



INTRODUCTION *(Speaking to students and parents)*

In school students are taught almost everything you need to become adults, but the one thing our culture has neglected to do is train us on using our phones. Using your phone is a lot like the wild west. It's untamed and there are usually more bandits than sheriffs.

But there are some unspoken rules when it comes to our phones and teenagers often create a secret etiquette for social media. For example, it's bad manners to go on Snapchat and constantly send every Snap to everyone you're connected with. These are called Mass Snaps and will annoy everyone that follows you.

There is no rule book though, and so in order to learn most of the rules, you learn through trial and error. Which is why we developed today's program called: Verified. No one laid out a survival guide for your phones because at the end of the day they are just objects. But your phone is more than a trendy piece of technology.

Social Media can affect your self-esteem in a twisted way that won't go away. One solution is: we could never own a smartphone and hide in a log cabin for the rest of our lives, but let's be realistic. At some point, you might have a phone and with that phone comes social media. So, what if we had a plan of action on what to do when that time comes. Today, we want to open the topic on a very sore and sensitive subject. Today we're talking about cyberbullying.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING? *(addressing parents and students)*

Cyberbullying is any form of harassment online or through social media. This can look like: posting rumors about other people, threatening someone, making sexual remarks, sharing a person's private information

(phone number, address, etc.), or using hate speech/racial slurs. Bullying can also come in small and not so offensive comments, but the behavior is repeated. One instance of this is posting emojis as a comment like a snake. People are known for doing this to insinuate that person is a snake. You're not saying anything illegal, but when you post a snake emoji on every photo, that's repeated abuse.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER? (addressing parents)

Parents, when your student entered into 6th Grade, their risk of suicide increased dramatically, and every year that risk increases. As your student takes on a new school, new developmental stages, and new responsibilities, their self-esteem is constantly on the chopping block. To make matters worse, social media tends to highlight our flaws. So even if your student is never bullied, it can still affect them negatively.

So, when they are bullied, it feels like their world is crashing around them and they panic. Most students do not reach out to their parents when they're being bullied, and that's shocking to some parents. But here's what your student is thinking when they are being cyberbullied: If I tell mom I'm being bullied, she might think Instagram is too dangerous and she will take my phone away and make me become an Amish person who has no friends and we'll have to make our own butter.

So, if you want your student to come to you when cyberbullying happens, they need to hear this from you: ***"If someone is harassing you, I won't take your phone away in an effort to save you from being bullied, instead I will help you navigate through this."*** At the end of the day, you're the parent, and only you know what's best for your student. If they aren't ready for a phone, that's okay. If you don't think they're ready for Instagram and Snapchat, that's okay too. You know your student better than anyone else, and they need your guidance. And students, your parents know what's best for you. They know you better than anyone else does, so if they say no, it's because they love you and want to give you that freedom when you can handle it.

WHAT CAN WE DO? (addressing parents and students)

Whatever you decide to do, you will always crave that freedom. So, parents, if you think they're ready for social media, be that voice in their life that says: I want to help you navigate this, I don't want to control your every word, I want to coach you.

Now let's say you're finally on Instagram and Snapchat. You can feel the electric energy as you post your first picture and the "likes" start rolling in left and right from your followers. Your phone will look like a hyperactive firefly as you're notified of all the activity happening in cyberspace. But let's be clear. Everyone, whether you are 12 or 72, is a target for cyberbullying if you are on social media. Everyone, even parents.

So today we want to give you some practical steps to protecting yourself from cyberbullying and we want to talk about how to be proactive and reactive to it.

BE PROACTIVE (addressing parents and students)

When we say proactive, we mean that we are planning for an attack to happen. With social media, it's not an "if" but "when" we get attacked scenario. It's like installing locks on our doors, because we know there is a potential of someone stealing from our home. So, we want to talk about two ways you need to be proactive.

