

When in Doubt, Talk It Out

Defining and encouraging Internet Brave behavior.

Lesson overview

Lesson 1	What does it mean to be brave?	ML	Grades 2–6
Lesson 2	From bystanders to helpers	SEL	Grades 2–6
Lesson 3	Helpers have options!		Grades 2–6
Lesson 4.1	Seeing upsetting stuff: What do I do?	SEL	Grades 2–3
Lesson 4.2	Upsetting stuff online: What do I do?	SEL	Grades 4–6
Lesson 5.1	What to do about mean stuff on screens	SEL	Grades 2–3
Lesson 5.2	Handling mean behavior online	SEL	Grades 4–6
Lesson 6	When to get help		Grades 2–6
Lesson 7	Report it online, too		Grades 2–6

Themes

It's important that kids understand they're not on their own when they see content online that makes them feel uncomfortable—especially if it looks like they or somebody else could get hurt. First, they should never hesitate to get help from someone they trust. Second, it's good for them to know they have options: There are different ways to be brave and take action.

Goals for students

- ✓ **Understand** what types of situations call for getting help or talking things out with a trusted adult.
- ✓ **Consider** what options there are for being brave and why bringing adults into the conversation is important.

Standards addressed

ISTE Standards for Educators: 1c, 2c, 3a, 3b, 3c, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 6d, 7a
ISTE Standards for Students 2016: 1c, 2b, 3d, 4d, 6a, 7a, 7b, 7c
AASL Learning Standards: I.a.1, I.b.1, I.b.2, I.c.1, I.c.2, I.c.3, I.d.3, I.d.4, II.a.1, II.a.2, II.b.1, II.b.2, II.b.3, II.c.1, II.c.2, II.d.1, II.d.2, II.d.3, III.a.1, III.a.2, III.a.3, III.b.1, III.c.1, III.c.2, III.d.1, III.d.2, IV.a.2, IV.b.3, V.a.2, V.a.3, V.c.1, V.c.3, V.d.1, V.d.2, V.d.3, VI.a.1, VI.a.2, VI.a.3, VI.d.1, VI.d.3

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Vocabulary

Lesson 1

Media: A tool for or means of communicating something (an idea, concept, message, information, etc.). Examples of media: TV, books, newspapers, the Internet, the side of a truck, a t-shirt—whatever has information on it, even just a logo

Lesson 2

Aggressor: The person doing the harassing or bullying; though sometimes called the “bully,” bullying prevention experts advise never to label people as such

Bullying: Mean or cruel behavior that’s repeated and meant to hurt someone (physically, emotionally and or socially) who’s more vulnerable than the aggressor. Cyberbullying is the digital form of this behavior.

Bystander: A witness to harassment or bullying who recognizes the situation but chooses not to intervene

Harassment: A word for many kinds of aggressive or mean behavior, it’s a more general term than “bullying”—isn’t necessarily repeated or aimed at someone more vulnerable

Target: The person being bullied or victimized

Lesson 4

Refusal skills: Skills children are taught to help them avoid unsafe online content or behavior and understand that choosing to refuse what makes them uncomfortable is one form of self-respect.

Lessons 2 and 4

Trust: Strong belief that something or someone is reliable, truthful or able

Lessons 2, 4, 6 and 7

Report Abuse: Using a social media service’s online tools or system to report harassment, bullying, threats and other harmful content that typically violates the service’s Terms of Service or Community Standards

Lesson 6

Courageous: Brave; not necessarily fearless, though, because people are especially brave when they’re scared or nervous but take positive action anyway

Student agency: A step beyond student voice, agency is the capacity to act or make change; including protecting or standing up for oneself and others; often seen as a necessary part of citizenship

What does it mean to be brave?

Thinking about how media influences us: Students name someone who's done something they consider to be brave. In thinking more deeply about their choice, they're asked to examine where their ideas about bravery come from and to talk it out amongst themselves.

Media literacy background for teachers: *We all know that people's thinking can be influenced by media. So to help students develop their awareness of that, it can really help to "talk it out"—think out loud together about how that happens. Here are a few important things to keep in mind as you teach this lesson:*

- *Our ideas are shaped by everything we see, hear and read.*
- *We interpret what we see through the lens of our own experiences, so we can take away very different messages from the very same media.*
- *We learn as much (sometimes more) from pictures as from words.*
- *Media literacy helps counter stereotypes by helping us become aware of (and challenge) patterns—especially repetition. For example, if all the heroes we see are male, we might get the idea that men are more likely to be heroes—even if no one ever actually **tells** us that women can't be heroes (absence of information is something to watch out for too).*

Goals for students



- ✓ **Think** about what it means to be brave, including what it means to be brave when we're online.
- ✓ **Identify** the source(s) of our ideas about what it means to be brave.
- ✓ **Learn the habit** of asking: "What are they leaving out?"

Let's talk



What do you think of being brave, do you think of movie superheroes or firefighters? Those are great examples, but it's important to remember that **we** are able to be brave too.

Activity



Materials needed:

- A sheet of paper and something for each student to write with
- A whiteboard or other way to write a list that everyone can see
- 3 large labels with bold lettering that students can see from 8–10' away, one for each category: "A character in media" (not a real person); "Someone I know personally"; "Someone I know **about**" (in history or in the news)

Before beginning, post one label in each of 3 corners or areas of the classroom.

1. Today we're going to talk about being brave

On a sheet of paper, take a few seconds to write down the name (or job if you don't know the name) of someone—real or fictional, living now or from history—who has done something you think is brave. Don't show anyone what you've written yet.

