

Cyber Bullying and Internet Victimization

What is Bullying / Cyber Bully?

Bullying,” as defined by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*

(Tonja, et al, 2001), involves,... a specific type of aggression in which (1) the behaviour is intended to harm or disturb, (2) the behaviour occurs repeatedly over time, and (3) there is an imbalance of power, with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one. This asymmetry of power may be *physical* or *psychological*, and the aggressive behaviour may be *verbal* (e.g., name calling, threats, taunting, malicious teasing), *physical* (e.g., hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings), or *psychological* (e.g., spreading rumours, engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation).

What has come to be called “cyber bullying,” like “face-to-face bullying” (also termed “real life” bullying), involves deliberate and repeated aggressive and hostile behaviours by an individual or group of individuals intended to humiliate, harm, and control another individual or group of individuals of lesser power or social status (Tonja, et al., 2001).

Cyber bullying involves information and communication technologies such as Internet web sites, e-mail, chat rooms, mobile phone and pager text messaging, and instant messaging. Instances of cyber bullying include:

- 1) people sending hurtful, cruel, and oftentimes intimidating messages to others (e.g., “Flame Mail”) designed to inflame, insult, or enrage;
- 2) “Hate Mail” (also known as “Cyber harassment”), which constitutes hate-inspired and oppressive harassment based on actual or perceived social identities in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexuality, physical and mental abilities, socioeconomic class, and others;
- 3) people stealing other peoples’ screen names and sending inflammatory messages under those screen names to others;
- 4) anonymous postings of derogatory comments about another on web journals called “blogs” or on social networking sites (e.g., MySpace or Facebook);
- 5) young people creating online polling booths, for example, to rate girls and boys as the “hottest,” “ugliest,” “most boring,” “biggest dyke,” or “wimpiest faggot” in the school;
- 6) individuals taking pictures of others in gymnasium locker rooms with digital phone cameras and sending those pictures to others (a form of what has come to be known as “sexting”), or posting them on Internet web sites;
- 7) people creating web sites with stories, cartoons, caricatures, pictures, or “jokes” ridiculing or mocking others;
- 8) posting material about a person involving private, sensitive, or embarrassing information, for example, “outing” a person’s sexual identity to classmates and sometimes to the targets’ parents or guardians;
- 9) sending intimidating or threatening messages (also known as “Cyber stalking”);
- 10) or actions designed to isolate and exclude a person from online communication technologies.

Another key feature that makes cyber bullying so problematic is the fact that hurtful or humiliating content can be sent to a large number of people in a short period of time.

Why do people involve themselves in these negative behaviours?

Ego based; promote own social status

“Power-Hungry”

Want reaction

Controlling with fear

Technologies are here to stay. The Internet places a seemingly endless library in our homes; it allows us to communicate with others instantly; and it enables us to spread information with an efficiency and power that humankind has never before witnessed. The free flow of information on the Internet provides wondrous new opportunities for people to express themselves and communicate.

As social reputation-shaping practices such as gossip and shaming migrate to the Internet, they are being transformed in significant ways. Information that was once scattered, forgettable, and localized is becoming permanent and searchable. Ironically, the free flow of information threatens to undermine our freedom in the future.

These transformations pose threats to people's control over their reputations and their ability to be who they want to be. Will we enslave ourselves by making it impossible to escape from the shackles of our past and from the stain of gossip and false rumours?

Gossip isn't inherently good or evil — it has its virtues as well as its vices. On the Internet, however, gossip is being reshaped in ways that heighten its negative effects and make its sting more painful and permanent.

The behaviour of people on the Internet is simply an extension and reflection of the attitudes and forms of discrimination adult's model on a regular basis in the physical world.

We can't outlaw all of it. We can't stop all of it. Bullying is an age-old problem. But we can be educated about it. We can know what it is that we're dealing with. We can balance our right to free speech and our need for discourse.

Research had demonstrated a number of serious consequences of cyber-bullying victimization. For example, victims have their self-esteem lowered, increased suicidal ideation, and a variety of emotional responses, cyber-bullying back, being scared, frustrated, angry, and depressed. One of the most damaging effects is that a victim begins to avoid friends and activities, often the very intention of the cyber-bully. Cyber-bullying campaigns are sometimes so damaging that victims have committed suicide.

How is this related to Swedish Vallhunds?

The cyber bullying by proxy (using others to voice their opinions or spread gossip), Internet Slander, Cyber Vigilantism, Flaming, Peer Bullying and online rumour mill has been working overtime on chat lists, private emails and facebook in recent months.

