



Cybercitizen Challenge

It's a Dog's Life

Guiding level: Brownies / Guides

Topic: Ethics on the Internet

This activity doesn't require a computer.

This activity encourages girls to think about the importance of treating others with respect in online communications. It also stresses that all of us have a role to play in stopping bullying behaviour online.

Preparation

- Have a copy of *Orkad's Story* (see below) on hand to read to the girls.
- Photocopy the handout *Four Steps to Stop Cyber Bullying* (one for each girl).

At Your Meeting

Start off by reading the following story to the girls:

Orkad's Story

There once was a dog named Orkad. His master, Ray, who is nine years old, took good care of him — taking the time to walk him every day. But not for long walks, because Ray also liked to spend time playing Internet games. His favourite was a game where the player must look after a dog; there was an image of a dog on the screen and the player had to feed it, furnish its room and buy it toys to keep it entertained. (*You can ask the girls if they can guess the game Ray is playing – it sounds a lot like Webkins, a favourite with kids this age.*)

For hours on end, Orkad would watch Ray play this game, all the while waiting to be walked. Those were the times when he felt really lonely and dreamed about having someone to communicate with ... oh, of course, there was always Katy, the neighbour's cat, but they really didn't have much in common.

There was something else that drove Orkad crazy: his kibble. He hated the kibble Ray bought for him. Obviously, he couldn't tell Ray how he felt because he was a dog and everyone knows dogs can't talk ... and Orkad was no exception. But strange as it may seem, there was something he did know how to do: he could operate a computer. Watching Ray hit the keyboard day in, day out, Orkad had learned a thing or two.



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One day, Ray left for school without turning off his computer. Orkad, who was home alone and bored, jumped up on the office chair and after only a moment's hesitation, typed out the word "dog" in the little window at the top of the screen. His heart beating like a drum, he clicked on the first link.

It was a discussion group where people talked about their problems with their dogs and gave each other advice. That was exactly what Orkad was looking for because he knew all about dog problems. He was just about to respond to a message when he heard Katy meowing mockingly at the window.

"What are you trying to do, Orkad? You're a dog, and the Internet is for humans!"

"You're right, Katy ... but on the Internet, no one knows I'm a dog!"

From that day on, Orkad's life was transformed: he could communicate and help people resolve problems with their dogs and everyone respected his advice. He was secretly hoping that Ray would one day join the discussion group to seek advice because then Orkad would be able to explain to him how he could improve his dog's life. But that day never came.

It was time for summer vacation and Ray left for camp, leaving Orkad with Ray's mom and dad. Orkad was disappointed that his master hadn't joined the discussion group and, out of frustration, he decided to write a message directly to Ray. Of course, his message was anonymous ... he didn't want to blow his cover!

The message read: "You're trying to poison your dog with this gross kibble. If you keep it up, I'll come after you!"

Orkad was just about to hit the "Send" button when he heard a shocked meow at the window. It was Katy again:

"Orkad!! Don't you send that message to Ray! You're making threats. He'll be absolutely terrified!"

"Come on! It's just a joke to get him to understand that I don't like my kibble," said Orkad, hitting "Send." "In fact, check it out. I'm sure Ray must have already received the message. Can you smell fear anywhere?" he asked, running his nose all over the screen and keyboard. "I know Ray's odour when he's afraid; I would recognize it anywhere and I'm not smelling any fear here." (Sniff! Sniff!)

Deconstructing the Story

Engage the girls in a discussion about the story.



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- Imagine that you are Ray. Would you be scared if you received a message like the one sent by Orkad? Why? (*Ray doesn't know the identity of the person who is sending him the threat. Because of this, he doesn't know whether this is serious or a joke.*)
- Orkad doesn't feel that he is harming Ray. Why not? (*Orkad is a dog, and dogs use their sense of smell to identify fear in humans. But on the Internet, the sense of smell doesn't work – Orkad doesn't realize this.*)
- Think of what Katy could have told Orkad to convince him to stop sending this type of message over the Internet. (*Katy is the bystander, a positive witness trying to prevent cyber bullying. Katy's response must not be limited to "it's wrong." She must also explain to Orkad that although he cannot smell Ray's fear, it might still exist. The Internet does not provide all the sensory information that Orkad uses in the physical world.*)
- As human beings, are there signs that we cannot see when we communicate online, as opposed to speaking directly with someone in the physical world? (*There is a loss information on the Internet – we can't read people's expressions or hear their tone of voice.*)

Explain that when people threaten or harass others using the Internet or cell phones, they are engaging in "cyber bullying."

Discuss the following points with the group:

- In the story, Katy is a bystander watching Orkad send the message. Even though she isn't sending the message, she is part of the bullying because she doesn't stop Orkad. In what other ways might people be bystanders to cyber bullying? (*They may be receiving mean messages about or images of others through instant messaging, or they may be following a hurtful conversation thread in a chat area.*)
- If people ignore cyber bullying, is it likely to just go away? Why or why not?
- What can bystanders do to stop cyber bullying?
- What can targets do to stop cyber bullying?
- Orkad thought he was being funny, but it is clear how his joke might be interpreted by Ray as a threat, because Ray doesn't know who sent it.

Closure: Responding to Bullying

Generally, a four-step **STOP** process is recommended to actively deal with and stop bullying. Distribute and then discuss the "*Four Steps to Stop Cyberbullying*" handout with the girls.



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FOUR STEPS TO STOP CYBER BULLYING

STOP: Don't try to reason or talk to someone who is bullying you.

BLOCK: Use the block sender technology to prevent the person from contacting you again.

TALK: Tell a trusted adult, inform your school, use a help line or report it to the police.

SAVE: Save any instant messages or e-mails you receive from the bully, or capture any comments that have been posted on the Web.



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