2. Was it easy or difficult to think of someone?

Stand if you thought it was easy. If it was hard, why do you think so? Do we talk about being brave a lot, or not very often? Where do you usually see or hear about people doing brave things?

3. The big reveal

Now you can reveal what person or character you picked by going to the label that fits the kind of individual you chose.

So let's talk. Notice how many of you named a media character or even a real person that you knew about only through media (like a book or movie). What does that tell you about where your ideas about what it means to be brave come from?

Media need to make money, and that means they need **lots** of us to pay attention to them. They present to us **the** most dramatic, action-filled kinds of bravery. So we see lots of superheroes and first responders and soldiers. Those can be great examples, but they definitely don't tell the whole story, right? It's always smart to ask, "**What are they leaving out?**"

So what other examples of bravery are there? Where else have you learned about what it means to be brave?

4. Revealing more

In the groups you're in now, talk about the reasons for your choices: What made your person brave? Were there differences in the types of brave things that real people did and the brave things that media characters do—if yes, what differences?

After a few minutes for group discussion, bring the class back together and—on the whiteboard or easel—take notes...

Let's think about this:

- Did anyone name a person who saved others from physical danger? (Raise your hand if your answer is "yes" to each question.)
- Did anyone name a person who stood up for someone who was being bullied? Most people would agree that saving someone from being physically hurt—especially if you might get hurt yourself—is brave.
- What about saving someone from having their feelings hurt—or being kind or supportive to them if their feelings already **were** hurt? Is that also brave?
- Or what about reporting something you see that makes you feel super uncomfortable—when you're not sure how the adult you report it to would react? Would you consider that brave too?

Raise your hand if you can tell me about someone who was brave in these other ways—or if you have another kind of brave behavior you've thought of. I'd love to hear about that.

Optional: Divide the room into three again, but this time divided up into these areas:

- a) The person on my paper is female.
- b) The person on my paper is male.
- c) The person on my paper doesn't identify as male or female.

When you think of the word “brave,” do you picture a man or boy? A woman or girl? What does bravery by women/girls look like? Is it different than bravery by men/boys? Why do you think so?

5. Discuss what it takes to be brave

Look carefully at the list you created about what it takes to be brave. Discuss:

- Can you imagine yourself doing any of the things on the list?
- Can you think of a situation where being kind is brave?
- What about **online** (or on a phone)—can you think of ways you could be brave online?

Takeaway

Bravery is about taking risks to help people—in all kinds of ways, big and small. Media can shape the way we think about things like what it means to be brave, but the media doesn’t always present all the possibilities. So it can help to ask, “What or who are they leaving out?” When we’re online, we also need to think about taking risks to save people from having their feelings hurt. We all can choose to be brave in **lots** of ways.

From bystanders to helpers

Students practice identifying the four roles of a bullying incident (the person who bullies, the target of the bullying, the bystander, and the helper) and things to do if they witness bullying.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Identify** situations of harassment or bullying online.
- ✓ **Evaluate** what it means to be a bystander or helper.
- ✓ **Learn** specific ways to respond to bullying when you see it.
- ✓ **Know** how to behave if you experience harassment.

Let's talk



Why does kindness matter?

It's important to remember that behind every screen name and online character or avatar there's a real person with real feelings, and it's good for us, them and everybody if we treat them as we would want to be treated. When bullying happens, there are usually four labels that describe how the people involved handle the situation.

- There's the **aggressor**, or person(s) doing the bullying
- There's also someone **being** bullied—the **target**.
- There are witnesses to what's going on, usually called **bystanders**.
- There are witnesses to what's going on who try to help the target or turn things around. And **you** know what they're called: **helpers**, right?

If you find yourself the target of bullying or other bad behavior online, here are some things you can do:

If I'm the target, I can...

- Not respond
- Block the person
- Stand up for myself (but not retaliate, which can keep the negativity going)
- Report them—tell my parent, teacher, sibling or someone else I trust, and use the reporting tools in the app or service to report the post, comment or photo

If you find yourself a bystander when harassment or bullying happens, you have the power to intervene and report cruel behavior—online as well as offline. Sometimes bystanders don't try to stop the bullying or help the target. You can choose to support the target and take a stand for kindness and positivity, privately or publicly.

If I'm the bystander, I can help by...

- Finding a way to be kind to or support the person being targeted privately, in a phone call, text or direct message
- Publicly supporting the target by saying something nice about them in response to a mean comment or post
- In another kind of public support, getting a bunch of friends to create some kind comments about the person being targeted (but nothing mean about the aggressor, because you're setting an example, not retaliating)

- Calling out the mean behavior in a comment or reply like “That’s not cool” (remember to call out the behavior, not the person—if you feel comfortable and safe to do that)
- Deciding not to spread the drama by sharing, reposting or telling people about the mean post or comment
- Reporting the harassment. Tell someone who can help, like a parent, teacher, or school counselor.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Worksheet: “From bystanders to helpers” (one per student)

Answers for each scenario on the worksheet:

Scenario 1: B, H, B (because not helping the situation), H, H

Scenario 2: H, B, H, H

Scenario 3: H, H, B, B, H

Scenario 4: The answers are all yours!

Possible modification for grades 2–3: *The worksheet scenarios may be a lot of reading for your students to do on their own in groups. So you might read the scenarios to the class and make it an all-class discussion. See if the class comes up with the right answers (below) before reading them out. (Oh, and remember that if students in Grades 2 and 3 haven’t had experiences described here, they may have older siblings who have and might want to talk about that.)*

1. Bystander or Helper?

After discussing the roles above, pass out the worksheet and give students 15 min. to read the three scenarios and categorize each response (if there’s time, have them create that 4th scenario together as a class).

