

October 4, 2010, 6:59 am

# What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

By [KATHERINE SCHULTEN](#)

**Student Opinion** 

Questions about issues in the news for students 13 and older.

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*This is the question [an article](#) in the Week in Review asks about the [Tyler Clementi](#) case. “Just how culpable is an online bully in someone’s decision to end a life?” the article asks. Do you know about this case, and the [Phoebe Prince case](#) earlier this year? How tough should the punishment be for those who cyberbullied these students? Why? How do you think incidents like these could be prevented in the first place?*

In [“Bullying, Suicide, Punishment.”](#) John Schwartz discusses the complexities of the case and concludes:

Finding the right level of prosecution, then, can be a challenge. On the one hand, he said, “it’s college — everybody is playing pranks on everybody else.” On the other, “invading somebody’s privacy can inflict such great distress that invasions of privacy should be punished, and punished significantly.”

There is also the question of society’s role. Students are encouraged by Facebook and Twitter to put their every thought and moment online, and as they sacrifice their own privacy to the altar of connectedness, they worry less about the privacy of others.

Teenagers “think that because they can do it, that makes it right,” said Nancy E. Willard, a lawyer and founder of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use.

Impulsiveness, immaturity and immense publishing power can be a dangerous mix, she said. “With increased power to do things comes increased responsibility to make sure that what you’re doing is O.K.,” she said.

...That is why Daniel J. Solove, author of “The Future of Reputation: Gossip, Rumor and Privacy on the Internet,” said society needed to work on education.

“We teach people a lot of the consequences” of things like unsafe driving, he said, “but not that what we do online could have serious consequences.”

**Students:** Tell us what you think about how punishment in this case and others like it should be handled. How much is the bully to blame, and how much responsibility should he or she bear for the consequences? Why? How do you think cyberbullying like this can be prevented in the first place? Do you think education, as Mr. Solove suggests above, is enough?

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**Students 13 and older** are invited to comment below. Please use only your **first name**. For

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1. 1. October 4, 2010 8:05 am [Link](#)

I think that when someone cyber bullies someone else, I think of it as when someone at school bullies someone else and I think that they should get into trouble for it. The bully is fully responsible for their actions, they are the ones that are teasing the other student/person and they know that they should not bull them bu they do anyway because they think that it's fun. Cyber bullying can be prevented by talking to your children about the Internet and telling them what all goes on and also by

telling them not to cyber bully someone because there can be serious consequences for those actions.

— *Hannah*

2. 2. October 4, 2010 8:10 am [Link](#)

Bullying is going to happen no matter what. I think instead of focusing on punishing the bully we should work to improve childrens reactions to it. Everyone is bullied at some point in their life and yet very few commit suicide. I feel like the blame should be on the bullied. Yes, i know it [word removed] to be bullied and attacked but not everyone commits suicide because of it. Committing suicide is a very selfish act that is for more reasons than just one. I do not think cyberbullying can ever be controlled. Immature students are going to post whatever they want, whenever they want, And that is exactly what it is; immaturity. Life throws you curveballs so move past it, dont let it rule your life.

— *Haley*

3. 3. October 4, 2010 8:12 am [Link](#)

I dont really think cyber bullying shouldn't be a severe punishment. The reason why is nobody is physically getting hurt, and nothing of the other. Most the people who do cyber bullying don't have a life, and two are never even gonna approach someone in the real world and do that. Therefore cyber bullying should just be looked over and just as a laugh more then anything.

I think people should just not take offense to every little aspect of detail someone says about them. People need to learn how to stand on their own two feet and just think "wow someone must have a lot of low self esteem about themselves." If people would do this the cyber bullying would eventually decrease, and soon just be another thing to remember. People just need to learn to get along, and stand up for themselves. That way everyone has more respect for each other, and themselves.

— *Cory H*

4. 4. October 4, 2010 8:13 am [Link](#)

This should be handled like any other crime in the U.S. The bully is definitely to be blamed for whoever shot themselves because they are pathetic losers and can't handle a few harsh words from a cyber bully. Cyber bullying can be prevented by not even getting into chat rooms with people you don't know. But people who are cyber-bullying others should consider the consequences before bullying, because they could make someone who is weak-willed commit suicide.

