film, video or other visual representation, whether or not it was made by electronic or mechanical means,

- **(i)** that shows a person who is or is depicted as being under the age of eighteen years and is engaged in or is depicted as engaged in explicit sexual activity, or

- **(ii)** the dominant characteristic of which is the depiction, for a sexual purpose, of a sexual organ or the anal region of a person under the age of eighteen years;

- **(b)** any written material, visual representation or audio recording that advocates or counsels sexual activity with a person under the age of eighteen years that would be an offence under this Act;

- **(c)** any written material whose dominant characteristic is the description, for a sexual purpose, of sexual activity with a person under the age of eighteen years that would be an offence under this Act; or

- **(d)** any audio recording that has as its dominant characteristic the description, presentation or representation, for a sexual purpose, of sexual activity with a person under the age of eighteen years that would be an offence under this Act.

As outlined in the Criminal Code of Canada, every person who accesses any child pornography is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment of between 1-10 years (Branch, 2021). Additionally, any person who distributes, transmits, makes available, sells, advertises, imports, exports or possesses is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment of between 1-14 years (Branch, 2021). It is important that adolescents are made aware of the severity of these charges as to some it may seem harmless to possess nude photographs, but in reality the act can have a lasting impact.

Cyberbullying can be extremely emotionally and mentally damaging as well as lead to tragic outcomes (more on this in the section *Implications of Cyberbullying)* which is why it is imperative that as a society we create awareness and mitigate the foreseen effects. In the next section we will dive into the *minds* of the victim and the bully, in hope of gaining insight into the *why* behind the act of cyberbullying.

The Minds of Those Involved

As we dive into the minds and development of the victim and the bully, we must consider no one size fits all, no black and white answer, only information and experiences. The psychology behind why humans behave the way they do is very complex. For this informational report, the writers will be using a trauma-informed approach to describe the minds of those involved in cyberbullying. The first step in understanding cyberbullying is starting from the root; adolescence development.

Psychosocial Development

Adolescence is a time when independence is sought for, and identity exploration occurs. Naturally, adolescents are present-focused thinkers. Research shows they are more likely to act impulsively due to an influx of hormones and development of the prefrontal cortex; hence decide

what is good for them in that present moment rather than think about the consequences of their actions (Huffman et al., 2017). In addition to adolescents being present thinkers, researchers Cingel and Krcmar (2014) describe adolescence as a time when they tend to exaggerate others' perceptions of themselves; therefore, they behave in a way that would please their peers rather than themselves. This concept is known as the imaginary audience (Cingel & Krcmar, 2014). A sense of belonging is a key factor in adolescent development; naturally, they tend to gravitate towards the "cool kids" and subconsciously behave the way their peers are behaving to feel a sense of purpose (Steinberg, 2014). According to Elkind, personal fable is another cognitive process within the imaginary audience (Alberts et al., 2007). It is said that personal fable causes adolescents to believe they are immune to consequences (Alberts et al., 2007). Imaginary audiences and personal fables directly correlate with the act of cyberbullying and provide insight into why adolescents choose to bully.

Adolescence is a time of constant change in which self-esteem fluctuates from low self-esteem in early adolescence and rises through late adolescence (Arnett, 2018). Those with baseline self-esteem may have an occasional day that they feel incompetent or self-critical but can bounce back and evaluate positively (Arnett, 2018). However, those who experience adversity, such as trauma-related to cyberbullying, have higher rates of emotional difficulties, i.e. low self-esteem and poor self-confidence making it more difficult to gain baseline self-esteem; a stable sense of worth and self-concept (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2012). Research identifies a significant relationship between low self-esteem and cyberbullying within both the victim and the aggressor (Patchin & Hinduji, 2010). This suggests that although the act of cyberbullying elicits short term reward, the act inevitably negatively impacts both parties' self-esteem. Factors such as personal fable, imaginary audience, identity and self-esteem

all play a role in the minds of the aggressor and the victim. To work with victims and the aggressor of cyberbullying, the psychology behind the behaviours that drive the act of bullying must be understood.

