

Bully-Proofing Youth Techniques

PLEASE DO NOT POST ON-LINE, BUT SHARING WITH STUDENTS AND PARENTS OF YOUR SCHOOL VIA E-MAIL OR PRINT IS FINE

Verbal Bullying:

If another student is targeting you, it is in no way your fault. It is clearly the person doing the bullying that has the problem. Most kids who are targeted, are just accidentally responding in a way that the bullying student can make fun of, without realizing it. Once they learn how to respond in a way the bullying boy or girl can no longer make fun of, the targeting ends. Unfortunately, the kids who are bullying are likely to continue targeting others until the reactions they seek from the behavior are taken away. The person doing the bullying suddenly becoming nice rarely happens on its own.

Students who target others feed on a fear reaction, and attention from their peers and the kids they target. Taking this reaction away from them, without the bullying student's cooperation, is the focus of how to shut down their game and be left alone.

The fastest way to re-teach these kids how to treat you is to take the reactions that they are looking for away. By doing this you will starve their bullying behavior. Just like a stray dog will go away when you stop feeding it, kids who bully also move on when they don't get the reactions they want from the kids they target.

Kids who target others are constantly testing everyone around them. If you pass their fear and attention test you are left alone. If you respond in a way that they can make fun of, they continue to target you. Many times other kids who bully see this and then begin to also target you. This is the swarm effect. First one kid picks on you, then two, then four, and pretty soon it's overwhelming. That is the bad news. The good news is, when you respond without giving them a reaction they can make fun of, they will go away as fast as they swarmed you.

You can't control being tested by these kids, but you can control how you respond in order to re-teach them how to treat you. The way to empower targeted kids to shut down the bullying are outlined below. This outline is just a bullet point review and practice reminder for students and parents. This is designed to only be read following a student or parent training, not as a substitute for attending. These techniques will be much more thoroughly explained and demonstrated during the student assemblies, as well as the parent workshop.

FEAR: Don't show kids who are bullying any fear:

Fear reactions is what kids who target feed off of and use to scare their peers into doing whatever they say. If you show any sign of fear, that alone can be enough to keep the boy or girl coming back and picking on you again and again. Most people are not aware that they give off fear signals. These are natural reactions to being uncomfortable. First you must learn what fear signals you are accidentally sending, then you must learn and practice sending non-fear signals. This must be practiced until you can do it without thinking. Start practicing the below techniques at home, then practice in real-life bullying situations with a friend watching and giving you feedback later about any fear reactions you might still be radiating.

Adults will rarely be able to witness bullying, so peers are the only real feedback available to students who are being targeted. Below are all of the ways we tend to send fear signals when we become scared, nervous, upset, or angry. Each of the different parts of the body reacts to uncomfortable situations instinctively and feed the dance. Below we will learn how to change these normal body-language reactions, and instead react in a way that conveys confidence or "cool" and shuts down the dance.

Each section below describes the wrong and the right way to control all the different parts of the body when you are being picked on by a bullying student:

HEAD

Wrong: Head tipped forward and down. Tipping the head forward projects fear to a bullying boy or girl, and this will keep him or her coming back to pick on you over and over.

Right: Keep your head tipped slightly up. This makes you appear confident, calm and relaxed.

EYES

Wrong: Looking down or nervously around with your eyes. If you watch two dogs approach each other, one of them will always look down to let the other dog know that he or she is "in charge". This "in charge" feeling is what a bullying person seeks when picking on you. If you feed him or her that feeling, he or she will continue to target you.

Right: Always keep your eyes higher than eye level and focus on something in the distance. Don't look directly over the bullying person's head. Instead, always look slightly to the right or left. This will keep your eyes up and it will also keep your eyes from moving nervously around the room. By doing this you will not be projecting fear with your eyes. Don't look at the bully because this might

accidentally feed him or her attention. He or she might also be able to detect fear in your eyes.

MOUTH

Wrong: Chin shaking or moving side to side. Lips held apart and trembling. These signals will tell the bullying student that you are uncomfortable and scared. The more uncomfortable you appear, the more bold the kid picking on you generally becomes. Often a bullying student will become much more aggressive as the targeted student appears more afraid.

Right: Push your tongue against the roof of your mouth or behind your front teeth. This will stop your jaw from shaking. Bring your lips together to stop your lips from trembling, but don't squeeze them together. Your goal is to look as relaxed and calm as possible. Yawning quietly will project a very relaxed impression. If you appear bored and relaxed that is the opposite of appearing afraid. If you appear bored and a little sleepy you can't appear scared at the same time.

BREATHING

Wrong: Allowing your breathing to speed up. This indicates fear.

Right: Slow down your breathing silently, and maybe yawn subtly. Really be careful to look natural and not forced. A fake looking yawn will make things much worse.

SHOULDERS

Wrong: Curled forward and/or pulled up toward your ears. Just like a turtle, when we become afraid we try and pull our arms, legs and head into our shell. Unfortunately we don't have shells so we wind up curling our shoulders forward and pulling them up toward our ears. We also tend to keep our arms close to our body and our legs and feet close together.

Right: Keep your shoulders down and relaxed so you don't look tense and afraid. Do not push them down too hard or you will look stiff or tense.

ARMS

Wrong: Holding your arms in close to your body. Remember to not hold your arms up close to your body like a kangaroo. Also moving your arms stiffly projects fear.

Right: Let your arms and shoulders swing loosely and naturally as you move. Be careful not to over-exaggerate this or you will look uncomfortable instead of relaxed and confident. Imagine that your arms and shoulders are loose and relaxed. Always drag your arms naturally with your shoulders. Do not move your arms independently of the shoulders or it will not look natural. Any muscle tension in the body radiates fear. Also make sure your arms

don't stop moving completely, or you will look like a deer in headlights.

HANDS & FINGERS

Wrong: Letting the bullying student see your fingers shaking or balled into fists. If the bully sees your fingers shaking they will know you are afraid no matter what other techniques you do to hide your fear. If they see you making fists you will appear to be tense and they will know they are getting to you.

Right: **Hold your fingers together and curl them slightly to look natural. Don't look at your hands while you are doing this motion, simply bring your fingers together in a loose, curled position. Next bring the thumb to the curled index finger for somewhere to let it rest naturally.**

LEGS & FEET

Wrong: Walking fast to get away from the bully. The faster you walk, the more the bullying student will know you are afraid.

Right: **When you come into a room where there is someone who picks on you, don't turn and leave immediately. First walk slowly past them scuffing your feet and pretend to look closely at some object in the room. Once you have crossed the room, turn and slowly walk past them again as you leave.**

Try to stay more than an arm's length away from them so they can't push or hit you. This will fool the bully and everyone watching into thinking that you are not afraid of the person who picks on you. If the bullying boy or girl, or anyone else in the room who tends to bully others thinks you are afraid, he or she may target you in the future.