1.Set to Private- SNAPCHAT

Luckily, Snapchat is very private in how it operates. If someone wants to follow your student, they have to have their username, their phone number, or a special picture code known as a "Snap Code." The issue here that gets students unwanted attention is when they post their "Snap Code" in public, like on Instagram, where anyone can see it. If you want to keep your snapchat private, don't post your code everywhere.

SNAPMAP Warning

Snapchat has a feature called “Snapmap.” This shows the users’ exact location of where they are posting from. This is a huge security risk because anyone following you on Snapchat can where easily see where you live or where you are. This could put you and your family at risk. If you are using Snapchat, make sure you turn this function off. To do this go to “Settings”, select “Who can see my location”, and turn on “Ghost Mode.”

INSTAGRAM

When you start an Instagram account, your account is not set to private. When you keep your account public it means anyone can see what you post, they can comment on your pictures, and they can send you messages. This can paint a giant target on your back for cyberbullying and it makes you an open target. I highly recommend that every student have their Instagram account set to private. This lets you decide who gets to see your account and what you post. Every person has to ask your permission to follow you, which gives you a lot of control. We want to show you a quick video on how to set your account to “private” so watch this video as we walk you through the steps. ([Play: Instagram Privacy video](#))

2. Avoid Open Door Apps

The next proactive step you can take is by avoiding, what I call, open door apps. I call these apps, open door apps, because the idea behind them is you make an account, and then anyone can say anything they want on your profile and they say it anonymously. Right now, the most popular open door app is called: Sarahah. Sarahah is an app where you make a profile and you send a link through SnapChat or Instagram, and anyone with the link can leave a comment. The idea is for people to leave anonymous comments, but the danger is that you are opening the door for a lot of harassment from people that don’t care about you. Check out this review from BuzzFeed: “Sarahah is like playing Russian roulette with your ego.” If your favorite app is compared to a game where people get shot, that should scare you away.

You might be wondering why a teenager would ever take that risk. In short, there's the thrill of hearing positive comments and not knowing who said it. I've talked with some teenagers and most said they expect a secret admirer to leave a love note. The appeal is very real, but you might be looking for love in all the wrong places. If your friends want to encourage you or compliment you, tell them to do it in person. If you want to be proactive in protecting yourself, close the door on "open door apps." Other notable open door apps include: Yik Yak, Afterschool, Curious Cat, and Formspring.

BE REACTIVE

We talked about some ways to be proactive in protecting yourself on social media, but what happens when someone harasses you? Remember, Cyber bullying takes many forms. It can be hate speech, sexual remarks, sharing private information, posting rumors, making threats, and it can even look like repetitive comments. When you are being harassed, the worst thing you can do is ignore it. When you are bullied, it's time to be reactive and do something about it. So, here are three reactions you can have toward cyber bullying:

1. Don't Feed the Trolls

People on the internet that try to stir up conflict have been given the nickname "trolls," which is why the first reaction we can have is this: don't feed the trolls. What I mean by this is don't respond to their comments. This might sound contradictory because I just told you that doing nothing is the worst way to handle bullies. But this is not doing nothing, this is being strategic. When you respond to a troll's comment, it tells them that they wounded you and the second they smell blood, they'll attack even more. Trolls thrive on negativity. When you respond, it's like putting a fire out with gasoline. It starts a forest fire of arguments. You will never win an argument with a troll, even when you are completely right. They will ignore truth and keep attacking. Just check out any comment section on YouTube and you

can spot a whole nest of trolls feeding on other people's misery. Trolls love when you comment back, so don't feed the trolls.

2. Delete Comments

When trolls attack, the best strategy is to delete their comments. Snapchat doesn't have a comment feature, but people can direct message you; we'll cover how deal with those negative comments in a second. But on Instagram comments are shown for all your followers to see. When you are harassed, the best strategy is to delete those negative comments. Here's a video on how to delete comments on Instagram ([Play: Instagram Delete/Report Comment Video](#)) To delete a comment, click on your comments section of your post, and then swipe left on the offending comment. The "Red Trash Can" icon will delete their comment. If that person keeps commenting, because you keep deleting their comments, do the same action but instead of deleting their comments, click the middle button. It looks like a grey octagon with an exclamation mark. Instagram will look into that user's history and decide if they're violating their community standards. This will not stop them, and Instagram may not punish them.