The Bully

As with traditional bullying, the motivations for cyberbullying are similar and include (Huffman et al., 2017):

- seeking a sense of power

- boredom

- wanting to be liked or seem cool

- revenge for being bullied

- as a way of getting attention

To specify, many internal and external factors influence one's decision to cyberbully. Internally one may be struggling with mental illness, and externally one may be suffering from a toxic family dynamic and/ or neglect. It is crucial to understand that adolescent behaviour is driven by feelings and emotions, which is consciously or unconsciously driven by past events, experiences, and development (Perry, 2015). Adolescence is a time of self-discovery, exploration, excitement and love. However, those who lack healthy bonds may find themselves lost and searching for connection wherever possible. For example, an individual may utilize proactive aggression which can be described as instrumental aggression that is motivated by rewards and outcomes resulting from aggressive acts, and appease their peers by actively cyberbullying someone in their class (Ang, 2015). Whereas, some may choose to cyberbully because they are lacking the emotional reward from nurturing adults in their life. The key is finding out the *why* instead of labelling the adolescent as a delinquent or unworthy.

Research reports that infrequent relational connection with trusted adults was associated with an 50% increase in odds of harassing others online; thus, emphasizing the importance of having nurturing adults within an adolescents milue (Ang, 2015). A study conducted by DeHue, Bolman and Vollink (2008) found that many parents did not know that their child/adolescent was engaging in bullying behaviours or a victim of cyberbullying. Collectively, these findings suggest that adolescents that are lacking relational permanence with their caregivers/ or other trusted adults are at greater risk for engaging in online harassment (Ang, 2015). A study completed by Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found a strong correlation between psychosocial (i.e. peers, community and school) challenges and elevated odds of harassing others online. For example, "32% of online harassers compared to 10% of non-harassers reported frequent substance use and that represented a four-fold increase in odds of Internet aggression against others" (Ang, 2015, para 14). The researchers also report that 6% of online harassers versus 1% of non-harassers reported physical or sexual victimization by an adult in the previous year (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Thus, clarifying that the act of cyberbullying may be driven by adversity. In addition to past adversity, sources outline that adolescent-reported harassment, depressive symptoms, and receiving a failing grade at school are other psychosocial variables that are related to elevated odds of harassing others online (Ang, 2015).

Previous research has shown that bullies have higher rates of self-esteem; however, recent studies have found more equivalence of low self-esteem between the victim and the bully (Patchin & Hinduji, 2010). The low self-worth exhibited from the bully has been said to drive a desire for power and control over those who they see as "weak". By choosing to cyberbully, the aggressor has the ability to assert that power and control how others are feeling without seeing future consequences; thus, increasing self-esteem temporarily. This fog of power tends to leave

cyberbullies apathetic of their actions and more susceptible to problematic internet usage; the overuse of the internet resulting in negative consequences (BearsPaw Media and Education, 2021 & Ang, 2015). Ultimately, there are many variables which can result in internet harassment and it is crucial that these factors are understood and addressed.

The Victim

Being the victim of cyberbullying can have immense negative effects including feelings of isolation and humiliation but yet, many youth who are victimized by bullying do not tell anyone about it. To put things into perspective, studies have found that "64% of students who were bullied never told anyone about it" (Gordon, 2021, Para 2). Even when injuries occurred, 40% of bullied students still never reported the incident" (Gordon, 2021, Para 2).

When diving deeper into the minds of the victim, there are a few possible reasons as to why children or youth do not tell anyone when they are being electronically victimized. One of the main reasons may be shame and embarrassment. Because of the power differential that occurs during bullying between the victim and the aggressor, online bullying can cause victims to feel weak or powerless (Gordon, 2021). Feelings of powerlessness and weakness can result in feelings of shame or embarrassment for many children or youth. Oftentime victims are bullied for something that they are already self-conscious or sensitive of (Gordon, 2021). For example, if a child is being bullied for a physical attribute or being accused of something that they did, the child will often feel intense feelings of embarrassment and/or shame. Thus, to talk about the problem with an adult would require them to talk about their insecurities or highlight their "defect" (Gordon, 2021, Para 10). Research suggests that for some kids, bringing up the incident to an adult is far worse than the bullying itself (Gordon, 2021). In addition to feelings of shame and embarrassment, victims of bullying may not speak up in fear of retaliation (Gordon, 2021).

Not only does the child feel powerless in the situation but they fear that if they do speak up for themselves that the bully will only make things worse for them.