Walk at half your normal pace and scuff your feet slightly. By scuffing your feet you make sure your pace is slowed and it also makes you look relaxed and confident. If you are standing, make sure your feet are at least shoulder width apart. Shift your weight to one side and maybe dip one of your shoulders. Practice this until it looks absolutely natural.

MOVEMENTS AND WALKING

Wrong: Making quick jerky movements. If you watch any great actor or actress, they always move very slowly and confidently. Slow movements make a person appear cool, calm, collected and confident.

Right: **Slow down all your movements as much as you can while still looking natural. For example, if you have to scratch your ear, bring your hand up slowly, scratch your ear slowly, and then drop your**

hand naturally to your side again. Don't rush anything. Try to keep your hands away from your face when someone is making fun of you. Covering any part of your face sends out fear to the bullying person and the bystanders.

Slow down your walking speed to about half your normal pace. This will confuse the bully, who expects you to speed up to get away. By not speeding up, you are no longer giving the person picking on you the reaction he or she wants. If you don't feed the reaction they can make fun of, they will move on and leave you alone. If no one gives them the reactions they seek, they will be forced to be respectful to people in order to get a response. This helps bullying students learn to be a friend by re-teaching them how to treat you.

VOICE

Wrong: Talking back to a bullying student when they put you down. The tone of your voice will tell the bully that you are afraid. When they pick on you, pretend that they are a ghost who you can't see or hear. A bully gets most of their new putdowns from the targeted kid talking back. Don't respond so the bullying student won't hear fear in your voice and will quickly run out of things to make fun of you about.

Right: Never say a word to a bullying student, even if you think you have the perfect comeback. No exceptions to this rule. If you break this one rule, all the body-language will not help you. You will be amazed at how effective the technique becomes once you quit talking back and feeding the bullying person fear by accident.

Pretend like you can't hear or see anything they say or do. Silence, combined with the above body language techniques will project a cool and confident air. By not saying anything back to the bullying student, you will appear cool and mysterious. If you talk back they will toy with you like a cat playing with a mouse. Again, there is no exception to this rule. If you talk back, they will pick on you forever. Whatever you say back is like playing one-on-one basketball with LeBron James and hoping to win. The minute you open your mouth you have already lost and fed the bullying student both fear and attention. The section below will discuss this in more detail.

ATTENTION: Don't give students who bully attention.

Attention is a bullying student's second favorite "food". Attention is given to another person in three ways. One way is by looking at the person. Another is by talking back, or responding to the person. The third is indicating that you are listening to him or her. To take your attention away from a bullying boy or girl, you must not look at, listen to, or talk back to him or her in any way. I don't care if you stayed up all night coming up

with the best comebacks possible, if you open your mouth, the bullying student will keep coming back and picking on you. Trying to outdo a person who is skilled at putdowns would be like playing one-on-one basketball with LeBron James. Even if you practice for a whole year, he's still going to beat you. Let's say you get a couple lucky shots that go in...you're still going to lose the game. It is the same with a bullying student. This is a person who practices putting people down all day, every day. Now suddenly you think you're going to beat this person at their own game with little or no practice. If you are able to win by putting a person down worse than he or she puts you down, you'll probably end up in a worse bullying situation. If putting him or her down is easy, you might be exhibiting bullying behavior yourself.

Remember; never say anything back to a person who is bullying you. You will look much cooler pretending like they don't exist and concentrating on not showing any signs of fear with your body-language listed above. (Remember the role-play demonstration of this technique) By taking your attention and fear away, you will also take bystander's attention away from the bullying situation. People watch bullying because they want to see how the targeted person will react. If you don't react to the bullying, there will be nothing to watch and everyone will get bored and quit paying attention. The bullying student, who thrives on attention, will leave you alone because they can no longer use you to get attention and show off their power. This is the secret to no longer being targeted. Once the bullying boy or girl and everyone else knows that you will not react to teasing, no one will want to tease you anymore. Remember, showing any sign of fear or giving any sign of attention is reacting.

THINGS: Never give material things to a student who is bullying you.

It will never work to give a student who is bullying a material thing. (Money, candy, food, CDs, DVDs, games, clothes, toys, etc.) This will not make him or her like you. As a matter of fact, the more things you give to a person who is bullying, the more things they will demand. The worst part is: The more things you give to a person targeting you, the less they will truly like you or respect you. Studies have shown that kids who bully view targeted kids who try to buy their friendship as more fun to pick on. Never give a person who is cruel to you any material reward. It will only keep them coming back to pick on you just like the stray dog who gets fed.

Don't invite kids who bully you to go places with you either. This is the same as giving them things. They will see this as you trying to buy their friendship. Kids who pick on others like the power of knowing that you are so afraid of them that you will try and bribe them to not pick on you. If you meet their demands, they will only be nice for a short time, and then immediately turn and pick on you again. They have to keep you scared in

order to get more things from you. This is not friendship, they are simply using you. They probably even make fun of you to other people behind your back. You will never be able to buy a bullying student's friendship. You can only follow the suggestions above to earn respect. Believe it or not, a boy or girl who bullies will like and respect you much more in the long run if you don't feed them Fear, Attention or Things.

The presenter will demonstrate all of the above techniques in role-play form during student assemblies. I encourage parents to practice with their children until all above techniques are mastered. Even when a child can do all of the techniques perfectly at home, it is still often difficult to do everything while they are in a real bullying situation. Many of the fear signals seem to creep back out in real bullying situations. To combat this, have your child find a friend who will watch them in real-life situations and give them specific feedback later about the above body-language. This will be the fastest way to master the techniques in real life situations.

Teachers usually can't do this coaching as well as friends, because 90% of the time the kids who target others do it only when teachers are not looking. Adults can generally only catch one out of ten bullying incidents. I know that is depressing, but any kid will tell you the same thing. This is why empowering a child to permanently shut down bullying is so much more effective in the long run than attempting to temporarily fix just one situation. Of course all adults should intervene and stop any situations they witness directly. However, all the kids who bullied others that I worked with (over 400) as a therapist told me that they could drop below adult R.A.D.A.R. and retaliate or continue the bullying whenever they wanted. All of the targeted kids I worked with (over 300) confirmed this fact. This is a fact that we as adults (myself included) wish wasn't true. Unfortunately it is a reality we have to be very aware of when supporting targeted kids. If not, we will make the situation worse without realizing it, and targeted kids will lie and tell adults "Everything is good now, please don't "help" me anymore."

Physical bullying:

Physical bullying is a small percentage of the bullying that happens. (3%-5% for boys and 1%-2% for girls) Most bullying is verbal and social. However, when physical bullying does occur it is terrifying for the kids who are targeted.

