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Cyberbullying by proxy

Cyberbullying by proxy is when a cyberbully gets someone else to do their dirty work. Most of the time they are unwitting accomplices and don't know that they are being used by the cyberbully. Cyberbullying by proxy is the most dangerous kind of cyberbullying because it often gets adults involved in the harassment and people who don't know they are dealing with a kid or someone they know.

"Warning" or "Notify Wars" are an example of cyberbullying by proxy. Kids click on the warning or notify buttons on their IM screen or e-mail or chat screens, and alert the ISP or service provider that the victim has done something that violates their rules. If the victim receives enough warnings or notifications, they can lose their account. The service providers are aware of this abuse, and often check and see if the warning were justified. But all the cyberbully has to do is make the victim angry enough to say something rude or hateful back. Then, BINGO! they warn them, making it look like the victim had started it. In this case, the ISP or service provider is the innocent accomplice of the cyberbully.

Sometimes the victim's own parents are too. If the cyberbully can make it look like the victim is doing something wrong, and the parents are notified, the parents will punish the victim. Alyssa, one of our Teenangels, had this happen to her. To learn more about her cyberbullying problem, read Alyssa's story.

Cyberbullying by proxy sometimes starts with the cyberbully posing as the victim. They may have hacked into their account or stolen their password. They may have set up a new account pretending to be the victim. But however they do it, they are pretending to be the victim and trying to create problems for the victim with the help of others.

The most typical way a cyberbullying by proxy attack occurs is when the cyberbully gets control of the victim's account and sends out hateful or rude messages to everyone on their buddy list pretending to be the victim. They may also change the victim's password so they can't get into their own account. The victim's friends get angry with the victim, thinking they had sent the messages without knowing they have been used by the cyberbully. But it's not always this minor. Sometimes the cyberbully tries to get more people involved.

For example...Mary wants to get Jennifer back for not inviting her to her party. She goes online and, posing as Jennifer, posts "I hate Brittany, she is so stupid, ugly and fat!" on buddyprofile.com. Mary may tell Brittany and her friends that she read the post on buddyprofile.com and blames Jennifer for being mean. Brittany and her friends now start attacking Jennifer, and may report her to buddyprofile.com or her school. They are doing Mary's dirty work for her. Mary looks like the "good guy" and Jennifer may be punished by her parents, lose her account with buddyprofile.com and get into trouble at school. And Brittany and her friends may start to cyberbully Jennifer too.

Sometimes it is much more serious than that. When cyberbullies want to get others to do their dirty work quickly, they often post information about, or pose as, their victim in hate group chat rooms and on their discussion boards. Cyberbullies have even posted this information in child molester chat rooms and discussion boards, advertising their victim for sex. They then sit back and wait for the members of that hate group or child molester group to attack or contact the victim online and, sometimes, offline.

For this to work, the cyberbully needs to post offline or online contact information about the victim. Real information, not the account they used to impersonate the victim (if they are posing as the victim to

provoke an attack). For example...Jack is angry that Blake was chose as captain of the junior varsity basketball team. Blake is black. Jack finds a white supremacist group online and posts in their chat room that Blake said nasty things about whites and their group in particular. He then posts Blake's cell phone number and screen name. People from the group start calling and IMing Blake with threats and hateful messages. Jack has no idea how much danger he has placed Blake in, and Blake doesn't know why he in under attack. In cases of cyberbullying by proxy, when hate or child molester groups are involved, they victim is in danger of physical harm and law enforcement must be contacted immediately.

Can you think of examples of cyberbullying by proxy? Share them with us and other kids, preteens and teens here at the site. We'll never use your name or personally identifying information, share it with others or bother you. Read our privacy policy to know how we use your information. You should always read a privacy policy before submitting anything to anywhere online.