2. Helpers at school and online

Discuss the answers above. Before or at the end of the discussion, ask them if they can tell you why it can be nice to have helpers around, at school and online.

3. Discuss

If there’s time, ask your students if any of the responses were hard to categorize and why. Have a discussion about that.

Takeaway

Whether standing up for others, reporting something hurtful, or ignoring something to keep it from spreading even more, you have a variety of strategies to choose from, depending on the situation. With a little kindness, anyone can make a huge difference in turning bad situations around.

From bystanders to helpers

So you know now that a bystander can use their kindness superpowers and help someone out who's being bullied. Below are 3 examples of online bullying or harassment. Each has a list of responses. Of course there isn't just one right way to go (sometimes choosing to go with more than one can **really** help), but each choice below is about something either a bystander would do or a helper would do. Read each one and decide which it is, then put a "B" for "bystander" or an "H" for "helper" in the blank next to the response.

If there's time, have a class discussion about the ones that seemed to make it harder to decide and why. Another option: The students may think of a 4th scenario—maybe something that happened at your school. As a class you could come up with responses that involve helping or just witnessing.

Scenario 1

A friend of yours dropped her phone by the drinking fountain near the school soccer field. Someone found it and sent a really mean message about another student to a bunch of people on her soccer team, making it look like your friend sent the mean message! So you know what "impersonation" means, right? The person who found your friend's phone and sent the message was impersonating her, and the person they targeted told your friend she was a terrible person, even though she wasn't the one who sent the mean message. No one knows who actually sent the mean message. You...

- feel sad for your friend but do nothing because no one knows who did that mean thing to her.
- go find the person the mean message was about, tell them it didn't come from your friend and ask them how they feel and whether you can help.
- spread the drama by sharing the mean message with other friends.

Note to teacher: *Students may find this one challenging, which means they're smart, because it is. This is neither pure bystanding nor helping because it's likely making things worse. It may well be worth discussing.*

- and your friend get everybody on the soccer team to post compliments about the person who was targeted.
- and your friend anonymously report the incident to your principal, letting her know that everybody needs to be talking about good phone security and locking their phones—maybe even include it in morning announcements!

Scenario 2

Your teacher created a class blog for Language Arts, giving the class the ability to write, edit and post comments. The next day she's out sick and the substitute doesn't notice that things are going south in the class blog—someone is posting seriously mean comments about one of the students in the class. You...

- comment on the comments by saying things like, "This is so not cool" and "I am _____'s friend, and this is not true."
- ignore it until your teacher gets back.
- get other students to call out the mean comments or post compliments about the student being targeted.
- tell the substitute that mean behavior is happening in the class blog, and they might want to let the teacher know.

Scenario 3

There's an online game that a bunch of your friends play a lot. Usually game chat is mostly about what's happening in the game. Sometimes it gets a little nasty, though that's usually more like friendly rivalry than anything really bad. But this one time, one player starts saying really nasty stuff about one of your friends who's playing, and they just won't stop. They even keep it up the next day. You...

- call up your friend and tell them you don't like this anymore than they do and ask them what they think you two should do.
- call everybody you know who plays with you guys (making sure your friend knows you're doing this) to see if you can get everybody's agreement that it's time to call out the nastiness.
- decide to wait and see if the kid stops, then maybe do something.
- walk away from the game for a while.
- look for the game's community rules and if bullying isn't allowed, report the mean behavior in the game's reporting system.

Scenario 4

Create a real-life scenario as a class, based on a situation one of you has heard about, then come up with both bystander and upstander responses to show you definitely know what we're talking about now!

Helpers have options!

Often students want to help out a target of bullying but don't know what to do. This activity shows them that they have choices, offers examples, and gives them an opportunity to create positive responses of their own.

Goals for students



- ✓ **See** that being a helper is a choice.
- ✓ **Learn** there are different ways to step in and be a helper in a specific situation.
- ✓ **Choose** how to respond using different options that feel safe and appropriate to you.
- ✓ **Create** your own response to the situation.

Let's talk



When you see someone being mean to another person online—making them feel embarrassed or left out, making fun of them, disrespecting them, hurting their feelings, etc.—you always have choices. First, you can choose to be a helper instead of a bystander by helping the target. Second, if you choose to be a helper, you have options for what kind of action you take.

The most important thing to know is that it can really help someone being targeted just to be heard if they feel bad—and to know that someone cares.

Now, not everybody feels comfortable standing up for others **publicly**, whether online or in the school lunchroom. If you do, go for it! You can...

- Call out the mean behavior (not the person) right when it happens, saying it's not cool
- Say something nice about the target later, in a post or comment
- Get friends to compliment the target online too.
- Offline, you can invite the person to hang out with you on the playground or sit with you at lunch

If you don't feel comfortable helping out publicly, that's fine. You can also support the target **privately**. You can...

- Ask how they're doing in a text or DM (direct message)
- Say something kind or complimentary in an anonymous post, comment, or direct message (if you're using media that lets you stay anonymous)
- Talk to them quietly in the hall and tell them you're there for them if they want to talk after school or on the phone
- Tell them you thought the mean behavior was wrong and ask if they feel like talking about what happened

No matter how you choose to be a helper, you also have both public and private options for **reporting** what you saw. This could mean reporting bullying behavior via a website or app, or it could mean reporting what's going on to an adult who you know will make the situation better, especially for the target.

