

A group of girls were fighting with one of their friends, Nicole. They created a “Rate Nicole” group on a social networking site. They posted embarrassing photos of Nicole from middle school and high school and invited their hundreds of “friends” to join the group to look at the photos, and tell Nicole how she stacked up. Cruel and crude comments were posted on the group’s message board. One message said that some girls were planning to beat up Nicole. At school, Nicole got text messages on her cell phone saying, “Take a look at what everyone thinks of you.”

What’s the Problem?

What emotions do you think Nicole felt when she saw the photos and read all the comments online?

How do you think she felt when she read that some girls wanted to beat her up?

How do you think this situation affected the learning environment of the school?

Think About It

Sometimes you need to go online in order to do homework assignments. You want to have portable electronic devices for networking with your friends. But the more you are online or connected to cell networks, the more likely it is that you will be involved in harassing situations. You may not have posted a single comment—or maybe you did. You may not be the person getting abused or threatened. Yet it is very likely that you have witnessed it. Not everyone reacts the same way, but many teens say that when these kinds of bullying behaviors occur at any time of the day or night, both online and face to face, it can be very depressing.

Find Solutions

What advice would you give Nicole?

What advice would you give the girls who created the group?

What could you do if you witnessed a similar situation online that made you worried?

Take Action

Write a Letter to the Editor

Teens are called “early adoptors” because they are often the first age group to use new technologies or find new ways to use existing technologies. Write about the positives and negatives of social networking sites, messaging, and cell phone technologies used by teens. You might want to refer to a recent incident in your community or find a news article to which you can react.

Be CyberSmart!

- If you get online messages that seem threatening or vicious, print them out so you will have a record.
- If you know who is leaving the message, block that person.
- If the messages are upsetting or make you feel fearful, get help from a trusted adult.