I have looked into the eyes of kids who were so scared to go to school that they were getting physically sick, and literally throwing up in the morning. Adults at school and home were doing everything they could think of, but the boys or girls (they were mostly boys that I worked with regarding extreme physical bullying) doing the bullying could not be caught by adults. They were able to still physically assault the targeted student when adults were not around.

It is important to always discretely tell adults (In order to increase the odds of the adults catching the bullying student. Not letting the bullying boy or girl know you told is also key in protect the “cool” of the targeted student. Have adults stake out, and try to catch the physical bullying. They can also work behind the scene to help you stay away from the bullying student without them knowing you told. This will also keep the bullying student from dropping below adult R.A.D.A.R. and retaliating and escalating the violence.

Unfortunately, adult support and is only effective about half of the time. If the violence continues after adults are doing everything possible to support the targeted child, then getting the child self-defense training is the next step.

Most physical bullying happens on the way to and from school (bus-stops and buses) and/or in your child’s neighborhood. Bullying students will generally threaten, intimidate, and do subtle physical things at school, but most wait until they are off school grounds and away from adults to get violent. Just like a verbal bully, they feed off of fear. Doing the above body-language techniques becomes very difficult to almost impossible if you think the bullying student is going to physically attack you.

If your child is attacked he or she has the right to defend him or her self. If your child does not do this, the violence will often unfortunately escalate and the bullying will many times become more and more aggressive and violent. The chances of more serious injury increase with each attack. The older a student is, the more dangerous physical bullying becomes. Many parents tell their child to “just beat up the bully”. That is not what I mean by self-defense.

Having personally practiced Martial Arts for many years, most kids need very specific training to defend him or herself. They are dealing with kids who hit all the time, and are good at it. If you just tell them to fight, they will lose and the violence may even escalate more. The only way I know of that drastically reduces the chance of a child getting hurt, or hurting the bullying student is defensive (not attacking) Martial Arts training.

Here is a much safer way for your child to learn to defend him or herself:

- 1) Go to a local Martial Arts instructor. It doesn’t matter if it is Karate, Kung Fu, Jiu Jitsu, Taekwondo, or any other local form. Any style will have plenty of defensive techniques. The key is that the instructor is skilled at teaching blocking and control combinations similar to what well trained law enforcement uses.

- 2) Tell the instructor that you would like your child to learn the instructor’s five most effective self-defense (blocking and control) combinations. These can often even be tailored to respond to the exact assault techniques of the child attacking your son or daughter. I don’t recommend any type of attacking combinations, simply blocking and control methods. Please don’t just sign your son or daughter

up for Martial Arts classes. Ask specifically for the instructor to teach your child the specific combinations mentioned above in a one-on-one learning style. The goal is to master the five or six combinations within about two to three months. After that, if your child wants to go on and learn more, great, but at least he or she will be trained quickly, safely, and efficiently defend him or herself. If you just sign them up for classes it will often take two years before your child will be able to effectively defend him or herself. Make sure to find an instructor who is comfortable with this method of teaching. Someone who trains law enforcement would be ideal, because the focus would be completely defensive. Maybe even check with local law enforcement for recommended local instructors.

3) Once your child masters five or six blocking and control combinations tailored to exactly how the bullying student is attacking them, a strange thing will happen. Very few aggressive kids will hit your son or daughter anymore, and if they try to, it will only happen once. Now when the bullying student tries to physically intimidate your son or daughter, your child will be thinking of what combination he or she will use to defend him or herself. Now instead of radiating fear your child will radiate a calm confidence. The bullying student always senses a target's confidence and lack of fear. When they don't sense fear, they generally don't attack. (Dogs actually react the same way. When they sense fear they bite. The bullying student can smell fear almost like a shark smells blood in the ocean.)

If the aggressive kid impulsively attacks anyway, he or she will wind up on the ground. (not hurt, but startled) Much like a criminal being controlled by the police, your child will be physically in control of the situation. On their stomach is generally where the attacking student ends up. Word of this will travel through the school and no other kids will physically touch your child again. Not only do these skills prevent violence before it starts, but they also balance (as safely as possible) your child's power with the bullying student.

For the first time that boy or girl who used to hit your son or daughter, will now respect him or her. Learning to defend yourself safely is the key. There is no shortcut to professional training. Again, the instructor can and should tailor the training to the specific violent situations and settings that your child is facing. Have them teach blocking and control combinations specifically for what is happening in each bullying setting. (Examples: Hallway shoving, tripping, bus or bus-stop attack, etc.)

A student who bullied your son or daughter in the past, will often seek out your child as a friend once he or she stops him or her physically. It will now be your son or daughter's choice to decide if he or she wants to hang out with the kid who previously targeted them or not.

How to Stop Social Bullying

Facts about students who socially bully others:

Almost all kids who target others tell their parents they are being targeted by the victim.

Parents are always the last to know what is going on.

You could catch these kids on film targeting others, and the parents of the child doing the bullying would still defend their kid.

Calling the parent of the child bullying yours almost always makes the situation worse, unless the kids are 2nd grade or younger. (The training will explain this in more detail, but follow your child's lead. If your child says please don't call the bullying kid's parent, listen to them.) If you called in the past, most of the time your child simply quits telling you what is really going on. The worst part is, they make you think you fixed the problem so you will stop making it worse.

Punishing the child who targets when we catch them teaches the child who is bullying that the behavior is wrong, and is really important to do. The frustrating part is that consequences can only be issued when the child is caught by an adult. They know they are innocent until proven guilty, and they take full advantage of this. We also have to be careful trusting witnesses. More than half of the time, the witnesses lie in favor of the bullying student out of fear of retaliation. When this happens adults often believe the scared lying bystanders and end up blaming or punishing the targeted child.

Less than one in ten bullying incidents will be caught by adults when the bullying is blatant name calling or physical. Less than one in fifty bullying incidents will be caught by adults when it involves the sneaky sophisticated social-exclusion type of bullying. This is why empowering your child to shut down the dance without much adult help is so essential when it comes to eliminating bullying from his or her life.

You can coach your child as much as possible, but unfortunately you can't step on the field for them without almost always making the situation worse. This training will cover how to empower a child to permanently fix the situation. Unfortunately many adults with the best of intentions temporarily rescue kids, and accidentally make things much worse in the long run.

Leaders: These are kids who don't target others, are not targeted, and who everyone naturally follows. Ten percent of kids generally fall into this category.

Students who socially exclude may look like leaders to adults, but they are really intimidating other kids under our R.A.D.A.R. Any kid who bullies others is not a true leader. Students who socially bully are exceptional actors and actresses who fool all adults and even these leader kids who they want as friends.