Activity



Materials needed:

- A whiteboard or easel with large white pad on which students can stick sticky notes
- Handout: “Helpers have options!” (one per student or at least one per group)
- Sticky notes for each group of students

Possible modification for grades 2–3: *The worksheet scenarios may be a bit too much reading for your students to do on their own in groups. So you might read the scenarios to the class, then let the groups create their responses.*

In this activity, we’re going to try out what it’s like to be a helper, so let’s assume our whole class has made the choice to help out the target.

1. Divide into groups of five students per group

Each group should pick one member to be a reader and one to be a writer.

2. Groups read and discuss the hurtful situations together

The three situations are provided in the worksheet on the next page.

While groups are discussing, the teacher divides the whiteboard or easel into two large spaces with the headlines “Public Support” and “Private Support.”

3. Groups choose or create their two kinds of responses for each

Students can work with the sample responses in “Let’s talk” or create their own.

4. Students post their choices to the board and read out loud to the whole class

The teacher can then facilitate a class discussion based on the choices the students made.

Takeaway

Lots of times when you see somebody being hurt or harassed, you want to help but you don’t always know what to do. You now know many ways to help the target—and that you definitely have options for supporting them in ways that you’re comfortable with. You have the power to help people in a way that works for you!

Helpers have options!

Now that you're in your groups, each group gets to decide **how** you want to be a helper. Ask for one volunteer in your group to be a writer (on the sticky notes) and one to be a reader. The reader reads the first situation out loud and then the groups take five minutes for each situation to discuss and decide how you'd support the target publicly and how you'd support them privately. The writer writes your decisions on two sticky notes and sticks one note in the Public column and one note in the Private column on the whiteboard. To make your decision, use the ideas the class just discussed together OR make up your own way to help the target. Repeat that process for Situation 2 and Situation 3.

Note: There's not just one right way to support a target because each person (whether target or bystander) is different and each situation is different. We're just trying out different helper options.

Situation 1

A student posts a video of themselves singing a cover to a famous pop artist's song. Other students start posting mean comments under the video. What do you do to support the student who posted the video? Work with some of the ideas on the previous page or agree on your group's own response.

Situation 2

A student sends another student a screenshot of a comment your friend posted and makes a nasty joke about it. The screenshot gets reposted and goes viral at school. What will you do to support the student whose comment was screenshotted and shared? Choose one of the ideas we just discussed as a class—or decide on your own response.

Situation 3

You find out that a student at your school created a fake social media account using another student's name and posts photos and memes that say mean things about other students, teachers, and the school. What do you decide to do to support the student who's being impersonated in this mean way? Consider the ideas on the previous page or come up with your own response.

When in Doubt, Talk It Out: Lesson 4.1

Seeing upsetting stuff: What do I do?

Students learn that if they see pictures or videos that they find upsetting they should trust their feelings, refuse to watch more and talk about what they saw with an adult they trust.

A special note for educators: *Because children in lower elementary grades tend to be online less than their older peers, this activity is about helping younger kids deal with upsetting images or messages they might encounter anywhere. If a child does run into upsetting content or communication online and reports that to you privately later, follow these steps:*

1. Thank them for telling you and reassure them that they did the right thing in coming to you.
2. Listen to their report and believe what they say. If you feel comfortable, you can gently ask for more details, but don't push. In this situation, your job is to listen, not be an investigator.
3. If the child indicates the content has been shared by an adult or that any inappropriate contact is involved, report what you've heard to your school administrator, understanding the sensitivity of this information and the primary importance of caring for the child.
4. Make sure the administrator follows through.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Recognize** upsetting content.
- ✓ **Understand** what to do when they encounter it.
- ✓ **Create a plan** for talking about what upset them with a trusted adult.

Let's talk



Looking at pictures or watching videos on a phone, tablet or computer can be a lot of fun. Tap your head if you ever look at pictures or videos on a phone, tablet or computer. [Note number of tapped heads.]

- Who do you look at these things with? ("Family." "Friends." "Classmates.")
- What are some of your favorite things to watch? (Various answers.)
- How do you feel when you watch these? ("Excited." "Happy." "Relaxed.")

Pictures and videos aren't **always** fun to watch. Snap your fingers if you've ever had to look at something that was boring. Or confusing. Or scary. [Note snaps.]

Think about a time you felt really upset—I'm not talking about on a tablet or TV screen, just **any** time you felt upset. You don't need to say what happened. I'll give you some examples of how bodies can feel when people are upset. Raise your hand when you hear how **your** body felt when you were upset. [Pause after naming each body sensation...] Hot face. Racing heart. Sweaty palms. Sick stomach. Fast Breathing. You feel those feelings in your body, right?

Now snap your fingers if you've ever seen a picture or video that's made you feel upset. [Note snaps.] This activity will help you know what to do if you see pictures or videos that make you feel upset.

If someone shows you a picture or video that makes you feel upset, you can refuse to watch. That's called growing your refusal skills, and that's important.

So what are some words you can use to refuse an uncomfortable picture or video? ("Please stop." "I don't like that." "I don't want to watch this.") [*Write down students' ideas on the board.*]

- Turn to your neighbor and practice saying one of these phrases. Use a strong, respectful voice.

Give students a chance to practice two or three different phrases.

- What can make it hard to refuse? ("If the other person won't listen." "If they keep showing you similar things." "If you're afraid or embarrassed to refuse." "If the other person is older.")

This is a really important way you can be brave (referring to Lesson 1).