— *jason*

5. 5. October 4, 2010 8:14 am [Link](#)

The Clementi case was the first big report about cyber bullying. Until it was published on tv and newspapers, people knew about it but didnt think it would cause that much problem. Well now people are wanting to increase punishment for cyber bullying. In most cases I believe that all the nescessary precautions are needed and if they are broken then yes, punishment is necessary. They should treat it as any other case of bullying just like in person. If it were punished, the evidence would be easy to contain and prosecute. If someone is found to be a cyber bully then their internet rights should be pulled, so that another case like Clementi does not happen.

— *Tyler*

6. 6. October 4, 2010 8:14 am [Link](#)

I think that cyber bullying is way more extreme than just average school-bullying. Cyber bullying is pretty much embarrassing someone world wide, not just within your school or town. People who cyber bully should be sent to Siberia to learn the chain of how we got to electronics in the first place, and start all over, with making fire as the first thing to do. Then all of the hateful, spite ridden people can live together in their own little hateful community and write notes back and forth on the snow walk way. That way they are only embarrassing or harassing, people they would have on the internet, in their own community full of gossiping and jealousy. That way they are only embarrassing or harassing, people they would have on the internet, in their own community full of gossiping and jealousy.

— *aspen*

7. 7. October 4, 2010 8:15 am [Link](#)

It's going to happen, so we might as well get used to it and over it. If someone tries to bully you online, it's your own fault for not closing the window, or ignoring it, or telling someone, or beating them up before they beat you up. It's no really worth getting into it that much. I guess it really shouldn't be worried about until it leads to the ending of a life. If it does, then we can get involved and send the kid to jail or something bad like that. But overall, I don't care.

— *matt*

8. 8. October 4, 2010 8:17 am [Link](#)

The punishment should be just as harsh as the person they were bullying. They should be taught not to do it, but it just comes to see that the kids who are bullying, their parents have not taught them the right ways. Plus they don't need to be a computer if stuff like cyberbullying starts. It can be prevented by not getting on the computer in the first place, but all teenagers need to use the computer anyways, but it's an idea. Another one is just ignore all together, don't pay any attention towards it. And education might not help out, because the only thing it does is teach certain lessons, unless you have a certain class like, "Not to Cyberbully!" But the chances of that to me, is slim to none.

— *daniel a*

9. 9. October 4, 2010 8:19 am [Link](#)

I think cyberbullying is completely wrong in all ways. And half the time, kids don't have the chance to defend themselves. Sometime last year, a girl committed suicide because of bullying and cyberbullying. This should've opened people's eyes around the U.S. But it still to this day continues to go on. I see Facebook bashing sites for some students. Which is very unfair and hateful. But also, I think kids should learn to defend themselves if they're a victim of cyberbullying. I know if it was me, it would not continue to go on very long because I would've taken care of it real quick. Cyberbullying is wrong in every way possible and should not be tolerated at all.

— *jackie*

10. 10. October 4, 2010 8:19 am [Link](#)

It really depends on how far the bullying goes. These kids thought they were being all funny till this girl committed suicide. Jail should be the punishment for however long see fit. This girl did nothing to them she had just started her high school years. I think that these kids thoughts will get to them better then any punishment.

— *miranda*

11. 11. October 4, 2010 8:22 am [Link](#)

Punishment in this case should be charges brought against the kids who did the bullying. They are to blame 70% because that girl was definately victim in the incident, but she shouldn't have put herself out there like that, Cyberbullying can be prevented by just ignoring people like those in this incident, or telling someone about it, talk about it with your family. I think education would help alot but wouldn't be enough.

— *anthony*

12. 12. October 4, 2010 9:43 am [Link](#)

I Think The Bullys Should Be Charged And In Jail Because The Girl Did Nothing Wrong. I Feel That People Are Cruel An Mean Sometimes. But Thats How People Are You Cant Change Anyone.

— *Tori R.*

13. 13. October 4, 2010 9:44 am [Link](#)

I've heard that a teenage girl was being cyber bullied and bullied at school and that she committed suicide. I do not think it's fair that people treat others so mean and have so much hate for them and they have no reason to. I think there should be a major charge to the student or child/teenager who caused the cyber bullying. They should be charged by how mean they were to the other person. I am shocked to also find out that adults do the same also and it is not right. I do not think that the teenage girl should have taken her own life for the situation she should have talked about it and told someone in the first place. She deserved a lot better than to be treated the way she was.

