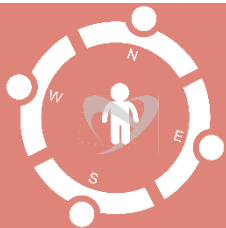GRADE 10 - CLASSROOM

COMPASS CHILD PROTECTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

CYBERBULLYING
Parent Handout

Cyberbullying

Grade 10 - PARENT FOLLOW-UP SESSION

With children who attended the parish/school session

Instruction for the Parents

Your child attended Compass Child Protection Children's program session about dealing with cyberbullying. The classroom session held was to open the discussion with you, the parents, on this subject and also to deal with the more sensitive issues regarding this topic. This packet contains the material you will need for the discussion and a step-by-step guide on how to cover it.

You are encouraged to, sometime within the next week, please set aside 30 minutes and discuss this material with your child. This packet contains the material you will need for a follow-up discussion and a step-by-step guide for suggestions.

PARENTS: Before you begin the discussion with your child, please go through all the material in this packet. Be prepared to discuss this material in ways that will be appropriate for your child.

Session Overview:

The teacher discussed with the students what bullying is and what it is not. The students completed an activity reflecting on their own possible bullying tendencies.

The students were then encouraged to base their behavior on the teachings of Lord Jesus on loving one's enemies and repaying good to those who have been bad to them, and also the teaching 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you.'

The teacher then discussed issues people may be going through, causing them to behave the way they do. Also, the different ways people can deal with their underlying issues instead of reacting in unhealthy ways were discussed.

The students participated in another self-reflection activity to consider if they have ever been a victim of cyberbullying.

Next, the teacher discussed roles that the bystander can play in cyberbullying prevention.

Strategies that the students can use as a bully, as a victim and as a bystander were then discussed with the help of two scenarios.

The teacher encouraged the students to think of good netiquette (etiquette on the internet) that they should observe in their stand against cyberbullying and write these down.

The session ended with a reflective reading of I Corinthians 13:4-7 and a prayer.

Background Information for parents

Following is information to help you better understand and distinguish between cyberbullying and cyber-harassment/cyber-stalking. This can be important as the seriousness and methods of approaching each situation may be different.

- ### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is an electronic form of bullying that uses cyber-technology or digital media to hurt, threaten, insult, embarrass, blackmail or otherwise target someone. Cyberbullying is committed by a minor to another minor, no adults are involved; however, due to the viral nature of the internet, this can involve adults at later stages.

The effects should not be ignored. Look out for these signs that may indicate that your child is a victim of cyberbullying.

Signs that a teen is being bullied:

➢ Sudden hesitancy to be online or avoiding it altogether

➢ Visibly upset or depressed after using the computer or cell phone

➢ Nervous or scared when an Instant Message, text message or Email appears

➢ Spending unusual and longer hours online

➢ Falling behind in daily life routines and school, or wanting to avoid school

➢ Withdrawing from friends and often alone

➢ Suddenly sullen, evasive, withdrawn, marked change in personality or behavior in a negative sense

➢ Trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, excessively moody or crying, seeming depressed

➢ Suspicious phone calls, e-mails or hate notes

- **Cyber-harassment and Cyber-stalking:**

Cyber-harassment and Cyber-stalking are similar to cyberbullying, but involve a much more serious *intent* to threaten or hurt, often are repetitive, and the desire is to harass, distress or intimidate the individual. In these, an adult is the perpetrator. While cyber-harassment is purely an online activity, cyber-stalking can lead to physical stalking, harassment and other related crimes in the real world. Cyber-stalking also involves being repeatedly contacted or emailed or threatened to the extent that the victim feels uncomfortable or unsafe.

Cyber-stalkers may also use technology like Spyware by which they can monitor their victim's activities, track the location of the victim by their photographs using GPS technology, intercept phone calls or messages or emails; impersonate the victim; and may even watch the victim through hidden cameras.

Both cyber-harassment and stalking are illegal and definitely need to be reported. They should never be taken lightly and your teen's online safety should NOT be taken for granted.

It is always advisable to store every piece of evidence of harassment or stalking, especially when you need to report to the police to protect someone.

- **Protecting your teen from Cyber-harassment and Cyber-stalking**

➢ Keep up-to-date on the advances in the internet as well as the dangers.

➢ Use an internet monitoring software to gain access to your teen's electronic communications and monitor their activities online.

➢ Use a reliable internet filter.

➢ Enable parental controls where available.

➤ Help your teen with their privacy settings and keep updating the contact list to only those who your teen currently is friends with. Limit the amount of people who can see photographs and other personal information.