Followers: These are kids who are part of the group, but not a leader in the group. They are the majority, making up about 70% of students at school. Followers are sometimes targeted by kids who bully, but usually not on a daily basis. These kids rarely initiate bullying, but due to their fear of being picked on next, will sometimes go along with the kids who intimidate and exclude others. The students who bully in a sophisticated exclusion style count on these followers to go along with them. The followers are needed by the excluding students to carry out their isolation and humiliation strategies.

Kids who are excluded from their group, or don't have a group: These kids are often highly targeted. This training is essential for these kids to eliminate bullying from their lives. They often have little or no social support from their peers and are often targeted on a daily basis. Kids in this group are not at fault in any way, but learning the strategies in this outline is essential for them to eliminate bullying situations.

Kids who target others blatantly: These kids are obvious in the way they target, and are often desperate for attention. They will often target others right in front of adults. This group represents the stereotypical bullying student. Often this student is a neglected child who picks on others.

Kids who target others in a sneaky, controlling, under the R.A.D.A.R way: These are the little angels around teachers, parents, leader kids, and anyone they want to impress. As soon as the people they are playing to are not looking, they let their peers know who is in charge. These kids run almost every school by 3rd or 4th grade. This is the roughly the age when the kids who blatantly bully become socially isolated. At this point, the sneaky social-exclusion style of bullying starts taking over. Girls often master this a few years sooner than boys.

CONTROLLER

TAYLOR-----LINDA-----TINA

TONYA

TARA

How the Students Who Socially Exclude and Control Peers Operate

The controlling girl who excludes and isolates others always treats Linda (The Leader) really well and becomes her best friend. Much like a parasite attaches to a host. She then controls the follower girls (Tina, Tara, Tonya, and Taylor) without Linda being aware she is doing this. She also treats parents and teachers with the same charm that she shows to Linda, but anyone without power is considered unimportant.

Linda is liked by everyone, and is genuinely popular. The controlling girl appears popular, but is really just feared. She does an incredible job of snowing Linda and adults. She pretends to be like Linda when Linda is around, but the other girls in the circle know her true behavior. Linda is not naive, the controlling girl is just that good at snowing her.

I've worked in therapy with about fifty female controllers, and about 25 male controllers. They present really well, and don't come to therapy as often as other types of kids. None of these kids came to therapy for bullying (because no adults can catch them). It was always for family problems that brought them to me as a therapist. Most however eventually shared their social control methods with me during therapy while trying to impress me with their popularity, or how they ran things socially. I never showed reactions to what they shared initially, otherwise they would not be honest, and instead simply tell me what I wanted to hear.

During almost all therapy I pick the brain of whoever I am working with in order to find out how they think. I then can use this to help them change whatever behavior isn't working in their lives. I did not pick the controlling student's brains

in order to train those they were targeting. That happened by accident. I initially did it strictly to help the students who were socially, excluding others change their behavior for their own benefit.

Once fifty girls, and twenty-five guys shared almost identical strategies for controlling their peers, I knew I had stumbled onto something. I realized I had to not just help the controlling kids change, but I also needed to help the targeted kids stop them for everyone's benefit. By doing this, both the controlling kids and their targets would benefit.

Every time a student hurts another student, they also hurt themselves. The kids who are bullying others just don't realize this.

What I learned from asking the controlling students the right questions was eye opening, and that is what will be discussed next.

I will be using female examples to describe the social behavior patterns, but almost the same rules apply to male kids who control and target others. One difference I noticed between the genders is that girls almost always incorporated rumors, whereas boys only sometimes used rumors when targeting or isolating other students.

Social Bullying Strategies Used to Control Peers

When asked how they control their peers, all of the sophisticated male and female students who excluded and isolated others answered almost identically. The main difference again was that the females incorporated rumors, while the males were usually more blatant in their style. Girls were much sneakier, and almost impossible to catch by adults. Guys were sneaky too, but not at the same level.

These kids presented to me initially as the All-American Girl or Guy. Most were good students, good athletes, good at Art, music, good looking, and had peers at school either fooled (The leaders), or controlled (The followers and kids they targeted). They also had teachers and parents completely snowed. They would often brag to me about how they would pull this off. Keep in mind, I initially did not react to what they shared, otherwise they would shut down and just tell me what I wanted to hear. Later in therapy, when they had shared as much as I thought they could, I would then confront them honestly about their behavior.

The Steps Kids Who Exclude and Isolate Takes to Control Peers

Once a week the controlling guy or girl would report that they would blatantly humiliate a peer outside of his or her group. This was all pre-planned, and not spontaneous. The controlling students were very explicit about showing off their power in front of the follower peers, but hiding it from Linda and adults.

I am going to use a group of girls to describe this process from this point on. If this were a guy group, just change the names to guy names, and maybe leave out the rumor part.

Once every two weeks or so, all fifty controlling girls, and several of the older controlling guys said that they chose a member of their group, and intentionally kicked him or her out.

I asked the female controllers what their reasons were for kicking a girl out. The answer was always a form of jealousy. The girl might be getting too close to Linda, she might be a better student, a better athlete, or getting more attention from boys.

Remember, these girls who control, exclude, and manipulate their peers are often high achievers who are competing with everyone.

I focused on the most common reason for exclusion a follower girl. The reason for the shunning was that girl started to hang out with Linda too much. Linda was the controlling girl's best friend, and no one was allowed to get too close to her. If they did, they would be kicked out of the social group.

I asked this question to the controlling girls. "How do you kick out the girl who is hanging out with Linda too much? Isn't Linda the glue of the group?" All fifty girls said roughly, "Oh, It's easy, I start a rumor".

The girls who excluded others all explained an almost identical strategy for starting rumors. They talked about using a girl who gossiped to spread their rumor, using a weasel girl who goes along with anything they say to back up their lie. They described how they plant the rumor with the gossip, back it up with the weasel girl confirming it is true, let it spread through the group, and then the controlling girl comes in like a hero to punish the girl she set up. The student assemblies and parent training goes into much greater detail about how they pull this off.

Please look at above chart while following this:

If the controlling girl is kicking out Tina, she will lie to Tonya (Who likes to gossip) and make up something Tina said about Linda. The rumor is almost always about the leader (Linda), because that will turn the rest of the girls against Tina the fastest. When the controlling girl plants the rumor with Tonya, she brings in Taylor (The weasel) to back up her lie. She then lets Tonya spread the rumor to the other girls (Including Linda). Every controlling girl said in so many words, "Once a girl hears a rumor from two different girls she thinks it's true". Now the controlling girl patiently waits for her best friend Linda to bring up what Tina said about her. When she hears it, she acts surprised, and says something like, "No one talks about my best friend like that, we are not talking to Tina for the next three weeks". Now Linda feels lucky to have a loyal friend like the controlling girl to protect her from Tina.