— *Alexis*

14. 14. October 4, 2010 9:47 am [Link](#)

People are always going to bully other people so there shouldn't be a punishment for cyber bullying. The only thing to do is teacher the person how to take cyber bullying and deal with it. In life people are always going to talk things about you, there's nothing you can do so you might as well just get used to it.

— *Gerson*

15. 15. October 4, 2010 9:48 am [Link](#)

Well, I am a strong believer in Anti-Cyber bullying. I do not think that is right to people embarrasses someone over the internet, because not just your town sees it. If it is on the internet, everyone sees it. I think that the people that Cyber bully others should be sent to a remote island along with all the other people who do this, so that they have no electronics, and they would have to fend for them selves. The only thing that should be sent with them is one other change of clothes and nothing else. I think that I should also turn into a TV show, called, "Survival of the Cyber Bullies" or something along those lines. It would teach them discipline and if it was a TV show I am sure they would be embarrass And the one who makes it farthest can go back home, but the others, would have to go to Nigeria an start a new life. I think that would be a fabulous punishment! haha(:

— *sydney*

16. 16. October 4, 2010 9:49 am [Link](#)

Cyber bullying if some of you don't know is someone bullying someone else over the internet. It is completely wrong and should have the consequences of harassment all the

way every one is going to get or has been bullied. You can't prevent it all the time but some people can get away. If some one is accused of cyber bullying they should be charged with harassment. Don't you think so I mean it is harassment in a way? I would never bully or cyber bully any one you have to think of the consequences before you take action on anything.

— *Jonathan*

17. 17. October 4, 2010 9:49 am [Link](#)

this is the reason some people die in some way its kind of like a crime. but i think there should be charges on poeple that do that cuz i wouldnt lilke to be the one picked on

— *ilse*

18. 18. October 4, 2010 9:50 am [Link](#)

This type of bullying should be punished but not to a great extreme. Some people think that it's funny to bully people around without knowing how much it really hurts them. Some know that it hurts them but still don't care and just continue. I may not be the nicest person in the world but I still know my limits on how to treat other people. I think that cyber bullies should be punished with at least 2 months in a prison cell or some kind of physical punishment. Do to them as they told their victims. Let them see what that feels like.

— *Elia*

19. 19. October 4, 2010 9:50 am [Link](#)

In my opinion, cyber-bullying is a pitiful form of bullying. It allows people to hide behind a computer and bash their peers. When you put something out on the internet, there is no way to control who sees it. The whole school can see what you said, and it only makes it more humiliating for the victim. People who spend their time cyber bullying should be severely punished. If someone bullies a kid in school, the can get expelled. However, when it comes to online bullying, people treat it lightly. There are many cases of children committing suicide, because they are so upset over the ridicule. If we don't start punishing the cyber bullies, it is only going to get worse

— *Rebecca M.*

20. 20. October 4, 2010 9:52 am [Link](#)

People are always going to be bullied. But people tend to say more hurtful and threatening things over the internet, text, and Chat rooms. But when it comes down to it they can't back up what they say. People pick on people because they are missing something in life. Such as a Parent, Friends, Love, the feeling of being cared about, or they just want to be cool. In my opinion if somebody has a problem with somebody then they should talk face to face instead of threatening over a computer. I think that teens should be able to fight it out if they try to start something and then parents or teachers break it up. Because the problem is not going to be solved until somebody gets their face popped. My dad has always told me stories of when he was in high school if somebody was bullied and they fought and won the fight. Then the bully would leave them alone. I think that fighting should be a part of punishment if somebody bullies. But now day parents are stuck on the fact that their kid is the best kid in the world and if you touch them their going to sue you.

— *Chris L*

21. 21. October 4, 2010 9:53 am [Link](#)

I think there's a simple solution they should be banned from the server for a week for first offence. The second offence should be banned for two weeks and no talk to other people for three weeks, and third offence banned forever. While there's internet there will always be a bully. They should make sure there's no way the bully can make or remake on another account. The fourth offence is if they remake on another computer or use someone else's account both accounts will be banned and a fee will have to be paid by both people.

The bully will be on different websites trying to make you mad or make you quit playing but you don't have to you can just send a request to the creator and they will give him his offence.