Sometimes, you might accidentally see something upsetting when you're using a phone, tablet or computer by yourself. Tap your head if this has ever happened to you. [*Note the heads tapped.*]

- What should you do if you accidentally see something like this? ("Close it." "Turn it off.")
- What if somebody showed it to you? ("I don't want to watch that." "That makes me feel bad.")

If you can't or don't want to refuse, you can report what happened to an adult you trust. Adults will help take care of you and keep you safe. Who are some adults you trust? (Various answers.) When you report to an adult, remember to be assertive. Tell them what happened and use a strong respectful voice.

Now we're going to practice reporting to an adult.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Calm music
- Scenarios (next page)

Musical Reporting

1. Explain the rules to the class:

- A. "I'll read a scenario."
- B. "I'll play music for 30 seconds."
- C. "While the music is playing, walk around and think about what you'd say while reporting the scenario to an adult."
- D. "When the music stops, find a partner and practice reporting with them."

2. Choose a scenario and start the music.

3. Stop the music.

4. Listen to students as they practice. Choose one pair of students to demonstrate what they said for the class.

5. Call on a few other students at random to tell the class what they'd do in this situation.

6. Repeat steps 2–5 for other scenarios, as time allows.

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Someone shows you clips from a comedy show she thinks is funny, but it makes you uncomfortable.

Scenario 2: Your sibling shows you videos of car crashes. They think it's funny when you say "stop."

Scenario 3: One of your family members is always playing games with lots of shooting in them. You liked it at first, but it's starting to bother you.

Scenario 4: You're playing a game with a couple other people, and you see one of them being really mean to the other player.

Scenario 5: Your cousin's hanging out at your house and you're watching videos together. They start watching a video that has naked people in it.

Takeaway

You might see things in your life offline and online that make you uncomfortable. If you do not feel good about something you see, try and use your words to refuse them. Also, always report what you saw to an adult so they can help everyone stay safe.

Upsetting stuff online: What do I do?

Students learn to identify inappropriate online content and strategies for refusing it. Students also learn about reporting any content that suggests someone has or is about to hurt themselves or others.

A special note for educators: *If during or after this activity a student tells you about an instance of bullying, harassment, abuse, threats of violence or even suicidal ideation, that is usually a sign of trust, and it's very important that you honor that trust. Research suggests that students will often report sensitive information to an adult **only one time**. If that first report doesn't result in their feeling helped, students will not try again.*

If a child does report something serious to you, follow these steps:

- 1. Thank the student for being so brave and let them know you will talk with them more privately as soon as possible.*
- 2. Once you meet with them privately, thank them again and reassure them you will help keep them safe—or, if they're reporting about someone else—make sure that person gets the help they need.*
- 3. Listen to their report and believe what they say. If you feel comfortable, you can gently ask for more details, but don't push. It's your job to listen, not be an investigator. If it's serious, report what you've heard to your school administrator and make sure they follow through.*

Goals for students



- ✓ **Recognize** upsetting content
- ✓ **Understand** they can refuse to watch or engage with it
- ✓ **Learn** some strategies for refusing it
- ✓ **Practice** the strategies, including reporting to an adult

Let's talk



This activity will help you handle situations where people do, say or show you things online that make you upset or scared.

Raise your hand if you've ever seen content, comments or behavior online that made you upset—it could be text, photos or video. [Note number of hands.]

Write this sentence on the board and have your students copy it and fill in the blank: "Something that upset me online was _____." On a piece of paper, write some examples that fill in the blank in this sentence on the board.

As students are writing, walk around and look at their answers. Ask a few students if they're willing to share their answers with the class.

You have the same right to feel as safe and comfortable online as you do here at school. You get to decide what you watch and who you talk with online. You can refuse to see anything that makes you upset. What this activity is all about is growing your refusal skills—skills everybody needs to have.

So what are some ways you can refuse upsetting things?

See if they come up with some of these examples: "Turn off your device." "Delete things people send you." "Block or remove senders." "Tell them you don't like whatever it is."

Make sure they hear all of these options. Encourage students to share specifics of how they can refuse content on different platforms. This will also be a chance for you to learn more, for future discussions, about your students' experiences online. To maximize trust and communication, try to remain judgment-free.

Sometimes a person will keep doing things that upset you, or you'll still feel upset about something even after it's gone. Sometimes you might not know how to handle a situation—which is just fine. A lot of **adults** don't know how to handle some situations too. What could you do in this situation?

See if they come up with this on their own: "Get help from an adult I trust."

Remember, just because you refuse doesn't mean you can't also report the content or the behavior. You can definitely do both.

If you need help and report what happened to an adult but they can't help you, what should you do? ("Find another adult to report to.") I know reporting isn't always easy. Experts say students often report things only once. So I want to tell you: Keep reporting until you find an adult who really helps you.

Who are some adults here at school you trust to help you? (Various answers.) There are lots of adults here who you can talk to if you need help.

Now we're going to practice refusing and reporting unwanted, upsetting or scary things.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Scenarios (next page)
- One piece of paper with the word "Refuse" on it
- Another piece of paper with the word "Report" on it.

- 1. Place the two signs** on opposite sides of the room.
- 2. Choose a scenario** from the list and read it to the class, or create a relevant scenario of your own.
- 3. Ask students** to think about whether they'd refuse the scenario themselves or report what happened to an adult and ask for help.
- 4. Have students move** to the side of the room corresponding to what they'd do.
- 5. Have each group discuss** what they'd say or do when refusing or reporting and why.
- 6. Call on one student** from each group to demonstrate reporting and refusing.
- 7. Repeat** with another scenario, as time allows.

