

Real-life Story Retaliation Justified?

- 1. Read the real-life story as a whole class or print and divide into small groups to read.**
- 2. Discussion questions about the specific scenario should be done in small groups/pairs.**
- 3. Discussion questions related to empathy for the different aspects affected should be discussed as a whole class. There are a lot of questions, feel free to use as few or as many as you need to facilitate the class discussion. Encourage kids to share personal experiences - as long as they aren't using names!**

Tired of Being Bullied at School, Teen Strikes Back Online

Recently a nine grader at a local school who was allegedly being bullied targeted her tormenter by creating a fake profile on Instagram and posted personal information and alleged things about the person. After receiving complaints by the targeted teen and viewing the Instagram account, the guidance counselor called in the police to investigate. The creator of the account was caught and facing charges.

Yvette

I was sick and tired of Lucy and all her friends. They made my life at school so miserable; I'd pretend to be sick so I didn't have to go. The worst thing Lucy had done was to spread the rumor that I had cheated on my boyfriend, Ryan, at her birthday party last month. And I wasn't even at the party! So then everyone thought that I was some kind of horrible person and believed all the stupid things she said had happened. It was like the rumors took a life of their own!

Ryan broke up with me so I exacted a little revenge of my own. I created a profile on Instagram as if I were Lucy. I posted her personal information and used picture I had from a

vacation I'd taken with her family and really made the profile seem like she was the one posting all the stuff.

It didn't take much for the account to make its way through the grapevine. Before long, half the school was following it. They'd tune in to see who she liked or what she thought about what people were wearing or doing at school. They were so gullible! Nobody believed it wasn't her account. My job was done.

And I thought there was no way she (or anybody!) would find out who created the account. I didn't even use my own computer. So I figured there was no way it could be traced to me.

It turned out she didn't trace it to me. Someone else did. Lucy was upset by the account (her friends started distancing themselves and nobody wanted to date her – they were all so scared!). and told our guidance

counselor about it. And since it contained “degrading lies” and also “defamed her character,” the police were brought in. They were able to trace the computer to the one I used at the library, and since we need to sign up to use it, they traced it to me.

Obviously the account was taken down (but after I was caught so I didn't know that they were on t me), and I had to talk to the guidance counselor. I told her about what Lucy was doing to me, but legally that doesn't matter. I was told that I don't have the right to retaliate in this way. Lucy knows that I did it, but she has been ordered by the police not to retaliate like I did. I'm worried about seeing her again.

Needless to say my parents are furious with me. But they're waiting to hand down consequences at home until we've figured out what will happen to me from a legal standpoint. I've been suspended for 5 days. I'm facing a \$1,000 fine and a sentence of up to one year in jail for second-degree harassment. I'm terrified. I have no idea what will happen to me.

Discussion questions for this specific scenario:

1. What reasons did Yvette give for creating the profile on Instagram as if she were Lucy?
2. Was Yvette right to retaliate for the bullying Lucy was subjecting her to? Why or why not? What would you have done in her place?
3. Yvette didn't think about the legal consequences that she could face for creating this account. Do you think other teens who use the Internet to target others consider the legal consequences they could face? Why or why not?

The purpose of this activity is to have students understand what empathy is and to think about what it would be like to be cyber bullied.

Discussion questions to emphasis empathy and how these aspects might be affected if they were cyber bullied:

Self-Esteem

- How might being cyber bullied affect how you feel about yourself?
- How would you feel about yourself if someone you knew were sending you mean messages?
- How would you feel if you were getting hurtful emails or text messages and you didn't know who sent them?

Friends

- How would you feel about your friends if they were sending nasty emails about you?
- How would you feel about your friends if they were excluding you?
- How would you feel about your friends if they were sharing personal information about you?
- How would you feel about your friends if you didn't know who was bullying you?

School / Learning

- How would you feel if everyone at school believed you were posting mean things about them?
- How would you feel if someone sent an embarrassing or insulting picture of you electronically to the whole school?
- Why could being cyber bullied affect someone's grades and how well the person does in school?

Happiness

- How might being cyber bullied affect how happy you are?
- Why might people who are cyber bullied feel depressed?
- Why might people who are cyber bullied feel anxious or nervous?