3. Reporting and Blocking Users

When all else fails and you're still being attacked, it's time to bring out the big guns. I'm talking about reporting a user and blocking them. This might sound harsh, but your self-esteem is at stake and it's worth protecting. If anyone belittles you, you need to react in way that will protect you.

So on Instagram, here's how you report and block a user. ([Play: Instagram Report/Block Video](#)) Go to the offender's profile and on the top right area is three grey dots. When you hit the button, it will give you some options concerning the person. You will find the option to report that user and block them. I recommend doing both. You need to report them so Instagram can investigate them and stop them from doing harm to other people. You need to block them because they do not care about you and you don't need that negativity in your life.

You have the same option of reporting and blocking on Snapchat. ([Play: SnapChat Report Video](#)) To report someone click your profile snap code or bitmoji in the top left corner. After that you will need to click the grey wheel in the top right corner. Scroll down until you see the support button and click support. When you get to the support page you'll click "Policies and Safety." You will then need to click "Report a Safety Concern" Then click "report a safety concern" on the drop-down menu. It will ask what you are concerned with so select "Someone else's account." After that, you will need to scroll down and it will ask if this helped. Select "No" and it will ask "What is concerning you about their account?" At this point you can select whether it was something they sent directly or if it was something from their story. Then it will prompt you to list what type of cyberbullying it was. This is pretty complicated and takes some maneuvering.

([Play: Snapchat Block User Video](#)) Blocking a user on SnapChat is easier, you will need to swipe right from the screen where you can make a post. This will take you to a list of the people that are following you. Select the user that is harassing you and it will take you to their profile and on the left side you will have the option to block them. This will stop them from ever being able to add you and message you.

To the Parents *(Also send this in a parent email, as a follow-up.)*

Parents, I hope all of this gives you some hope for helping your student navigate through social media, and I hope this becomes a great way for you and your student to start having conversations about cyberbullying. You are their most important influence and they want your approval even though they don't show it from time to time. As we close out, I want to leave you with a couple of thoughts/tools that will be crucial for the years to come.

RELEVANCE IS A FORM OF COMPASSION

The best way to stay proactive in protecting your student is by experimenting with the very apps they are using. If they're on Snapchat or Instagram, it is important that you get on these apps, too, so that you can help guide them effectively and so that you can experience what they experience. Being relevant in your student's life is so important, and even though they might not like the idea of you being on the same apps as them, it's important. I believe that relevance is a form of compassion because you are making an effort to see their world through their eyes.

CREATE A PHONE CONTRACT

This isn't a new idea, but it is an effective one. Develop a cell phone contract and have your student read over it. List rules and guidelines for social media, that way they know their boundaries and they know they can come to you about cyberbullying without fear of being kicked off social media. Here's a link to a phone contract created by a great author, Josh Shipp. It may not be the contract you want to go with, but it's a great place to start when creating one:

<http://joshshipp.com/teen-cell-phone-contract/>

SHARE ACCOUNTS

Always have access to your student's accounts. Get their passwords and account names. Let them know that you might check in on them once and awhile. This lets your student know that their own words and actions will be held accountable. Instagram even has a feature where you can link multiple

accounts so that you can switch back and forth from your account and your student's.

BEWARE OF FAKE ACCOUNTS

If your student is on Instagram, then they more than likely have multiple accounts. These fake accounts have been nicknamed, "Finsta accounts" (Fake Instagram). This is becoming a big issue among students. They create one account where their parents can watch them, and then they create another account where they can be whoever they want. Some students use it to post pictures that are inappropriate. Others use it to dump all their pictures on Instagram without annoying their followers. There isn't a way to find these accounts. The only way you can discover it is if you find it by accident, or by randomly checking to see if your student has multiple accounts attached to their real one.