Continued on the next page →

Scenarios

Scenario 1: A friend of yours keeps using bad language in chats.

Scenario 2: You keep seeing sexist statements in a comment thread.

Scenario 3: Someone makes fun of a photo you're in.

Scenario 4: Someone says something really racist about you.

Scenario 5: Someone asks you to send them a picture of you naked.

Scenario 6: You see a post saying someone is going to bring a gun to school.

Takeaway

You might see things online that are just plain scary—like someone saying they're going to do something that might hurt themselves or someone else. In these situations, tell an adult right away so they can help everyone stay safe.

What to do about mean stuff on screens

Students practice what to do the next time they see or hear something upsetting in a video, online game or TV show.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Understand** it's okay to feel scared or sad when you see something upsetting on (or off) a screen.
- ✓ **Know** they can refuse to watch upsetting things in a show, game or video.
- ✓ **Understand** how to refuse disturbing content.
- ✓ **Identify** who they can talk to if they see something upsetting.

Let's talk



What are some of your favorite TV shows or online videos? [*Call on volunteers to share.*] Why do you like these shows? ("They're funny." "They have lots of action, adventure, etc.") What emotions do you feel when you watch them? ("Happy." "Excited.")

We usually **like** to watch TV shows or videos because they're entertaining, right? Who knows what the word "entertaining" means? [*Call on volunteers to share.*]

When a show is entertaining, it makes you feel good and you enjoy watching it. Maybe it makes you laugh or just chill out, or you're interested because you're learning something new, or it's super exciting and you can't wait to see what happens next.

But sometimes a show might **not** be entertaining because people or animals are really getting hurt, someone's really mean or scary or something's making you feel nervous or sad. Can anyone tell me about a video or show that they didn't think was entertaining and why? [*Call on volunteers to share.*]

Today we're going to practice what you can do the next time you see or hear something upsetting on TV or the Internet.

- If you're watching a TV show or video by yourself and you see or hear something upsetting, you can turn it off. [*Write "Turn it off" on the board.*]
- If you're still upset after you turn it off, find an adult you trust to talk to about what you saw and how it made you feel. [*Write "Talk to a trusted adult" on the board.*]
- Who is a trusted adult you could talk to? [*Write students' ideas under "Trusted Adult" on the board.*] (Possible Answers: Mom, Dad, caregiver, teacher, etc.)
- If you're watching a TV show or online video with friends or family and you see or hear something upsetting, you can speak up and say how you feel. [*Write "Speak Up" on the board.*]
- For example, you could say, "This show is scary. Let's watch something else." What are some other things you could say? [*Write students' ideas on the board under "Speak Up."*] (Possible Answers: "I don't want to watch this because it makes me upset"; "Let's watch something we both like.")

If you speak up and someone keeps showing you things you don't like, you can always leave the room and tell a trusted adult.

Continued on the next page →

Activity



Let's practice speaking up when you see or hear something upsetting on TV or in a game or video and talking to an adult you trust. [*Help students pair up.*]

I'm going to read a scenario, and you're going to take turns with your partner practicing what you would do in that situation. Let's do the first one together.

Choose a scenario from the list below and have students work with their partners to decide how they would respond. After a few moments, call on volunteers to share. Continue working through the scenarios as time allows.

Scenarios

Scenario 1: You're watching an online video with a family member. The person in the video is using swear words and saying mean things that upset you. You decide to speak up. What do you say? [Turn and tell your partner what you would say.]

Scenario 2: You're watching a new TV show alone. You're halfway through the first episode when something super scary happens. Argh! You can't get it out of your mind, and now you're convinced it could happen to you. You decide to turn off the show and tell a trusted adult. [Turn and tell your partner who you would tell and what you would say.]

Scenario 3: You're watching online videos with your friends. One friend shows a video with naked people in it. You feel upset. You don't know how your friends feel, but you don't want to watch the video anymore. You decide to speak up. [Turn and tell a partner what you would say.]

Scenario 4: You're playing a multiplayer game online when you see one player intentionally messing up what other players are doing. Someone asks him to stop and he just laughs. [Turn and tell a partner what you would say.]

Scenario 5: Your cousins are playing video games with lots of shooting in them. There's lots of people getting hurt. You ask them to play something else, but they ignore you. [Turn and tell a partner what you would do.]

Scenario 6: You're at a friend's house and you overhear a news story on TV that makes you feel really sad. When you get home, you decide to talk to a grownup you trust. [Turn and tell your partner who you would tell and what you would say.]

Takeaway

If a game, video or TV show makes you feel upset, it's okay not to watch it. Now you know how:

- If you're alone, turn it off.
- If you're still upset, talk to an adult you trust.
- If someone is showing it to you, speak up and say how you feel.
- If you speak up and they keep showing it to, just leave and/or tell that person you trust.

Handling mean behavior online

Students learn that behavior, kind or mean, is just behavior—whether online or offline. They explore ways to handle the mean kind so they can avoid contributing to the drama and escalating conflict.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Recognize** how mean behavior online can lead to conflicts at school.
- ✓ **Identify** ways to avoid escalating conflicts online.

Let's talk



What are some reasons people act mean to each other online? (“Gossip.” “Disrespect.” “Misunderstandings.” “Being mean.”)

People can get into conflicts online for a lot of different reasons. We can avoid a lot of nastiness just by trying to show kindness to others—or just not getting involved. Sometimes it’s a spillover from something that happened at school. Other times, though, people just say or do mean things out of the blue. Snap your fingers if you’ve ever seen or heard of someone doing any of these mean things: [Note snaps.]