There are individuals including myself, in this breed that have been vilified by an array of false information, innuendo and insinuations, that the breed cyber website and breed police seem to want aired.

Their accusations have no validity and are clearly unsubstantiated and shown to have been made with malice, in the sense of ill-will or spite.

In addition to those few who are perpetuating rumours and fear mongering accusations there are those individuals and clubs who have involved themselves in this vigilantism, without verification of the aspersions and information that has been cast. It is very easy to change and remove information and make it appear something that it is not. There has been no checking of information, asking people their version of the accusations or their opportunity to defend their reputations. These individuals and clubs have just taken the word of ONE individual and declared the accused as guilty and then acted as judge, jury and executioners in their deliberations.

Firstly how gutless are these people who have cast aspersions and accusations of people hiding anonymously yet they act in the same manner as their accusations.

Secondly, what right do these people and clubs have to act in the unprofessional manner in which they have acted? Some of their accusations are that I and others have acted without consultation to others. Have we, check your facts! Funny. how it appears appropriate for these individuals and clubs to act without CONSULTATION, CHECKING and VERIFYING facts or information. Nothing but double standards and an outright witch hunt. What century do we actually live in and how mature and professional are some people in this breed.

No breed club should enter into personal victimisation, cyber bullying or breed politics by deliberately setting out to make examples of individuals involved in this breed, nor do clubs have the right to judge individuals, unless animal cruelty is involved. Breed clubs should be there for the breed and NOT there to demean the work of others in this breed. How dare breed clubs act as website police without counsel! How dare breed clubs issue false information and accusations without accurate knowledge!

Breed clubs should be promoting the breed and the breed's health positively. They should promote ALL resources on the breed without favour to any individual. The conduct of some in this breed and the clubs with which these people are involved is nothing less than shameful.

People in this breed need to remember we are all individuals with thoughts and feelings; we are involved because we love our dogs. Whilst some people may not agree with someone's opinion, we should respect their right to have that opinion without vilification, after all we are supposed to be adults but the conduct of some in recent times has been nothing short of school yard antics for the purposes of isolating and smearing individuals and encouraging others to follow suit.

People have a right to manage their dogs, websites and lives without others appraising their every move through malignant belligerent whisperings.

How to Stop Persecuting Behaviours

Cyber bullying wouldn't work if the bullies didn't convince others to join in

- The accused have a Right to a defense
- Don't forget the presumption of innocence
- You should think about things before you speak or respond to people's gossip.
- For nasty comments said to you - the best thing to do is to say nothing and walk away, or just use one-word replies e.g. yes or hmm to show that you are not interested in the bully's/bullies nonsense.
- Carry on being yourself and carry on feeling good about yourself - Don't believe the rubbish they say and don't let them stop you being you.
- Don't show that you are angry or upset. Don't give bullies the satisfaction, if you get angry/upset this will only up their ante? Angry outbursts only fuel the gossip's fire.
- Do not retaliate - It can throw things out of hand and you could end up being blamed instead of the bully.
- Remember you are not telling tales when you report bullying - You and everyone else has the right to be safe, happy treated fairly and free from any kind of bullying. Keep on speaking up till someone listens to you and takes you seriously.
- Control the situation. Avoid the impulse to defend yourself or discuss the accusations--this only validates the gossip and gives him or her, an opportunity to make you look bad. Don't give your slanderer

a chance to make you angry. Say what you need to say and then leave without another word. Gossiping is an act of cowardice and you can intimidate gossips through your cool and pointed behaviour.

- Remain detached and above the situation by remarking that it's sad how much time some people have to waste spreading lies and distorting the truth.
- Refuse to lower yourself by gossiping in retaliation. Responding in kind makes you as bad as the person who spread lies.
- Remember it is never your fault and bullying of any kind **is wrong** and there is **no excuse what-so-ever!**
- Remember bullies will minimize the matter or deny it because bullies are cunning and most bullies bully when no one in authority is around.
- Remember we are all individuals, no one has a right to judge or tell you how to live your life providing you are within the law, have respect and value of others rights.

There are many resources on the internet covering this subject, but more importantly to all who receive posts and emails from people in this breed that has nasty content about individuals, their websites or their dogs. Remember if these people are doing this about someone else they will do it to you and before long you could become their target. Do not feed their disease by responding to their diatribe. Check facts, ask the accuser for their side of the story.

“Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.” ~Buddha

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