In an effort to understand the complexity of eradicating cyberbullying it is important to note that many victims admit to not wanting to tell anyone because they do not believe it would help. In addition to this, some victims feel shame or embarrassment and fear that their social media privileges will be taken away if they tell someone about the bullying. Family support as well as social support from friends have been shown to be beneficial protective factors for victims experiencing cyberbullying.

Implications of Cyberbullying

Research suggests that the unique features of the electronic environment (ie. anonymity, increased accessibility, rapidity, etc) may result in more serious consequences for victims of cyberbullying than those of traditional bullying (Kiriakidis & Kavoura, 2010). Cyberbullying can have a profound effect on the victim either emotionally, socially or academically. Victims of cyberbullying have reported a vast array of problems including: poor physical health outcomes, self-denigration, school failure, absenteeism, depression, anxiety, discrimination, school violence, eating disorders, chronic stress, low self-esteem, isolation, poor relationships, aggression, and even self-harm or suicide (Foody et al., 2015). Research describes that youth who are bullied, or who bully others are at an elevated risk for suicidal thoughts, attempts and completed suicides (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for youth in Canada (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020 p.1). Research states, "between 2009 and 2014, admissions to hospital for intentional self-harm increased by 110% in Canadian girls" (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020, p.1). Although suicidal

ideation is highest amongst adolescent females, there should be a focus on both male and female suicide awareness (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020).

As the suicide and self-harm rates rise, so does overall social media use amongst adolescents (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020). According to one report, it is estimated that 72% of teens aged 12 to 17 use social media (Anthony, 2020). The social media use amongst teens has increased exponentially which in turn has increased mental distress, self injurious behaviour and suicidal ideation amongst youth, in particular, adolescent girls (Abi-Jaoude, 2020). Potential root causes may include, but are not limited to, the overall accessibility of social media and technology and the addiction that can stem from extended social media usage (Abi-Jaoude, 2020).

In addition to the victim of cyberbullying being at risk for a plethora of unfortunate effects, the aggressor is also significantly more likely to experience negative outcomes. Online aggressors are significantly more likely to demonstrate low school attendance, to use alcohol and cigarettes, as well as other types of delinquent behaviours, such as property damage, negative police involvement, stealing and physical assaults (Ybarra et al., 2007). Participation in school violence and usage of illicit substances predict both victimization and aggressor of cyberbullying (Pelfrey & Weber, 2013). Moreover, studies have found that children who bully are more likely to engage in violent behaviour later in life, commit adult offences, and have convictions by the time they are in their 20s (Sourander et al., 2007).

Studies have found the consequences of online bullying to include: decreased academic performance, increased truancy, perceptions of school being unsafe, poor concentration, and increased incidence of weapons-carrying (Tokunaga 2010). In addition to this, studies have found that those who engage in cyberbullying tend to have higher rates of rule-breaking and

delinquent behaviours (Ybarra & Mitchell 2007). Frequent online harassment appears to be related to increased reports of behaviour problems and weapon carrying at school (Ybarra et al., 2007). Maladaptive behaviors that appear to be related to both cyberbullying and cybervictimization include: recent school problems, assaultive behaviors, or substance use (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Ultimately, the consequences of cyberbullying for both the victim and bully can be extremely serious and detrimental. Therefore, it is important that the warning signs of online bullying are known in an effort to combat the issue before it becomes very serious.

Covid-19 Pandemic

As the number of Covid-19 cases as well as deaths continue to rise within Canada and globally the government has been forced to implement stricter measures to attempt to limit the spread of the CoronaVirus. Stricter measures, including the closure of schools and stay-at-home orders, have resulted in more children and adolescents using technology. With the influx of electronics being used at home for school and personal reasons it is reported that cyberbullying has increased by 70% this past year (Gordon, 2020). With the shift to online schooling students are spending more-time than usual online. While most students use electronics and social media as a pastime, the increased frequency of using electronics for educational purposes may be one of the reasons that has greatly increased the occurrence of cyberbullying. In addition to the shift to online learning, the Covid-19 pandemic has put a great deal of stress on society. When children or youth feel stressed it can cause them to act out, argue or have conflict amongst their friends and/or partake in risk-taking behaviour in response (*Increase in Cyberbullying During COVID-19,* 2021). Research shows that the implementation of social distancing, closure of schools and daycares, and the rise of unemployment rates has resulted in an immense influx of

