

## ***The Role of Bystanders in Cyberbullying***

### **Lesson 5, Teacher Resource 1**

Other students may be witness to cyberbullying acts. For example they may be with a target when he or she gets an abusive text message. Or if the bully posts malicious comments online, it is likely to be in a location where other students can read them so the target can be humiliated in front of his or her peers.

While many students are cyberbullied, only one or a few are targeted at a specific time. The majority of students present are bystanders. Witnessing cyberbullying has its own effect

- Witnessing a cyberbullying action makes bystanders feel uncomfortable and anxious that the next online attack could be directed at them.
- Whether they don't act because they don't feel it's any of their business, they don't want to tell on someone, or they are afraid of the bully, their inaction makes them feel powerless. Indirectly, bystanders are targets.
- Over time they may become desensitized to the bullying of others if the Web site owners, their school or parents don't work to change the climate of abuse.

**When bystanders stand up for a target it is one of the most effective means of stopping bullying. Support from bystanders gives the target confidence. It shows the bully that the target has friends who care, and that what the bully is doing is not cool.**

Still, many bystanders are afraid of standing up to a cyberbully. This may be a wise course. If you saw a crime being committed you might choose not to stand up to the criminal, but instead get a policeman to stop it. Similarly, bystanders can also help stop cyberbullying by telling a responsible adult about the behavior and reporting abuse to the service provider.

**Telling about a crime being committed isn't tattling and neither is reporting cyberbullying behavior. Both take courage and a sense of social responsibility.**

It isn't easy to stand up to a bully, especially if that person is popular or powerful in the school or online setting. It is probably safer to report the behavior to an adult and befriend the target.