Once the controller says, "We are not talking to Tina for three weeks". No one talks to Tina until they see that controlling girl be nice to her again. She also tells the other controllers in the class, or sometimes the entire grade (Who each control a group of followers) to tell their follower girls to also not to talk to Tina. They all work together to support each other when it comes to isolation and exclusion. They may not like each other, but they do it to maintain control over their peers. I've had several of these girls look me in the eye and say, "I can take away any girl's friends in the entire school in half an hour, and everyone knows it. By doing this every once in a while, the other girls do what I tell them to stay on my good side". Some even said that they liked the power.

When I asked what they did to a girl who talked to Tina even after being told not to, all the controlling girls replied in so many words. "Oh, they won't. And if they did, I would pull Tina back in, kick out the girl who talked to her against my orders, and force Tina to betray the very girl who tried to support her. That way the girl would never support her again". Some of the girls even said, "I divide and conquer".

I then asked how they keep the girls from telling Linda what is really happening. To this they answered, "I'll find out, because Linda will try to fix things if a follower girl complains. I will find out, and can secretly punish any girl who talks behind my back to Linda. I will warn the girl not to do it again, and I will pretend like we are again getting along in front of Linda". The controlling girls let Linda think she fixed things, but really the follower girls just stop telling her what is going on.

The consistency of this control method was stunning to me. It was almost like the controlling girls read a manual on how to control their peers. In reality, they

just do trial and error from the time they are in 1st grade, and by middle school they are all doing the same strategy because it works.

Girls who try to split Linda and her controlling best friend will usually find the controlling girl 10 chess moves ahead of them. She is like a Chess player thinking 20 moves ahead, and most girls and guys are only thinking one or two moves ahead. I have just showed you the controlling girls most common Chess moves, now I will focus on how the followers can checkmate this behavior and take their group back. This will not just benefit the girl being excluded and the other follower girls, stopping this pattern will actually benefit the controlling girl the most. When this no longer works, she will be forced to treat everyone like she treats Linda. She doesn't have to learn anything new. This is a choice that the controlling girls and guys almost have to be forced into by their peers for their own good.

How to Stop the Controlling Girls and Guys

I asked the girls and guys who control, exclude, and isolate others what they feared. The answer surprised me. They almost all said, "I'm afraid two girls (or guys) will form a friendship so strong that I can't split them up when I need to, and they will take over my group". Fifty out of fifty girls mentioned this, and about half of the guys alluded to it as well. At this point, a light bulb went off in my dim little brain. The girls even said that they watched their girls, and split up any girls who were getting too close. They would pull one into their inner circle, and exclude the other from the group by starting a rumor. The whole process was completely conscious, planned, and executed in a calculated manner. This was not impulsive attention seeking behavior, like that found with more blatant styles of bullying behavior.

In order to build this unshakable friendship, it must be done under the controlling girl's R.A.D.A.R. The reason is that if she senses any two girls in her group getting too close, she will split them up before they can seal their friendship and stand up to her together. Therefore, I recommend that any student who is being excluded must secretly get together one on one with another student twice a week for at least two months before they let anyone know they are hanging out together outside of school. They cannot brag or even let others know they are becoming good friends. This is not a permanent situation, it is simply to prevent the controlling girl from splitting them up prematurely before their friendship is strong enough to resist her attempts.

Another technique to reduce the controlling girls power to exclude or isolate is to secretly call any student who is isolated or excluded and let them know you still

like them. Offer to get together outside of school, or at least own not talking to them, and apologize for not having the courage yet to stand up to the controlling girl's tactics. This lets students who think all their friends hate them realize the controller has simply created this illusion. These simple secrete calls really take away the controlling students power at the core.

The end goal is not to just support those excluded a little bit secretly, but it is to actually take the power back permanently from the controlling girl or guy. Once the above mentioned strategies are in place, the following steps are how to truly take your group back. It is very important to follow these steps exactly.

- 1) After two months of getting together outside of school twice a week, the two (close) friends now make a pact to stick together no matter what. If the controlling girl kicks one out, the other goes with her. When she tries to pull the initial person back in to split them up, they simply continue to stick together. If the controller can split up the two friends the whole process must start over and she wins. These girls or guys count on this, and there is no excuse for not sticking together. If you let the controlling guy or girl split you, you will remain a pawn in his or her game. All future attempts to take your group back will become even more difficult because he or she now knows your weakness. There are no exceptions to this. Once you decide to stand up and support each other, you can't let the controller split you.
- 2) Once this pact is established, wait for the controlling guy or girl to kick one of you out. You won't have to wait too long. Remember, the controller still doesn't know about your secret bond and friendship yet.
- 3) When she kicks one girl out, the other friend must go with the person who is kicked out. Regardless of how scary it is, or how nice the controller is being to the non-targeted person, they must not let him or her split up their friendship or force one girl to betray the other. This again must be done at the moment of exclusion. Standing with your friend is critical. There are no exceptions or excuses for not doing this.
- 4) The controlling girl will then switch strategies and try to charm the first targeted person back into the group in order to isolate and exclude the girl who supported her. Do not fall for this tactic. The controlling girl will always use it to regain her power. When it doesn't work, she will turn on both friends and threaten them. It might be something like, "Big Mistake!", or "You're Done!" Do the body language of confidence and try to look bored with the threat. Remember, the controller is like a cornered cat who knows her power is limited and her bluff is being called. She will tell everyone not to talk to either of the two students she kicked out. Other

- kids might fall for it temporarily, but don't worry, deep down they will all gain tremendous respect for the two girls who stood up to the controller. When I do assemblies, I recommend followers sharing that admiration directly with the two heroes by secretly calling them after school after they chicken out and go along with the controlling girl. This combination of behaviors is really powerful. At this point during my assemblies I will almost always see the controlling girls and guys in my audience begin to squirm, posture, or act as if they are bored. This is the only way I know who some of the controlling students are. Each of the above steps will happen almost like clockwork. Having talked in detail to fifty female, and 25 male controllers, I promise that these are their best Chess moves. They only have one move left before the two friends "checkmate" them.
- 5) The final "card" the controller will play will often take several weeks. She may punish the two friends who stood up to her by excluding them for a couple weeks. She may also try to start rumors to split them up, but I recommend the friends compare what they heard about each other and laugh. Once you know her next chess move it will not work against you. The final move will be slowly bonding and charming both people who stood up to her. As they begin to trust her, she will then begin splitting them by becoming "best friends" with one girl and then excluding the other. Don't underestimate her sneakiness or intelligence. She might take a month to carry this out with only one end goal in mind...to split the two friends up and permanently destroy their friendship. Then she will kick the girls she fooled back to the curb where they belong. I have seen this happen countless times to girls I have worked with.
 - 6) To counter this, here is what I recommend: If the controller is nice, be nice right back. Whenever she excludes either friend, the other friend must stick by and not be lured into the controllers trap. I have coached many, many girls and guys through this process with absolutely no exceptions. The girls or guys who fell for the controllers charm, and betrayed their real friend all grew to regret their decision within weeks. I would always send them back to their real friend to apologize and try to rebuild the trust they had destroyed. If they didn't succeed, the controller won as usual. Most were able to repair the damage, but some had to start over with a different friend. There is no other way out of this dance of which I am aware. Any two people who bond can stand up to a controller with success. If someone tries to do this alone, unless they are Linda, they are almost always kicked to the social curb permanently.
 - 7) After a few attempts to split the two friends the controller will give up and quit targeting either one. She will pull them in with herself and Linda and