domestic abuse within families and mental health concerns amongst children and youth (Teo & Griffiths, 2020). The stress children and youth are experiencing from not only the pandemic but also from potentially being in unsafe environments may explain the overall increase in cyberbullying. Additionally, the Covid-19 measures can be extremely isolating and cause feelings of loneliness. Due to the feelings of loneliness and potentially limited access to the internet or technology, some children may lash out in response and make hurtful comments to their friends if they feel as though they are out of touch with their friends (Increase in Cyberbullying During COVID-19, 2021). Decreased supervision online is another factor that may explain the increase in cyberbullying during the Covid-19 pandemic. While many parents are trying to navigate the new normal we are in, on top of working and assisting their children in online-schooling it is possible that they simply do not have the time to supervise them closely online (Increase in Cyberbullying During COVID-19, 2021). As mentioned in the section on the motives behind cyberbullying, boredom plays a large role. With the closure of extracurricular activities throughout the past year, many kids are stuck at home with little to do and in turn, bored. Ultimately, there are numerous factors that may play a role in the overall increase in cyberbullying this past year during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the overall influx of cyberbullying cases, the Covid-19 pandemic has exponentially increased cyberbullying in the form of racism towards the Chinese community. Hate speech and racism on the social media platform Twitter alone towards Chinese individuals and China as a whole has increased by a staggering 900% throughout the past year (Gordon, 2020). Parents of Asian American children have reported instances of their kids being mistreated and shunned — and not just by other kids (Cyberbullying During COVID-19, n.d.). Many adults have been acting racist and calling the virus "The Chinese Virus" or "The Asian Virus"

(Cyberbullying During COVID-19, n.d.). The racism that exists towards the asian community stems from people *blaming* Chinese individuals for the Coronavirus which is absolutely unacceptable. However kids learn this behavior either at home or on the Internet, the more racism they see within their home the more likely it is for racist cruelty to end up online (Cyberbullying During COVID-19, n.d.).

The measures implemented as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have only exacerbated the issue of cyberbullying. It is imperative that the government takes into consideration these effects when implementing measures meant to keep people safe may subsequently be harming others. As Child and Youth Care workers and other professionals working with children during the Covid-19 pandemic it is important that the negative effects of the pandemic are taken into consideration. The following section will discuss the role of the Child and Youth Care worker as it relates to cyberbullying.

Role of the Youth Care Worker

Our role as youth care workers is to foster a nurturing environment and shift the lens from resentment and turmoil to positive self-worth, forgiveness, and resilience. It is important that the youth care worker watch for warning signs that an adolescent may be a victim of cyberbullying, as a lot of the time adversity such as this remains internal and cannot be seen. Internal outcomes of cyberbullying can be shown externally; for example:

- Watch for a shift in eating habits→ Are they eating more or less than normal?
- Are you seeing other physical changes (ie. weight loss/gain, headaches, stomach aches, not eating, distant)
- Withdrawal behaviours→ Are they spending less time with friends and more time isolated?

- Decline in academic performance→ Have they been noticeably less engaged in school? Are they scared or uneasy when needing to go to school or leaving the house in general?

- Unhealthy or a change in sleep pattern→ are they sleeping more during the day and less at night?

- Are they visibly upset after being online and/or viewing a text message? Secrecy or unwilling to share information about their social media activity and accounts?

- Withdrawing from friends, family and favourite hobbies/activities

- Mental changes (ie. lower mood, depression)

- Statements about suicidal ideation

It can oftentimes be difficult for a parent or caregiver to notice the signs of cyberbullying without seeming overbearing. While independence and growth in adolescence is important and desired by the youth it is important that caregivers are aware of the warning signs of cyberbullying. If one or more of these signs are observed it is essential that an open conversation is had in order to pinpoint the issue. If necessary, involving outside resources can also be extremely beneficial. Research supports that youth who feel adequately supported by their family, experience fewer incidences of cyberbullying or cyber victimization (cite). A caregivers support and love is essential for building resiliency and confidence in a child so that the child will hopefully feel confident enough to report cyberbullying. The acronym *L-O-V-E* is a useful tool for Child and Youth Care workers, parents, caregivers, teachers or anyone else attempting to assist a child or youth who is experiencing cyberbullying (Canada, 2018):

L - Listen to the child/youth → Allow the child/youth to talk about what is going on without feeling as though they are being judged, criticized or made to feel uncomfortable. By remaining calm and simply listening without over-reacting, the lines of communication between you and

the child/youth are more likely to remain open. Reassure the child that you will not take away their phone or Internet, but if they encounter anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable, or if they receive any messages or view content that is harassing or upsetting that it is important to talk to you or someone else that they trust about it.

