



## Letter to Students

### Lesson 1, Counselor Resource

Hello Again!

Many – if not most – of you have cell phones these days – in fact you almost can't imagine a time when people didn't carry them. It makes me smile when I remember the first cell phone our family had – it was big and bulky and terribly expensive. We all shared the phone and it was considered as an "emergency only" tool. Wow – has that ever changed! The thing is, though, that the change happened so quickly that it caught many of us unprepared and untaught. I'll bet that when you first got your cell phone that you spent a great deal of time playing with it. No doubt that you were downloading ring tones, programming all your favorite numbers and adjusting your settings. Most of you are wizards at text messaging as well. However, it occurs to us now that there are some things that you didn't learn – and that's what the first lesson is all about.

Lesson 1 in the Cyberbullying Curriculum is called *Respect and Responsibility*. Your teacher is going to go through some important terms and give you some activities to do as well as guiding you through some conversations. As I reviewed the lesson one thing really jumped out at me though - and that was the term "Social Contract". The two important components of a social contract are:

1. Demonstrating respect for others
2. Taking responsibility for our own actions.

I was really grabbed by the whole "social contract" thing as it relates to cyber communication. As I thought about all the kids who have been hurt or gotten into trouble with cyber communication, it seemed really obvious that they didn't understand the social "ground rules" as well as they needed to. They made mistakes because they didn't seem to know better. I thought about that quite a bit and one afternoon had an "aha" moment. It occurred to me that they didn't understand it because they hadn't really seen it. Then I thought about your age group and realized that there are many areas of your life where you are really skilled about following social contracts and acting appropriately! For example:

1. You learned how to wait in line at a restaurant, a movie – or even the school lunch line. You just seem to now that you line up, wait without prodding and get a turn as the line shortens.
2. You learned how to order food at a restaurant and how and where to wait while it was prepared.
3. You learned how to pay for merchandise at a cash register – and how to use a receipt to take things back.
4. You learned how to make up a test if you were absent or find out about missing work.
5. You learned how to get on a city bus – how to pay – and how to let the driver know that you need to get off.
6. You learned how to behave in museums, a place of worship or public building.

Now ask yourself – how did you learn these things? Did someone tell you specifically? Was there a lesson? Probably not – but you did watch these behaviors modeled for you since you were very young. You may have been a child in a stroller who watched your Mom or Dad do these very things and you absorbed all the steps involved with these processes. The steps that you watched were actually the acting out of a “social contract”. Modeling was the teaching tool and there is no more powerful tool for memorable instruction.

Ironically – most of the modeling that you may have seen regarding cell phones and computer communication may have been casual at best. The thing is, the devices that you take for granted are still relatively new and a single set of acceptable rules have just not been formalized or agreed upon consistently. That leaves a huge gap where all kinds of impolite or even dangerous habits may have grown up. This lesson is designed to help you create a meaningful social contract that you can use with all your cyber communication devices so that you may keep emotionally and physically safe and free from trouble or harm.

I think you’ll have some great conversations. I hope that you bring some of these conversations home as well.

Have fun with the lesson!

Mrs. G.