- treat all three pretty well. This is not rocket science. Every girl or guy who was able to bond with one other friend as I described above, succeeded at no longer being excluded. The controller has no interest in kicking out two people who stick together and support each other. This does not make her look powerful and intimidating. She would rather target the people in the group who have no one watching their back.
- 8) Now I will describe the final step of taking back the power the controlling girl or guy is abusing. After the two friends are no longer targeted, most of the time, they just enjoy being left alone. Most don't want to rock the controlling girl's boat. I plead with them to finish taking the power back, but three out of four kids that I've worked with choose not to.
 - 9) However, one out of four take this next step. When someone else is excluded, the two friends ignore the controller's exclusion order and talk to the excluded girl anyway. No one confronts the controlling girl (She loves confrontation opportunities), instead they simply ignore her exclusion orders and continue to include the targeted person. By doing this, the two friends move from being followers to becoming leaders, and the other followers in the group naturally follow them and also ignore the controller's orders as well. No one really likes the controller (except maybe Linda, who she treats well) they simply fear her. As soon as her power to exclude is taken away by the two friends, her reign of fear falls like a house of cards.
 - 10) This is not about getting even with the controlling girl or guy, it is simply about going to the root of his or her power, and removing it. What is amazing is that almost all of the students who have done this, report that the controlling girl or guy actually becomes much nicer when he or she can no longer exclude. Everyone wins, probably most of all, the controller. He or she is forced to learn for the first time how to be a real friend, instead of a controlling intimidator.

The only people who can really stop this controlling behavior are the kids in the social circles. As adults, we are not part of this dance, nor can we prove or punish this behavior consistently. This has to be done by peers, otherwise, these controlling students will go through Middle School and High School making everyone's life (Including their own) miserable. But life becomes much fairer after graduation. Here is what I have witnessed working with older controllers in therapy. Many described friends abandoning them following graduation. People hung out with him or her because they had nowhere else to go while in school. However, now as adults they will go anywhere to avoid them. Even Linda fades away as the controller's behavior starts to really show.

Now approaching his or her mid-twenties, the controller often feels profoundly lonely. "Let's get married", he or she thinks. So he or she goes out and turns up the charm to lure in a spouse. A happy marriage is not possible with this kind of controlling behavior continuing, so usually I meet older controllers during relationship or marriage troubles. When the marriage goes bad, many think kids will fix or secure the marriage.

Now the controller is in an unhappy marriage with kids who he or she raises just like he or she ran their social group in Middle and High school. He or she pits the kids against each other, and makes them compete for love. He or she winds up raising a whole litter of little controllers. This is where they come from. The acorn falls right next to the tree.

The little controllers grow up and move away from mom or dad as fast as possible. They go off and start controlling families of their own, and barely visit their parents. Pretty soon mom or dad are getting older, and can't take care of themselves anymore. They are probably long divorced, so they are put in a nursing home and forgotten. Pretty soon these controllers are 95 years old bullying other older men and women in their nursing homes the same way they did in middle school.

Though I am being a little sarcastic, I am actually speaking the truth. The older controllers know this truth better than anyone. His or her behavior will drive away friends, spouses, and even children. I do not wish this on anyone, and that is why the behavior must be stopped as early as possible.

How to Help Girls and Guys Who Exclude

Ultimately my goal is to help the targets of the controlling, excluding, and isolating kids, but I also want to help the controllers as well. When I finish understanding how the controller thinks and confront him or her about his or her behavior. I always end on a positive. I explain what will happen in much greater detail than I described above, but then I give the controllers the path out. I explain it in three simple steps what any controller needs to do in order to become a Linda.

I usually talk to them about who they want to be. Most want to be like Linda. I then describe how to go from being a controller to becoming a Linda. Here are the three steps.

- 1) I advise her to apologize to all the girls or guys they have controlled since 1st grade. It usually started long before Middle School.

- 2) I tell them to remind their past targets to tell him or her if he or she slips back into controlling, exclusion behavior. Remind them that this is a habit that took several years to develop, and will not be immediately changeable, but with their help she will slowly become a real friend. Girls will bend over backward to help controllers change. They want nothing more than to have her act like Linda.
- 3) The most important step of all. Treat every girl like they treat Linda. This is what is amazing. These girls know how to be the best friend Linda could ever want. All they have to do is treat everyone this way, and they will become a Linda.

I worry about these girls and guys more than most of their targets. The kids they hurt will outgrow them, and go on to live happy lives. Unfortunately I am not as optimistic about the future of kids who continue to exhibit this controlling, exclusion behavior.

Cyber-Bullying Outline

Statistics:

43% of teens have been victims of some form of cyber-bullying in the last year.

70% of teens said that being able to block cyber-bullying was the most effective method of prevention.

81% of youth said that others take part in cyber-bullying because they think it is funny.

80% of teens said that they either did not have parental rules about internet use, or they found ways around the rules.

30% of teens wanted to seek revenge on those who was cyber-bullying them.

Only 11% of teens talked to parents about incidents of cyber-bullying.

20% had a cyber-bully pretend to be someone else in order to trick them online.

17% of teens were victimized by someone lying about them online.

13% learned that someone was pretending to be them while communicating with someone else.

What not to do:

Do not respond in any way to someone trying to get your attention through any kind of electronic device.

Do not try to defend something that was said about you. Any response gives what they said even more power. It will always feed the person cyber-bullying exactly the reaction they want from you. I know this is difficult, especially when things said are extremely cruel, embarrassing, and/or untrue, but if you make the mistake of responding, the situation will almost always get worse.