— *Drake C*

22. 22. October 4, 2010 9:55 am [Link](#)

There are a lot of things to be considered when deciding punishment in cases like this. A lot of the blame goes to the cyber bullies who should really know better than to do things like this, but some of the blame does go to the victims themselves, such as in Tyler's and Phoebe's cases. I fully believe that you should not do anything that would embarrass you in the future. Both the victims of these cases did things that they should be ashamed of doing. The bullying was illegal and unnecessary yes, but both of these people should have realized that there would be repercussions for what they were doing. Also, excepting nonuse of the internet, there is no way to stop this cyberbullying unless the bullies themselves decide to stop. If they want to bully someone they will, no law will stop it. As for what punishment they should deserve I really am not sure and I am glad some federal judge has to make this decision and not me.

— *Thomas*

23. 23. October 4, 2010 9:55 am [Link](#)

Well I really don't understand why these kids are killing themselves? Is that really necessary? [removed] Also these kids that are doing the bullying? What's up with that? Why can't they just get to know that person or do something else that's useful. Most of the time the people who are doing the bullying are insecure and have all these emotions and take it out on these poor kids. I think the bullying is stupid and the suicide is stupid. But if someone cyber bullies someone and that person kills themselves, I think the charges should be murder. For all the people who were involved. But if they cyber bull period then I think the charges should be at least 3 to 5 years in state prison.

— *erik*

24. 24. October 4, 2010 9:55 am [Link](#)

Cyberbullying is going to happen no matter what is done. It is wrong in so many ways. Some people find it a lot easier to say hurtful things on the internet because they are not face to face with that person. Some kids just bully other kids out of jealousy and hatred or maybe they just have a rough life at home, so they take it out on other people. I think that there should be a punishment for cyberbullying. I think that if someone is caught doing it they should be charged and have to pay a fine or maybe go to jail depending on how serious the cyberbullying was. I have read about many stories in magazines about kids going and committing suicide because they were bullied. I think that if there is someone out there being bullied they should talk to someone about it because if they don't it might end up getting even more serious and dangerous.

— *ashley*

25. 25. October 4, 2010 9:56 am [Link](#)

Personally I think cyber bullying is a lot worse than regular bullying because when you bully someone over the internet the whole world can see it. I never heard anything about the Phoebe Prince case. I do not think there can really be a permanent punishment for cyber bullying. Someone can make a law that forbids it, but the internet is a huge network. Not all of the bullying will be caught because the internet is too big of a network to search. It would take a lot of people to search every site on the internet. So making a punishment would probably not stop cyber bullying since most of the people who cyber bully know they will not get caught.

— Calyn

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## Comments of the Moment

[“ I think that whoever is doing the cyberbullying should be punished by not being allowed to have any type of social network or be able to get on chats and be monitored on what he is doing on the computer. ”](#)

— [leo](#)

[What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?](#)

" i got it right.... but thats kind of sad we need to start eating more vegetables at least once a day.... i eat vegetables at least once a day"

— Amanda U

Test Yourself I Math, Oct. 4, 2010

" People pick on people because they are missing something in life. Such as a Parent, Friends, Love, the feeling of being cared about, or they just want to be cool. "

— Chris L

What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

" In my opinion, cyber-bullying is a pitiful form of bullying. It allows people to hide behind a computer and bash their peers. When you put something out on the internet, there is no way to control who sees it. The whole school can see what you said, and it only makes it more humiliating for the victim. People who spend their time cyber bullying should be severely punished. If someone bullies a kid in school, the can get expelled. However, when it comes to online bullying, people treat it lightly. There are many cases of children committing suicide, because they are so upset over the ridicule. If we don't start punishing the cyber bullies, it is only going to get worse"

— Rebecca M.

What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

" Cyberbullying can be prevented by just ignoring people like those in this incident, or telling someone about it, talk about it with your family. I think education would help a lot but wouldn't be enough."

— anthony

What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

" I think that cyber bullying is way more extreme than just average school-bullying. Cyber bullying is pretty much embarrassing someone world-wide, not just within your school or town. "

— aspen

What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

" If someone is found to be a cyber bully then their Internet rights should be pulled, so that another case like Clementi does not happen."

— Tyler

What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

" Bullying is going to happen no matter what. I think instead of focusing on punishing the bully we should work to improve children's reactions to it...I do not think cyberbullying can ever be controlled. "

— Haley

What Should the Punishment Be for Acts of Cyberbullying?

