

# Stand Up! Speak Out!

## CYBER SNIPER: *It's a Mean Girls Kind of Game* Guide for Discussion, Reflection or Role Play

A recent study finds that 54% of young people worldwide worry about being bullied online. No wonder: it happens 24/7, spreads like wildfire, and is just as hard to contain.

### Vocabulary

breach of confidence: publicizing information that was private and shared in confidence; a betrayal  
bystander: a witness; witnesses to cyber bullying who are *silent bystanders* are passive partners in the act  
complicity: being a partner to a crime; witnesses to bullying of *any kind* who remain silent are *complicit*  
compassion: *to suffer with*; the ability to feel someone else's pain, and the desire to lessen that pain  
cyber sniper: a cyber bully; a cowardly person who (mis)uses electronic communication and social media tools—including Facebook, texting, instant messaging, email, etc.—to intentionally hurt someone  
empathy: the ability to feel how someone else feels by imagining what it's like to *be* that person  
schadenfreude: a German word, pronounced *shy-din-FROI-deh*; taking pleasure in the suffering of others;  
someone who enjoys, or finds humor in, seeing someone else hurt, embarrassed, humiliated, destroyed  
sniper: someone who shoots at others from a concealed (hidden) place; used as a metaphor here

### *Cyber sniper / deals in cowardly fare*

#### *Talkin' trash, talking mean / While you hide behind a screen somewhere*

1. Why is the cyber bully referred to as a *sniper*? Why is cyber bullying considered *cowardly fare*?
2. What's the difference between being a witness to face-to-face bullying or to cyber bullying? How does the ability to be invisible online affect your role as a perpetrator, collaborator, or bystander?
3. If you witness cyber bullying but don't speak out about it, are you *complicit*? What tools does your school have to help you (anonymously) report it? How do you decide when to use them?

### *Cyber sniper / fires words like a gun / Spreading lies like poison, to destroy someone*

4. Spreading lies is slander. Spreading truths *never meant to be shared* is a betrayal, a *breach of confidence*. **Scenario:** Someone trusted you with a secret, something confidential. Now you're no longer friends. Do you still honor that trust? Why or why not? Do *your* secrets have expiration dates? As relationships change, do you expect people to honor or betray your trust?
5. **Scenario:** You shared a piece of *very private information* about yourself with your best friend last year. Now you've had a falling out and, just to hurt you, s/he posted it online. Now *everyone everywhere* knows: peers, parents, relatives, future employers, and college admissions offices. Describe how you feel. How will it effect your response to posts that might *destroy someone*?

### *Cyber sniper / do you feel so weak and small*

#### *Do you only feel the power when you watch somebody fall*

6. A recent study challenges the idea that bullies *feel so weak and small*. In fact, it finds that bullies often have very *high* self esteem. They often become bullies because they are seen as having power, either physical (they're big) or social (they're popular). Less powerful kids are drawn to them because it gives them a sense of safety or protection. Have you seen this or a different scenario played out in your school? How do you think face-to-face bullies get their power? How do cyber bullies get theirs? How can students help change the power balance?

### *Do you know just what it's like / to feel humiliated and alone*

7. Some students keep such a low profile, to avoid negative attention, that they become invisible: a lonely place to be. **Scenario:** You are that invisible person. What is *one school day* like for you?

### *It's a Mean Girls kind of game / Taking pleasure in my pain / Have the courage not to play / Compassion is another way / Cyber sniper / Find another way*

8. What do people get out of *schadenfreude*? Describe an example you have witnessed. Who were the perpetrators, the collaborators (who joined in), the bystanders (who watched)? Imagine *being* in each of those roles. Describe or role play what each one is thinking and feeling, and why.
9. ***It takes courage to be kind.*** Explain why. What are the risks? What are the rewards? Describe or role play a situation in which you, or someone you know, risked being kind in the face of cruelty.