What to do:

- 1) Absolutely no response and blocking the cyber-bullying wherever possible is the most effective way to shut down the dance. Some methods for blocking will be listed below. Letting an adult or trusted friend know in order to help you with ways to block cyber-bullying can be very helpful and sometimes necessary. Especially if that adult or friend has more computer/tech knowledge or experience than you.
- 2) Contact the Internet Service or Phone Service Administrator (Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Gmail, Verizon-for texting, ATT-for texting, T-Mobile-for texting, etc.) of the site or service where the cyber-bullying is happening and report the specific abuse. Give them all the information you have available, and have them walk you through the blocking process if you are unable to navigate it yourself. Also ask them about their policies for removing abusers from their service once they are caught. For phone companies, they generally won't give you the name of a restricted number, but they will block that number (without telling you what it is) from your phone. You will need a parent who holds the phone contract to make this happen. Always block any number (restricted or not) that leaves harassing voice messages or texts.
- 3) Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, YouTube, and most e-mail providers either have a block button that is pretty self-explanatory, or they will have a link that will describe exactly how to block a person who is using their service to bully. Most chat rooms also have this feature. I will discuss social networking platforms in more detail below, because blocking only works on your page. The person cyber-bullying you can still post stuff to the pages of friends you are linked to in order to still get to you. Again, this will be discussed in more detail below.
- 4) Talk to your parents and get their help in blocking the cyber-bullying, or connecting you with a person who can help you block the cyber-bullying. In the list of things parents should do below, I talk about the importance of your parents not taking away internet or phone privileges when their child reports cyber-bullying. This is because you are asking them to help you, not to have them punish you for seeking their help. Have your parents read this outline if you are hesitant to talk to them about being cyber-bullied. Below I will be outlining mistakes that parents sometimes make that lead their kids not to share stuff with them ever again. Look over that section of the outline, because it will

probably cover the reaction you are afraid your parent will do. If you are still nervous, have your parent read the outline, and ask them what they would do to support you. If they say something that is not recommended, point out the recommendation in the outline to make sure they will be truly supportive.

- 5) You can purchase a program called Puresight at www.puresight.com. This is a powerful program that recognizes combinations of words that are hostile. It then grabs the message/e-mail/chat/tweet/etc. and puts it in a special folder before the person supposed to receive the message even sees it. The neat thing about Puresight is that it blocks the message before you read it, which keeps you from even letting the cyber-bully's poison into your head. What is even better, is that if you don't receive the mean message, you will respond perfectly...with no response at all. Not getting any reaction whatsoever is the death blow to the whole game of the cyber-bully. I know Puresight is available for installation on any computer, and there is even a version that can be installed for Facebook and other social networking platforms. Apps are also constantly being developed for almost all iPhones as well as Android phones. To check for the latest upgrades and updates go to www.puresight.com. I have no affiliation with www.puresight.com. I have simply heard from numerous parents and teens that it was an extremely effective tool that helped to solve their problems with extreme cyber-bullying. The other nice feature is that the folder that mean messages are put into also serves as evidence of the cyber-bullying if it is needed. I love technology that helps stop abusive use of technology, and this is one great example.
- 6) If the person who is cyber-bullying makes a direct physical threat (threatening to assault you), sexual threat (saying sexually creepy things to you), or death threat, then it becomes a criminal behavior that law enforcement can become involved with and prosecute with serious consequences to the person who is cyber-bullying you. If someone is threatening to physically harm you, kill you, or being sexually creepy online, immediately contact your local police with your parent. Always tell your parent if the above type of cyber-bullying is happening. Getting the law involved in a criminal situation is the best way to stop it.

It will not be that difficult to trace where the threats are coming from if they are anonymous once you include law enforcement resources. Do not hesitate to tell your parents and have them get legal advice as well after contacting the police. Someone who makes a direct threat to you has crossed a line with evidence

leading right back to them. Take this to the limit of the law in order to make sure they don't ever do this to you or anyone else again. Most cases turn out to be a terrified kid who thought they were anonymous and tough while hiding behind their computer. Once questioned by the police, these cowardly cyber-bullies often sing like a canary. Even if they used a friend's computer or phone to carry out the crime, the friend will sing like a canary when questioned by the police and turn them in anyway. I am close friends with several police officers who are excellent at getting to the truth. Do not keep a death threat secret thinking cooperating with the person threatening you will protect you. Once there is a report and an electronic trail back to the person who threatened you, the chances of them acting on the threat drop to almost zero. Why would they follow through with a death threat when they would clearly be the prime suspect. Keeping it a secret and cooperating or letting them control you in any way is much more dangerous.

- 7) Tumblr, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook are a special case because people who are cyber-bullying can post to friends walls in order to get to you. The first step is to ignore the messages posted. Try not to look at them, but I know that can be difficult, especially when friends tell you everything posted. Try your best to not react to the person who is cyber-bullying you if you see them at school. Act as if you haven't seen any messages, and if you have, you couldn't care less. For details on how to do this, review the Bully-Proofing Youth Body-language Techniques section of this outline. If after two weeks the messages haven't stopped, discretely let your other friends know, in a way that the person cyber-bullying you won't find out, that you would appreciate them pulling down any mean message from their wall. Also tell them you don't want to hear anything the person doing the bullying says or does regarding you. Keeping their poison out of your head as much as possible will really help you react in a cool calm way. Those who cooperate are your real friends. Those that don't are cowards and should be blocked. If they try to talk about things anyway, remind them that you have no interest in playing the telephone game.

Remember, no matter how painful, you must not give the impression that the cyber-bullying is getting to you in any way. This is exactly the reaction he or she is seeking. I know that may be extremely hard at times, but I can assure you it is the fastest way to being left alone. Like a stray dog looking for food, the person bullying needs a reaction. Without one they will move on and find someone who will react, just like a stray dog moves on when you don't feed it. Trust me, they

won't have to look far to find a reactor. Most students struggle with this part and can't control their emotional response. Until they learn not to feed the person cyber-bullying a reaction, they will stay a potential target.

If the cyber-bullying is persistent beyond a month, remove your profile from Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, or Facebook and go up under an alias. Only share your new profile with true friends who pulled down the bullying posts. If some mean posts start to trickle through, block the friend who is leaving them on their page. If it gets bad again, pull down the profile and repeat the alias with only truly trusted friends.

Dropping off of social networks is the nuclear option, but this is rarely necessary if you strictly limit who your real friends are when you pull down your profile. You can keep your whole profile intact and saved for bringing it back up later. You can Google how to remove and save your profile. Contact the social media platform for instructions and details.