O - Offer support and advocacy → Discuss potential actions with the child/youth and make sure that he/she is comfortable with the action, before proceeding. One reason children stop talking to their parents or other adults about their problems is their fear that their parents will overreact and do something that will embarrass them. Inform yourself of the legal consequences of cyberbullying. Work with the child/youth to keep a record of emails, chat room history, web postings or phone messages that you can potentially take to your Internet Service Provider or the police. If the cyberbullying involves someone at the child/youth's school, you and the child might choose to report the incidents of cyber bullying to your child's teacher and/or principal as well.

V - Validate the child/youth's feelings → Explain to the child/youth that it is normal to feel the feelings they are feeling: sad, angry, fearful, frustrated, and lonely. Encourage them that talking about their feelings will help.

E - Explore resources together → Value the child's opinions on what they think may help and/or may things work. Work together with the child/youth to find outside resources and come up with a suitable plan / action steps together.

It is important for the adult to keep in mind that love, coming from a place of support and fostering a nurturing environment rather than blame or anger is essential in helping someone who is experiencing cyberbullying either in the form of the bully or the victim.

Preventative Strategies

For better protection of vulnerable adolescents online, it is critical to understand preventative strategies with specific reference to cyberbullying. Modeling empathy by utilizing empathy education programs has been proven successful in reducing cyberbullying (Ang, 2015). Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another (Cherry, 2020). Perspective shifting is a tool which can be taught to the aggressor as a way to help them understand the victims perspective (Ang, 2015). For example saying things like, "that could be your sibling or your best friend, would you want someone to speak to them like that?". Utilizing empathy training as a tool can be challenging therefore it is crucial to personalize the serious and real consequences of cyberbullying (ie.suicide, legal implications). By helping instill empathy you are assisting the aggressor in realizing that if these consequences can happen to a peer, it can also happen to them (Ang, 2015). In addition to engaging in empathy exercises, modelling can also influence a perspective shift. By modeling healthy relationships, trust, and humility adolescents will begin to learn what is acceptable and what is not. Research shows that by fostering empathy, trust and humility within the adolescent milieu, prescriptive change can occur (Ang, 2015).

Tips to prevent one from becoming a victim of cyberbullying (BearsPaw Media and Education, 2021):

1. Don't give out or share personal information (address and phone number, families names, dates of birth etc.).
2. Never open messages from someone you don't know.
3. Do not add a follower or accept a friend request from someone you do not know.

Below are two prevention activities that can be utilized with adolescents to proactively prevent and bring awareness to cyberbullying.

Internet Etiquette Activity

Give the youth hypothetical situations (related to the different forms of cyberbullying- Sexting, Harassment, Exclusion, etc.) Include examples that have bad words, sending spam, and stealing other people's stuff, like passwords and files. Have the participants stop and think about the long term repercussions of their actions such as, text message, or social media post. Remind them that everything a person posts online is available to everyone and cannot be removed. Help the adolescent recognize that future employers will be able to see these actions which may impact their future education or employment and that using bad netiquette can make others feel sad and ruin their time online. See document for more details.

Self Awareness Activity

Write down on separate pieces of paper hypothetical situations of cyberbullying (Include all forms discussed in this report- Sexting, Harassment, Exclusion, etc.) and have the youth stop and think about the scenario and how they would behave in response. Help them recognize their body signals (are they experiencing symptoms of anxiety?), and understand that if what they are doing doesn't feel right, then their action probably is not appropriate. Pre-teach the importance of treating people the way you want to be treated. For example saying things like "Do not do something to someone else that you would not want done to you" and "This could be your cousin, mom or bestfriend, would you want them to feel this way? See attachment for more details.