➤ Educate your teen about the danger of announcing their location via status updates of GPS-enabled applications and photographs.

➤ Google your teen's name and set up a Google alert to notify you every time your teen's name appears in a blog post or online comment anywhere on the Internet.

PARENT - TEEN PROCESS

Here are some thoughts and questions to help supplement your discussion with your child.

1. Difference between cyberbullying and cyber-harassment and who to contact for help.

In the classroom session, we discussed cyberbullying in depth but only mentioned cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking fleetingly. We discussed what bullying meant (including cyberbullying) and stated that bullying involved teens or children as the perpetrators, not adults; we also talked about ways to deal with cyberbullying, as a victim or as the bully. We even discussed the role of a bystander. Your role as a parent in this discussion would be to explain what cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking are, the difference in how to handle them, and who they can contact if this happens to them.

Ask your child to explain to you what they understood about cyberbullying and how they can respond to bullying, especially as a victim. Ask them what they learned about how they should base their behavior to others- even their bullies. Then explain what cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking are and how they are different from cyberbullying.

Explain how this may expose them to greater danger. Also explain how cyberbullying can sometimes lead to an adult getting involved and adding to/continuing the attack, due to the viral nature of the internet.

Ask your teen to decide and write down the names and contact numbers of responsible adults they are willing to share with or contact if they are in any of these dangers. Emphasize that the more repeated the episodes of harassment are, the greater the threats and the more dangerous the methods, the more likely law enforcement may need to be contacted, especially when it involves personal contact information being shared online, it must

be treated very seriously as it exposes your teen to grave dangers.

Explain that it makes no difference if bullying was started by a classmate or someone younger and even if it was just for fun. The minute adult strangers are involved, it just worsens quickly and can be dangerous, and so they MUST report it to a responsible adult.

As parents you need to be informed about the measures that can be taken in cases of cyber- stalking. Explain to your teen to take the following steps (help them take the steps):

- Start by telling the person not to make contact again.

- Save all communications without any alterations for evidence. Do not delete or reformat anything.

- Save any emails, etc. that suggest violent or sexual threats and contact law enforcement.

- If the harassment continues, contact the harasser's Internet service provider who can intervene by directly contacting the stalker or closing their account.

- Keep a record of your contacts with officials.

- Talk to or approach others for help if you don't have the courage to act, but don't neglect to act.

Remind your teen that the lessons on doing good to those who hurt you or cause you pain **do not apply** when it is someone who is harassing them online, because inaction may only expose them to more severe danger. Emphasize that their reporting can be done while maintaining a loving and forgiving spirit.

2. Discuss with your teen about how they can prevent being bullied online.

In the class, the students reflected on their own bullying tendencies. We discussed being a victim of cyberbullying and responding to bullies in a positive way.

Discuss with your teen how they can do a regular self-check on the internet to avoid being bullied. Help them to do this by doing a Google search of their name and showing them the results. In this way, they will become aware of any information, images, posts or polls about them that they didn't know about.

Also, inform your teen of the wisdom in regularly checking their different email accounts and social networking sites, even those that are hardly used and almost non-functional. These may be used to post malicious fake information or gain access to their contacts and groups; sometimes these can be used to post on hate polls or groups, which may seem like it's your teen that's causing it. Encourage them to check their sent messages and trash when there are indications of people receiving emails they don't recall sending.

Re-emphasize that they shouldn't reveal personal information including identification details or passwords to ANYONE, and also warn them against posting personal information and photographs on any sites and sharing them with people.

3. Discuss your teen's list of netiquette.

In the class, we discussed the importance of observing good netiquette and helped the students create their own list of netiquette – their own checklist of behavior to prevent cyberbullying. They were encouraged to look at this from time to time to ensure they follow it.

Ask your teen to share their list of netiquette with you and why they chose those particular commitments. Discuss

each netiquette and how that would ensure your teen's good behavior towards others and the loving and forgiving response toward people who act like bullies. Discuss the importance of holding on to the decisions they made. Help them to understand their responsibility in cyberbullying prevention even if they're just observers or bystanders.

4. End with prayer.

You have discussed some sensitive and important issues with your teen, and have also discussed the netiquette that they should observe. Now pray with your teen for God to help them with all of this. Pray for God's protection over them from cyberbullying as well as predators or other adults who may harass them online. Pray for God's grace for your teen to observe the right netiquette and to prevent cyberbullying in any way they can, and to be sensitive to the pain and struggles that others may go through. Pray for grace for your teen to love those that hurt them and to do good to others no matter how they are treated.