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Psychology of Cyberspace

The following presentation is based on a paper written by Dr. Suler

Cyberbullying Definition

CYBERBULLYING- is when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages, or uses online forums and postings online intended to harm, damage, humiliate or isolate another person that they don't like.

Psychology of Cyberspace

Cyberspace Psychology+ Adolescent Development+ Individual Personality= Behavior Online

Features of Cyberspace Part I

- Cyberspace is a psychological space that creates a social climate.
- reduced or altered sensory experience
- opportunity for identity flexibility
- anonymity
- equalization of power
- transcendence of time

Features of Cyberspace Part II

- maintain numerous relationships simultaneously
- ability to record one's experience
- express opinions freely without fear
- disinhibition effect- people in cyberspace are known to say and do things they might not ordinarily do face to face. They loosen up revealing secret emotions, fears, and wishes.

CAUSES OF DISINHIBITION

- *YOU DON'T KNOW ME(ANONYMITY)-* opportunity to separate from real world identity. This allows for actions in which the person feels distant from their actions as though the actions are not "really me at all."

- *YOU CAN' SEE ME(INVISIBILITY)-* A person can move through the internet virtually unknown. They can visit blogs, chat rooms, etc, without anyone knowing they are their, like a voyeur. This invisibility encourages behavior outside the personality in the real world.

<u>CAUSES OF DISINHIBITION</u>

- *SEE YOU LATER(ASYNCHRONICITY) -* online interactions can end at any time without warning and the person disappears from interactions that are personal or emotional.

- *IT'S JUST A GAME(DISSOCIATIVE IMAGINATION)-* some people see their online life as a kind of game with rules and norms that don't apply to everyday living. Once the computer is turned off, there is a sense that what was done has not really happened.

CAUSES OF DISINHIBITION

- WE'RE EQUALS(MINIMIZING AUTHORITY)- on the internet everyone is equal despite social standing, wealth, race, gender, etc. With power being equalized people are more likely to speak out or misbehave.

Psychology Of Cyberspace

- Cyberspace can induce a sense of altered reality, a dreamlike state, in which one can experience oneself from different perspectives, otherwise untapped or experienced. One can become whatever they wish, take on unique roles they would not imagine in real life. For teens this is tempting because they are still developing their identities and this allows them to see what "fits". Things that might have been taboo are now within experimental reach and personality attributes untouched become apparent and expressed(Example: a shy child can open up without fear of what might happen to them).

Psychology Of Cyberspace

- The internet environment can induce behavior that is termed **<u>internet regression</u>** in which the anonymity of cyberspace encourages immature and painful ways of acting. The regression is caused by unmet needs or an attempt to explore needs of power, acceptance, love, etc.   The regression also occurs because the user sees the computer as more human and the other person as invisible/unseen. This can bring out the most primitive instincts in the human personality for generosity or harm.

Adolescent Development

- More than anything else, adolescents are drawn to cyberspace because they make friends there. They find new groups to join, a place where they belong. They can experiment with their personality by practicing skills they would otherwise be afraid of or they can take on completely different personalities. Once a teen join a group, they can share their feelings, complain about their parents and peers or support each other through difficulties.

Adolescent Development

- Some of the common pitfalls of online friendships is they can create cliques that are somewhat artificial, shallow, and transient. Some teens attempt to maneuver through these surreal relationships even though emotions run high while others due to personality factors become seriously invested and emotionally torn up by these relationships. For adolescents craving social interactions, it can be heartbreaking when "friends" unexpectedly change their tone, withdraw, or disappear.

HOW PARENTS CAN BE INVOLVED

- GET KNOWLEDGEABLE AND JOIN IN- be familiar with what your kids are doing and something about the internet. Join them in some online activities for fun and academic pursuits.

- TALK TO THEM- Do you know where your children are? Ask your child about their internet use.   Ask casually about who they talk to, what they like about the internet, etc.

<u>HOW PARENTS CAN BE INVOLVED</u>

- ACKNOWLEDGE THE GOOD AND THE BAD- talk about the pros and cons of the internet.

- MAKE THE COMPUTER VISIBLE- it is important to supervise internet use like everything else with adolescents.

HOW PARENTS CAN BE INVOLVED

- SET REASONABLE RULES- set limits on when and how much.

- ENCOURAGE A BALANCE- help your child stay balanced helping them explore and participate in the real world.

- SOFTWARE CONTROLS- controls can be helpful in supervising use.

HOW PARENTS CAN BE INVOLVED

- INTERVENING WITH ADDICTION- computer use can like any thing else can develop into an addiction.

- DISCIPLINE MISBEHAVIOR/ENCOURAGE HUMANESS- use real world parenting.

What do you use the computer for?

- School related research
- Email
- IM
- Chat Rooms
- Facebook/Myspace
- Games/Entertainment

Student Survey: Types Incidents

- Teased while playing online games.
- Friends sent nasty/mean email/IM.
- Being cursed at.
- Being made fun of.
- Spreading rumors.
- Youtube comments.
- Facebook/Myspace comments.
- Sending inappropriate pictures.