

TECHNO BULLY

Teacher's Notes

A Synopsis of the Play

'Techno Bully' was written with the intention to promote discussion and understanding about bullying amongst high school students. Particularly bullying which incorporates technology such as the internet, web sites and mobile phone text messages. The play is performed by two actors who play three different characters. Eric is a sixteen year old boy who is lonely and anti social and uses chat rooms as an escape from his own life and identity. Through this process Eric has begun to lose the ability to feel empathy for other people. Sara, his younger sister, is impressionable and looks up to her older brother. She has been influenced by Eric's use of the chat rooms to also lose empathy for people as she is following his lead. Kathy is new at Crono High and is full of good and friendly intentions. Kathy has dreams she wants to fulfill and is willing to accept the hurdles in her life such as her broken family and her mother's struggle to put her through high school by herself. However Kathy becomes the target for internet and mobile phone bullying and struggles to find strategies to deal with this new and complicated form of harassment.

'Techno Bully' is a dramatisation of Kathy and Eric's stories when they meet as year 10 students at Crono High. Kathy is harassed through the internet and mobile phone text messages as soon as she starts her new life at Crono. Bullying is hard enough to deal with but Kathy finds the secrecy of what is happening to her and the hidden identity of her attacker an almost impossible situation to protect herself from. After Eric uses a secret picture of Kathy to tease her on the internet he apologizes and offers to help Kathy find out who is sending her the text messages. But Kathy doesn't know who she can trust anymore. It seems to her that people are one kind of person in the real world but can be the complete opposite in the world of cyber space.

Through Kathy's dilemma this play explores the issues of technological sexual harassment and bullying and offers strategies to deal with this growing problem.

After the play we offer a Q@A debrief with the students to discuss the issues the play has raised in an informal friendly and open forum.

Questions about the play

1. Why does Eric pretend to be some one else in the chat rooms?
2. Why does his little sister Sara enjoy what he does in the chat rooms?
3. What do you think about them spending their afternoons sitting at the computer?
4. What do you think of the mother always yelling from outside Eric's room but never coming inside?
5. Why has Kathy had to come to a new school?
6. How would you feel if you had to go to a new school in the middle of year 10?
7. When Eric takes the picture of Kathy he posts it on a web site. Why do you think that Eric does this?
8. How does Kathy feel when she sees the picture of herself on her phone?
9. What do you think about people who take snap shots of people without them knowing?
10. Explain how you would feel if somebody took a bad picture of you without your knowledge and then showed it to everybody at school?
(a)Do you think that this is a form of bullying?
11. Kathy is receiving nasty text messages on her phone from somebody but she doesn't want to tell anybody. How would you feel if you were receiving nasty text messages? (a)What would you do about it?
12. Kathy arranges to meet Eric at the police station. He is running late so Kathy goes in alone and the police tell her that Eric has been sending her the messages. How does Kathy feel when she finds out that Eric has been sending the messages?
13. Kathy says that her trust has been broken. What does this mean?
14. Eric didn't send the text messages to Kathy. How does he feel when he finds out that Sara has been sending the messages from his phone?

15. At the end of the play we find out that Sara has been sending the text messages. Why do you think Sara has been doing this?
16. Eric changes at the end of the play. He promises to play more with Sara and to be friends with Kathy. What do you think brings about this change in Eric?
17. Eric enjoys playing tricks on people when they don't know who he is. Why does Eric think that it's better if people don't know who you are when you're playing a trick?
18. Kathy says that she has been bullied before at primary school but that receiving the text messages is a worse kind of bullying. Why does Kathy say this?
19. Why do you think people can be meaner if the person they are bullying doesn't know who they are?
20. Why are people more frightened if they don't know who the bully is?
21. At the end of the play Eric says that Kathy is really nice. Why do you think he says this?
22. Why do you think Kathy becomes friends with Eric after all he has done to her?
23. Eric says that Kathy has shown him empathy. What does empathy mean?
(a) Why is it important to feel empathy for other people?

Drama Improvisations

Exercise 1 Play back Theatre

Ask the students if they have ever been bullied and would they be willing to tell the story to the class. After a student has told the story let small groups of students act out the story with simple props and costumes. Ask the student how they feel after seeing the story acted out. Ask them if it was accurate and if not what was different. If it's appropriate ask the group to act out the story again with the student's changes.

This is based on play back theatre.

The idea is to see something that has happened in your life acted back to you. It can be a very empowering experience or just help to shed light on people's different perspectives on what actually happened.

Exercise 2 Improvising Bullying

Place a student in the middle of a circle of other students. Allow the students to act out teasing the student while they are blind folded. Take the blind off and allow the students to act out teasing the student while making eye contact. Ask the student if it was different doing it blind folded from doing it face to face.

Be careful that the students are not really teasing and are acting. They don't have to be really mean for this to work.

This improvisation offers the students insight into the differences between feeling anonymous and being seen.

Exercise 3 Improvising Bullying Step 2

Select two students to be blind folded and then act out a bullying scene together. (For example that one student is always taking lunch money from another) Do the scene again and try it face to face. Examine how the scene changes. Ask the students what they think about being invisible or being able to see during an acting scene.

Drama Trust Exercises

During the play Kathy talks about trusting Eric. Through these exercises the children can explore what trust is and how it feels.

Exercise 1

Break the class into groups of about six students. Ask all the students to stand in a tight circle with one student inside. The student inside can fall and then be caught by the students in the circle. The student in the middle is then pushed gently from one student to the other around the circle keeping their feet central and their body straight but having no control over which direction they are pushed in.

Exercise 2

The students can break up into pairs. One student can act out fainting as the other catches them from a close distance. Both students can have a turn at fainting and catching.

Exercise 3

The students can be broken up into pairs. One student can wear a blindfold and the other student can lead them from one end of the room to the other. The students can take turns and both have a go at leading and being lead blind folded.

These exercises can be interpreted appropriately according to class size and the maturity of the students.

Questions about Bullying

1. What is bullying?
2. Name some different ways in which people bully.
3. Why do you think people bully?
4. How does being bullied make you feel? If you haven't been bullied how do you think it would make you feel?
5. What sort of suggestions can you make to stop bullying at your school?
6. How do you think bullying affects the school or home?
7. If people know that someone is being bullied and do nothing about it does it make them a bully as well? What do you think?
8. How is bullying through text messages different from face to face bullying?
9. If you were being bullied by text messages on your phone what could you do about it to have it stopped.
10. Name some strategies of dealing with bullying at school or at home. If you need help with this question discuss it with your teacher or class mates.

Have fun with these questions and exercises.

For more information about the performance or the teacher's notes please contact the playwright.

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