- Posting disrespectful comments on photos or videos
- Spreading gossip or lies about someone else
- Pretending to be someone else in order to get them in trouble
- Name calling
- Using racist or homophobic language

Raise your hand if anyone’s ever been mean to **you** online. [Note the number of hands.]

- How might you feel if someone said or did something mean to you online? (“Angry.” “Furious.” “Sad.” “Upset.”)
- Do you think you’d ever be tempted to get back at them? (“Yes.” “No.”)

It’s natural to feel angry when you think someone’s done something mean. The urge to get back at them can be very strong. Think about what the consequences might be for trying to get back at someone. [Give students time to think.] Turn and tell your neighbor your ideas. [After a minute, call on a few students at random to report.] (“Start a big fight.” “Drama.” “Get lots of people involved.” “Get in trouble.”)

Responding to mean behavior with more mean behavior is a common way conflicts start or spread online. What are some other ways you could respond to mean behavior that wouldn’t cause a conflict? (“Ignore it.” “Tell the person to stop.” “Block or remove the person.”)

When you’re angry or upset, it can be easy to say or do something mean to the other person. It’s important to calm down before you do anything else. One strategy for calming down is taking a few slow, deep breaths.

Have the class practice taking a few slow, deep breaths together.

Continued on the next page →

What are some other strategies you've used to calm down when you're angry or upset? ("Count backwards." "Tell myself not to worry." "Think about something happy.")

How would you feel if you saw someone being mean to someone else online? ("Mad." "Worried it could happen to me." "Upset." "Amused.")

- When people who see mean behavior don't say anything, or they laugh or join in, what happens? ("They're encouraging more mean behavior." "They're making people feel unwelcome." "They're being mean themselves.")
- When people stand up to mean behavior, what can happen? ("People will realize it's not okay." "People will be kinder and more respectful.")

Snap your fingers if you've ever helped someone who was being treated meanly?

[*Note the number of snaps. Call on a few students to tell their stories of helping others.*]

How does it feel to help someone? ("It feels good.")

What should you do if you don't feel comfortable or safe standing up to mean behavior you see? ("Get help from an adult.")

Now we're going to practice ways to respond to mean behavior we see online.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Worksheet: "Handling mean behavior online" (one per group of 3-4 students)

1. Have students get in groups of 3-4 and give each group a worksheet.

2. Have each group complete Section A of the worksheet.

3. Have groups trade worksheets.

4. Have each group complete Section B of their new worksheet.

5. Call on each group to tell the class what they came up with.

Takeaway

When you encounter mean behavior online, it's important to respond appropriately. If you try to get back by responding with mean behavior of your own, you can start a conflict or make something that started at school even worse—online or at school. If you take a moment to calm down and then respond in another way, you can avoid conflict.

If someone ever **keeps** being mean to you and you don't know how to make them stop, you should get help from an adult.

Handling mean behavior online

Section A

Write down one situation you might encounter where someone is being mean online.

Section B

How would you respond if this happened to you?

Why would you respond this way?

How would you respond if you saw this happening to someone else?

Why would you respond this way?

When in Doubt, Talk It Out: Lesson 6

When to get help

One piece of advice that appears consistently throughout these lessons is: If students come across something that makes them feel uncomfortable or worse, encourage them to report it—be brave and talk to someone they trust who can help, including you, the principal, or a parent. Students should pick this up from any one of the lessons but, just to be sure, here’s a class discussion focused specifically on the “when in doubt, talk it out” principle. Below you’ll find a list of situations in which talking it out can really help.

Important notes for educators:

1. Children have been taught or conditioned not to “tattle” for so many generations that it has become a social norm, and bullying prevention experts have been working hard to help children understand the difference between “telling” (tattling) and getting help. Help your students see that seeking support when hurtful things happen online is not “tattling;” it’s about getting help for themselves or peers when people are getting hurt.
2. Fostering open communication in your classroom and reminding students you’re always there for backup, supports students’ agency and appropriate reporting.
3. In the discussion below, any time students share about times they sought adult help, be sure the tone of the conversation is one that makes them feel proud and brave to have taken action, especially since they’re speaking up in front of peers.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Recognize** that seeking help for oneself or others is a sign of strength.
- ✓ **Think out loud together** about situations where talking it out can really help.

Let’s talk



Here’s a whole list of situations you might run into online. We may not get through them all, because I hope you’ll raise your hands when something on the list reminds you of a situation you’ve been in and what you did about it, so we can talk those situations out together.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Handout (select based on grade, one per student):
 - Scenarios for Grades 2–3
 - Scenarios for Grades 4–6

Please take a look at the scenarios below to complete the activity.

Note to school leaders: *Having a student panel or group of student leaders in your school (or a middle/high school in your district) mentor younger students about online situations like these can be a very effective way to teach, engage and empower younger students. If you already have a peer mentoring group at your school, have the mentors walk through the above scenarios with younger students and share their own experiences in navigating them.*

Takeaway

It may not always **seem** like it, but being able to ask for help when you’re not sure what to do is a brave thing to do. If it’s to help you or someone heal something hurtful or stop harm from happening, it’s both smart and courageous.

Scenarios for Grades 2-3

- 1. Silently read the list to yourselves.** While you do, think about whether any of those situations happened to you, whether you wanted to ask an adult for help in any of them and if you did or not.
- 2. Raise your hand** if you want to tell us what you did (or didn't do) and why. If someone already picked one, see if you have a different one we can talk about.
- 3. Let's discuss those situations.**

Scenarios

Scenario 1: You need help remembering a password. [Ask a parent or older relative to help you go through the steps to create a new one.]