" I have not, nor will I, see "Waiting for Superman." From what I've heard, it does little more than to sensationalize the issue of education reform -- an issue that should be treated seriously by the people most knowledgeable (not talk show hosts and

business leaders). I also find the inherent sexism & sense of hopelessness in the title offensive -- we do not need someone with superhuman capabilities, nor does the female-dominated educational structures require a male leader to "rescue" it. "

— Suzanne

What Are Your Thoughts on the Current Debate Over School Change?

" Yes, I have seen Waiting for Superman. Having spent 40 years as an urban public school teacher, administrator, PTA president, researcher and advocate, I have several reactions to the movie: a. It is first and foremost an appeal to not wait for superman, but to take constructive action to help improve schools. b. The movie shows that some public schools are having a dramatic positive impact on students from low income youngsters. c. The movie cited outstanding charter public schools, some of the finest results of a large, diverse, complex movement (I helped write the nation's first charter law in Minnesota and have testified on this issue in 20 states). d. There also are some excellent urban district public schools. It probably would have been better if the movie had described some of these schools. e. Some describe the movie as anti teacher - I think it is the opposite - the movie honors excellent public school teachers. Joe Nathan, director, Center for School Change Macalester College, St. Paul, Mn."

— Joe Nathan

What Are Your Thoughts on the Current Debate Over School Change?

" A health tip for me [this is] kinda strange but it works. If you have acne or you have small break outs, get 7 clean towels (one for each day of the week) then put a clean towel on your pillow each night. I usually do that for my face or because the simple fact that when my cat touches my face, it makes me itch. Putting that towel on my pillow makes the itching go away. Another health tip would be cucumbers for your eyes. This helps you get rid of the dark circles under your eyes."

— Kendra

What Health Tips Have Worked for You?

" If I could have any super power it would be changing to different things. If I can change to anything I want I would have more super powers I would be a pterodactyl and fly, be a shark and swim deep under the sea, be a cheetah to run really fast, be all sorts of animals. I would be able to protect my family and turn into a strong gorilla and attack the thief and take him to the police station and be a hero to my family and the town. It would be so cool to change to anything. I wish I had the power to change right now. ☐"

— Salim

What Superpower Do You Wish You Had?

" I remember a couple of months ago when I had a headache and I used a wet and cold towel to put on my forehead. Feel asleep and woke up with the headache gone. When I'm stressed out about something I usually listen to music that express what I feel inside. I also sing out loud to express my feelings. "

— PADER

What Health Tips Have Worked for You?

" ...when you have a nose bleed you should not tilt your head back. This can cause

the blood to go down your throat...and eventually come up. What you should do is tilt your head down, and apply A LOT of pressure.”

– Alex

What Health Tips Have Worked for You?

“ December 7th, a day that will live in infamy. Not only did the Japanese bomb pearl harbor on this dreaded day but fifty years later S Brooklyn J. was brought into this world. He grew up in a normal family in a small town from upstate New York. There he learned to hunt with the pack, becoming alpha male within weeks of his birth. As leader of the pack he gained renown and wealth leading him to go to Princeton. There he put aside he tribal ways (partially) and gained a doctorate in Nuclear Physiology. From that point on he continued to make incredible amounts of money and buy up the worlds population. When he died he owned 99.99% of the world.”

– Brooklyn J

What Do You Want Your Obituary to Say?

“ I started a program to help design a car for blind people so they can drive. I discovered a way to make a car run on air. I made it when I was still alive. I made a new faster car that tops out at 560/MPH. I lived a good life and I loved it.”

– Николай

What Do You Want Your Obituary to Say?

“ I don't believe that they should be banning any books for any reason. I think that maybe there should be an age restriction like the ESRB rating for video games, only an ESRB for books.”

– Jarred

Are There Books That Should Be Banned From Your School Library?

“ Our class agrees that gargling with salt water helps a sore throat. Some other health tips we have include those listed below: 1. Don't sleep over a friend's house if they are sick. 2. Don't go to school or work if you are sick. 3. Cough into your elbow. Wash your hands often. 4. Don't touch eyes with dirty hands. 5. Put vicks on your feet and put on socks. Sleep. Your cough will go away. 6. Use Purell.”

– MM's class

What Health Tips Have Worked for You?

“ If I get mosquito bites, of flea bites, my father always tells me to rub witch hazel on then because it gets inside the bur bite and dries it up so it will not itch, then it will heal.”

– Hannah

What Health Tips Have Worked for You?

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