Coping Strategies

       Coping is generally defined as an individual's behaviour, cognitive, and emotional responses to stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As researchers Pearlin & Schooler (1978) describe, "Coping serves to mitigate or modify a problem by neutralizing it's negative effects, which helps the individual regulate their own emotions (para. 7). According to Perren et al. (2012) responses to cyberbullying can be categorized on a basis of whether reactions are targeted towards the cyberbullies (i.e. retaliation), withdrawing from / ignoring the aggressor or involve seeking external supports (i.e. from friends, teachers, parents). In addition to using traditional coping strategies, research shows the most effective form of coping from cyberbullying was a mix of relational support and utilizing technological solutions, such as reporting and blocking the aggressor (Machackova et al., 2013).

       Although the original use of social media was for creativity and connection, it is where cyberbullying primarily takes place. Luckily, cites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have regulated tools that a victim of cyberbullying can utilize. In addition to blocking an abuser, Facebook and Instagram have a "Restrict" tool which is used to ignore all messages from the bully and discreetly protect your account without the bully being notified. Manage Custom Word List is a feature on Instagram that is useful for someone being victimized. This feature allows one to create a list of all the unwanted harmful words they wish to be removed from their posts; this will also restrict others from being able to comment on these words (Instagram, n.d.). The user can also modify their settings so that only people they follow can send direct messages (Unicef, n.d.). Twitter has the option to Mute an account which will remove the tweets from your timeline without unfollowing or blocking the account. Twitter also has a feature to block unwanted accounts from being visible and has the option to report abusive behaviour.

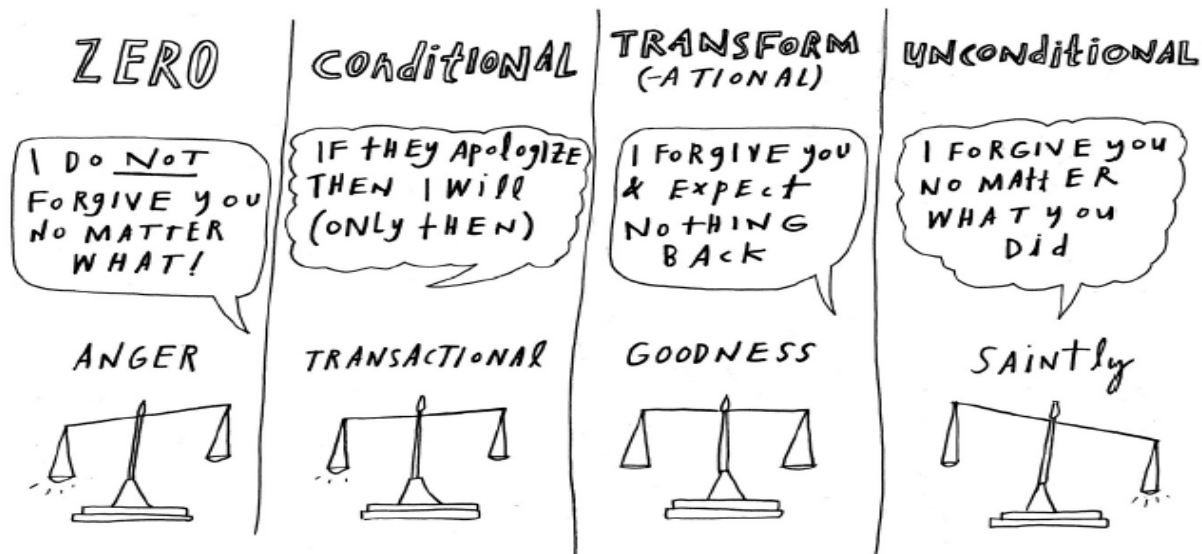The five most crucial tips for victims of online bullying are:

1. Do not reply to messages from cyber-bullies.

2. Do not believe everything you read → their message is a reflection of how they feel on the inside, it has nothing to do with you.

3. Do not erase or delete messages from Cyberbullies as they can later be used as evidence.

4. Speak to trusted adults

5. Contact service providers and report account(s)

Cyber-bullying can be extremely scary and threatening especially for vulnerable adolescents. Therefore, when working with a youth who is experiencing cyberbullying it is of utmost importance that they are aware that they are not alone and we are here to help them through this process of resiliency.