Scenario 2: Another gamer really likes your skin and offers to pay you game money for it—how do you decide?

Scenario 3: You see some really mean behavior in a video and aren't sure what to do about it.

Scenario 4: Another gamer asks you how old you are and where you live—do you tell them?

Scenario 5: A friend shows you a video that's really violent—someone gets hurt in it. What do you do?

Scenario 6: You want to do something about a comment you see online that's super mean. What do you do?

Scenario 7: Someone on the playground starts making fun of another kid because they don't have a phone, and the kid is really sad. What do you do about that?

Scenario 8: You're watching a video of cartoon characters and all of a sudden something really scary pops up in the middle of it.

Scenarios for Grades 4-6

- 1. Silently read the list to yourselves.** While you do, think about whether any of those situations happened to you, whether you wanted to ask an adult for help in any of them and if you did or not.
- 2. Raise your hand** if you want to tell us what you did (or didn't do) and why. If someone already picked one, see if you have a different one we can talk about.
- 3. Let's discuss those situations.**

Scenarios

Scenario 1: You have this feeling someone hacked into your account. What can you do to take back control? [Go to the app's or site's Help section, and go through the steps they have for showing them you're the owner, then log in and change your password—and not share it with anyone but a parent.]

Scenario 2: You're unsure if something was a scam and think you might have fallen for one.

Scenario 3: Another gamer starts asking you stuff that has nothing to do with the game and it's kind of cringey—do you answer them?

Scenario 4: You hear someone being really racist in game chat.

Scenario 5: You're concerned you may have shared something online you shouldn't have (only tell us what it was if you feel comfortable sharing that, but even if you don't, tell us what you did about it).

Scenario 6: You saw someone threatening to start a fight or harm someone.

Scenario 7: Someone is posting really bad stuff about themselves online, and it makes you worry about them.

When in Doubt, Talk It Out: Lesson 7

Report it online, too

Using a school device to demonstrate where to go to report inappropriate content and behavior in apps, the class considers various types of content, decides whether to report it, and talks about why or why not.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Know** about apps' and services' community standards, or terms of service.
- ✓ **Be aware** of online tools for reporting abuse.
- ✓ **Consider** when to use them.
- ✓ **Talk about** why and when to report the abuse.

Let's talk



When meanness and other inappropriate content turn up online, people have options for taking action. In the last activity we talked about the most important one: talking it out with someone you trust. That can help you figure out the best ways to help. Another option is to report it to the app or service where you find it, which can help get the content deleted. It's important to get used to checking apps' terms of service or community rules and using their reporting tools.

Students should get in the habit of taking a screenshot of conversation or activity that's harmful or suspicious **before** using blocking and reporting tools (which could make a record of the activity go away). This ensures that trusted adults can **see** what happened and help resolve this situation.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Worksheet: "Report it online, too" (one per student)

1. Look for community rules. Grab as many devices as your class has access to. If there are several, divide the class into groups. Together, find the terms of service in at least 3 school-related accounts and look for a rule about harassment or bullying.

2. Figure out how to report a problem. Find the apps' or sites' tools for reporting inappropriate content or behavior. (If there's only one device or computer in the room, have groups of students take turns at that screen.)

3. Go through the scenarios. Everyone sits down and, as a class, goes through the situations on the worksheet on the next page.

4. Would you report it? Ask students to raise their hands if they would report the content; then ask them to raise their hands if they wouldn't report it.

5. If so, why? Ask someone who would report it to tell the class why, and ask someone who wouldn't report it to do the same.

Note: Seldom is there just one right answer or approach. Make sure everybody knows this before class discussion begins.

Takeaway

Most apps and services have tools for reporting and/or blocking inappropriate content, and it can help the people involved, their community, and the platforms themselves if we use those tools. Before blocking or reporting inappropriate content, it's always wise to take a screenshot so that you have a record of the situation.

Report it online, too

Read each scenario below and raise your hand if you'd report it in the app or service where you found it. Ask for someone who would and someone who wouldn't raise their hand and explain why they chose that option, then discuss those choices as a class. (Everybody should know that there is seldom one right choice to make, which is why discussion is helpful. No one should feel bad about what they chose to do. Even adults don't always know when or how to report.)

Situation 1

Another student posts a group photo in a public account, and you hate the way you look in it. Would you report that photo or not? If you know who posted it, would you talk with the person and ask them to take it down? How can you respond?

Situation 2

Someone creates an account of a student you know using their name and photo. They turned the photo into a meme and drew a moustache and other weird facial features on it, turning the photo into a joke. Would you report the account?

Situation 3

Someone posts lots of mean comments about a student in your school without using their name, but you have a feeling you know who it is. Would you report those comments or not and, if you would, how?

Situation 4

A student creates an account with your school's name in the screen name and posts students' photos with comments that everybody hears about. Some of the comments are mean to students, some are compliments. Do you report the mean comments, the whole account, or both?

Situation 5

One night, you notice that a student has made a comment online saying they're going to fight with another student in the lunchroom the next day. Do you report that comment online or not? Do you report it to a teacher or principal the next morning or not? Both?

Situation 6

You're watching a cartoon video and all of a sudden there's some weird content in it that's definitely not appropriate for kids and makes you feel uncomfortable. Do you report it or not?

Situation 7

You're playing an online game with friends and someone none of the players know starts chatting with you. They're not being mean or anything, but you don't know them. Do you ignore them or report them?