- 8) If someone pretends to be you and does severe damage to your reputation, contact a trusted friend or friends, and have them help you spread the word online and at school that someone imitated you and spread a lie. Continue to act as if you are above the situation, even though I know it hurts and is frustrating. Once the rumor gets out that it was not you, people will also have probably heard the person doing the cyber-bullying talk about setting you up and much of the damage will be undone. (These kids who bully can't control the urge to brag about impersonating you. Almost all of them tell other kids it was them, thinking they look cool or funny, so the damage is usually less than it appears and often falls back on the person bullying in time) Most imitation cyber-bullying is done to get a reaction from you. Right when they do the imitation they tell their friends exactly what they are doing, and tell them to watch how upset you become. No response is still the ultimate response, and ruins their entire game.
- 9) If someone chats with you online about someone else and leads you into writing something mean about them, then later shares it with the person, you have just learned a very valuable lesson. If on the phone, online, or texting, always assume the person you are talking about is listening or watching. The reason you need to assume this is because most of the time they are. A favorite cyber-bullying technique is for a person who is bullying to call someone and get them

to talk negatively about someone, while the person being talked about is there listening. Girls do this much more often than boys, but it is common among both. It is so common that you must always assume it is happening. Even if the person doing the bullying is leading you to say something mean by saying it first so you will agree with him or her, simply say nothing. If you defend the person, that would be awesome, but if you can't think of anything to defend them, simply remain silent. Silence is a form of support for the person being put down. If they are listening, they will feel guilty and probably like you more as a friend for not agreeing behind their back. It really makes the person doing the cyber-bullying look like a snake in the grass when you don't play along with their game. I have talked with many kids who have done the talk about a friend trick, and all of them said that when someone doesn't fall for it, it makes them look really mean and petty.

- 10) Get help from a trusted adult like a teacher, counselor, coach, or parent, etc. Have them read this so that they will follow the same guidelines. This is important so that they don't accidentally make the situation worse while trying to help. Believe it or not, adult help in blocking the cyber-bullying, as well as brainstorming a strategy is really helpful as long as they don't break the rules of their role. After all, I am an adult, and these strategies were developed over many years of working with and picking the brains of hundreds of teens who bullied others. I also learned this through helping many kids who were being targeted. Don't hesitate to consult a computer technical person at your public library. They may be able to assist you with blocking strategies beyond the basics, or lead you to someone who is extremely tech savvy. In an extreme situation you could even go with your parents and consult with Best Buy's "Geek Squad". These people will have ideas and techniques way beyond this outline. Keep looking for more and more tech savvy people until you figure out how to block the person in the most efficient way. Platforms change constantly, but the above advice will continue to apply.

What parents should never do when their teen shares a cyber-bullying incident with them:

- 1) Never take away internet or phone privileges as a solution to the problem. Your son or daughter came to you and trusted you to help them solve a problem, not to be punished for sharing the problem with you. Even if you think you are solving the problem by doing this, ultimately your child will see this as a punishment and never come to you again. Instead focus on helping them block all types of cyber-bullying as outlined above. Get professional technical help if

necessary in order to do this as thoroughly as possible. Simply doing a Google search on how to block any specific type of electronic device or internet service platform is the best place to start. Things change so quickly that the only way to really learn how to block is to do a current Google search. When you do this, you are bonding with and empowering your son or daughter to solve future problems without you. Rescuing them is not the goal. Teaching them and empowering them to solve problems when you're not with them is the goal. The great side effect is that they will like you more for this approach, and they will trust you with other issues in the future. I have seen this happen numerous times with teens and their parents. YouTube videos are also an excellent resource. They will visually guide you through the process of many blocking techniques. Google will often lead you to these awesome training videos. I have found videos much easier to follow than written instructions because they show you the screen and the exact tabs.

- 2) Don't insist on calling the parents of the person who is cyber-bullying just because your child knows who they are. This is a case by case situation, but here is a clear rule. Your son or daughter gets to ultimately decide if calling the parents will be helpful. If he or she thinks it will work, it might. If the person cyber-bullying is a friend who was influenced by a real bully and didn't have the guts to say no, it may work. If it is a seasoned cyber-bully, it usually will be seen by the person cyber-bullying as a helpless reaction they can make fun of under all adult R.A.D.A.R. in the future. If you do call because your son or daughter thinks it might work, tell your child that if it backfires they can still come to you and you will not insist on doing the same thing again and make the situation even worse. Instead you will figure out the next step together.

If you do call the person cyber-bullying your child's parent, always protect the "cool" of your child. Tell the parent you keep tabs on your son or daughter's computer and came across the cyber-bullying. Don't ever make it look like they told. This is critically important. It will allow your son or daughter to act like they couldn't care less about the cyber-bullying, but their snoop parents found it and made a big deal out of it. With the other parents, I would insist that they have their child apologize to your child face to face. Then your son or daughter can act even cooler and pretend it didn't even bother him or her. Never throw your son or daughter's "cool" reputation out the window. Let them make suggestions in exactly how to carry this out. You always take the "uncool" hits for your kid, no matter what the situation. Even if the truth is stretched a little,

this is very important. Don't outright lie, but think about how to carefully word things so your son or daughter always looks like they are above the situation, and in the end almost calling off the dogs. You need to be the dogs, and let your son or daughter play the cool kid who was not even upset by the cyber-bullying, and instead says in front of the bully, "We're cool now mom and dad, the apology is enough". It will drastically reduce the person who is cyber-bullying from attempting to retaliate or continue the behavior. If it does continue, then a more drastic legal response may be necessary. Your son or daughter can simply say to the bully, "Hey, I gave you a chance, and you knew my parents were monitoring things, yet you kept it up".

- 3) If the person cyber-bullying makes a serious physical threat, a sexually creepy threat, or a death threat, it is no longer cyber-bullying, it is a crime. Follow the steps listed above for this type of situation.

Here are a list of websites and resources for parents and/or teens dealing with cyber-bullying. I have no affiliation with these websites, most were brought to my attention by parents and students.

www.puresight.com Software that blocks cyber-bullying attempts by recognizing phrases, and notifies you as a parent. They also have a cyber-bullying resource tab on their home page.

www.spectorsoft.com Software that lets you monitor everything your child does on-line. What they send, receive, and search will be tracked. Good to get if you suspect or have caught your child targeting others. Also excellent if you are having problems with tech-savvy teenagers going to sites you have prohibited.

www.keylogger.com A free version of software that attempts to do similar functions that Spectorsoft performs. It is not quite as good, but it is free. For less tech-savvy teens this may be enough.

www.meetcircle.com Circle and Circle Go control your child's phone, tablet, and computer no matter where they are. Can be set to restrict certain websites, and also can set game play on a device for a limited time, and then it will shut off automatically.

www.internetsuperheroes.org Provides general information and links.

www.stopcyberbullying.org Provides relevant cyber-bullying prevention and Internet safety information for parents, teachers, police officers, kids, and teens.

www.ncpc.org This website is a National Crime Prevention Council website. It has internet safety and cyber-bullying information.

www.wiredsafety.org Provides general information and links.

www.cyberbully.org Provides general information and links.
www.netbullies.com Provides general information and links.

www.nolo.com Legal templates and documents