Forgiveness, Letting Go and Resiliency

Forgiveness is commonly believed to be the same as reconciliation, and many believe that forgiving someone means that what the other person has done is okay, i.e., "forgive and forget". On the contrary, forgiveness is primarily an action we take within ourselves and has the power to bring great peace within (Shetty, 2020). When one decides to not forgive, there is the potential for a lifelong impact, affecting the whole person spiritually, physically and psychologically. Research shows that unforgiveness is closely linked to mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and more (Zitzmann, 2017). When one chooses to forgive, one allows themselves to be set free from the heartache caused by past adversity. "When a deep injury is done to us, we never heal until we forgive" - Nelson Mandela (Zitzmann, 2017).

TRANSFORMATIONAL FORGIVENESS

ZERO	CONDITIONAL	TRANSFORM (-ATIONAL)	UNCONDITIONAL
I DO NOT FORGIVE YOU NO MATTER WHAT!	IF THEY APOLOGIZE THEN I WILL (ONLY THEN)	I FORGIVE YOU & EXPECT NOTHING BACK	I FORGIVE YOU NO MATTER WHAT YOU DID
ANGER	TRANSACTIONAL	GOODNESS	SAINTly

(Kavi Ninja, n.d.)

Forgiveness is transformational and can move from phase to phase. Anger, transactional, goodness, and sanity. These levels show an incline of progress one can achieve if they take the steps to do so. Zero forgiveness i.e. "I'm not forgiving that person no matter what" means that one is still in a place of anger and believes there is no resolution (Shetty, 2020). Conditional forgiveness i.e. "If they apologize then I will apologize." This phase is driven by impulse and the desire to fulfil one's own emotions (Shetty, 2020). Both zero forgiveness and conditional forgiveness are commonly seen when working with youth. Transformational forgiveness is the ability to find the strength to forgive without any expectation of receiving anything in return (Shetty, 2020). Transformational forgiveness is equivalent to allowing yourself to let go and heal. Unconditional forgiveness is commonly the forgiveness felt from a mother to a child, no matter what situation they may have gotten themselves into, all is forgiven (Shetty, 2020). When working with youth, be aware of these stages and notice which phase they or yourself may be in.

Only then will you be able to address the situation and guide them to forgiveness, letting go and resiliency.

Resilience is shaped by an accumulation of adaptive coping skills from both good and bad experiences (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). In early years of development biological systems are most adaptive; this lays the foundation for resilience in early life (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). For example, when an individual is capable of tolerating significant stress, i.e. cyberbullies, their stress response becomes adaptive and flexible (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2018). It is crucial to emphasise that no matter what adversity or trauma, every single person is capable of resilience. Perry (n.d.) describes relationship as one of the key tools to becoming resilient. Therefore, by fostering relational permanence the youth care worker can help guide victims of cyberbullying to resilience. Resilience is an internal process which adapts and evolves as adversity takes place.

It is our responsibility as youth care workers to notice the signs of cyberbullying, enlighten, guide and encourage the youth we work with to understand their mental processes and the benefits of forgiving those who have wronged us. After all, the healing process won't begin until we learn to forgive ourselves and the aggressor. By modelling and using repetition, we can help guide them to understand that forgiveness sets them free from the intrusive thoughts that flowed their minds and, ultimately, the power of letting go.

In closing, cyberbullying is a serious act that can cause lasting damage on both the victim and aggressors mental health and overall wellbeing. Unfortunately, as technology continues to advance and the world shifts to a more online era, cyberbullying is on the rise. However, it is the writers hope that by utilizing some of the strategies outlined in this report, Child and Youth Care

workers, parents, teachers and other individuals exposed to cyberbullying will feel better equipped in understanding the *why* behind cyberbullying and will have useful resources to utilize in the future. Additionally, the writers hope that through learning about adolescent development, resiliency and the power of forgiveness and letting go individuals can work towards creating a society in which a nurturing environment is fostered and the prevalence of cyberbullying is mitigated.

Appendix

For more information and resources on Cyberbullying please visit:

- Bullying Canada → https://www.bullyingcanada.ca/get-help/

- Bear Paw legal Resources → https://bearpawlegalresources.ca/

- Stop Bullying → www.b-free.ca

- Media Smarts →

  https://mediasmarts.ca/blog/new-tools-aboriginal-youth-making-good-decisions-about-sh

- Cyberbullying Research Centre → https://cyberbullying.org

- Government of Alberta Anti Bullying helpline → 1888-456-2323

- Hope for wellness helpline, Indigenous crisis support → 1855-242-3310

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