Tagged

Teacher resource - background information

Welcome

When a group of high-school friends post a rumour about a rival it sparks a chain reaction that leaves no one untouched. Cyberbullying, sexting, filmed fights and police action ensue – will these friends avoid being Tagged forever?

An eSafety teaching resource, **Tagged** is recommended for use with students aged 14 and over. Tagged comes with lesson plans and compelling character interviews. It explores themes of personal and peer safety and responsibility that are crucial to maintaining positive online behaviour and digital reputation into adulthood.

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) was established as part of the Australian Government's commitment to enhancing online safety for all Australians.

Contents

Introduction to the issues

Your students have never known a world without the internet.

As 'digital natives', their online lives are crucial to your students' identities and understanding of the world.

However, being more technologically adept than most of the teachers and other adults in their lives doesn't mean that they display the social and ethical responsibility required to have positive online experiences.

In fact, negative experiences often result from a lack of comprehension of:

- The permanence of what is posted online, affecting what is referred to as a person's 'digital reputation'
- Privacy and personal boundaries in friendships and deeper relationships
- What constitutes bullying behaviour

As an educator working with teenagers you have probably been aware for some time that social networking sites and smart phone technology can combine to create incidences of bullying known as cyberbullying. Another escalating social trend is the taking and sending of sexual images amongst peers or between those in romantic relationships. This is known as sexting.

If there haven't been incidences in your school that you're aware of, a cursory search of the internet will reveal many high-profile media cases illustrating the damaging consequences of both trends. These cases can serve as good platforms for introducing discussion of these issues with teenagers. In Australia and around the world, it is possible to see many cases where people have suffered the loss of romantic relationships, career prospects, personal reputations and - all too often their lives, due to instances of sexting or cyberbullying. These outcomes are not restricted to teenagers. Adults suffer similar consequences, as illustrated by many cases focused on by the media. However, teenagers are often far more vulnerable to the negative fallout from these online actions.

Why are teenagers more vulnerable?

Adolescence is a time of curiosity, experimentation, the testing of boundaries, and the formation of a sense of identity and self-worth. As every important relationship is the 'first', best friends or sexual partners are often trusted completely. Teenagers are natural risk takers. Lasting consequences of any actions are often disregarded by teens.

This combination of well known social and emotional stages is part of what makes teenage life so creative and exhilarating. However, providing support, guidance and harm prevention is crucial to allowing the natural pathway to adulthood to progress without becoming caught in disturbing junctions that are unique to this current age of digital reputation.

How are things different for this generation?

Every generation has experienced schoolyard bullying. Why is cyberbullying so different, so insidious? Because it is relentless. In the era of constant, 24-hour connectivity at home and at school, there is often no escape to a place without harassment. This is why advice on how to recognise and deal with bullying must change to reflect the nature of the bullying.

Cyberbullying and sexting are new concepts for most of the adults in teenagers' lives today. As these negative events take place in silence and on screens, it is important for parents and teachers to understand the very high likelihood that this is occurring in schools even if they don't see the evidence. Acting from an assumption that these kinds of negative online interactions are happening can open a dialogue between teachers and students from the outset.

Your school's internal policy

You will need to explore your school's policies/role in both disciplining and also supporting students. If the school doesn't have a policy it needs to develop one, especially in relation to the support it will provide students.

The role of the bystander

In incidences of sexting and cyberbullying, there is rarely one victim, one bully, or one bystander. In fact, victims of cyberbullying are very likely to repeat the same behaviour themselves. Sometimes teenagers who do the wrong thing – film a fight or a sex act, tag a private photograph, make offensive or inflammatory comments – and publish this material online; do so in the heat of the moment; acting out of ignorance and immaturity. Without being fully aware of the consequences, these 'bullies' often end up as victims themselves, as their momentary episode of selfish or anti-social behaviour can expose them to dramatic and long-term social and legal ramifications including expulsion from school or police action.

Bystanders can experience guilt, confusion, loneliness and depression, and their lack of empowerment or knowledge of how to take responsibility often contributes to bullying acts in ways that are just as negative to a victim as the bullying itself.

What can teachers do?

You don't have to be an expert in online technology to help teenagers navigate their use of it safely.

Although much has changed due to the significant use of online technology by Australian teenagers, codes of behaviour - of ethics and of social and personal responsibility - are applied to online interactions in the same way as they are applied in other social settings. These are areas of life that are culturally determined and must be taught by trusted adults, not left for teenagers to figure out solely for themselves.

By exploring the core ethical and social issues raised through this resource, you can help students to understand consequences, develop responsibility, act with care and bravery towards others, and protect their digital reputations now and into adulthood.

Definitions

Sexting

Sexting refers to the sending of provocative or sexual photos, messages, or videos, generally using a mobile phone. It can also include posting this type of material online.

While sharing sexually suggestive images or text messages may be seen as innocent flirting or amusement for young people, sexting can have serious personal, social and legal consequences.

Under current Australian law, young people may be committing a crime when taking, receiving or forwarding sexual images of themselves or friends who are minors. This applies even if all participants are willing. These acts can represent the production or distribution of child pornography.support their friends.

Digital reputation

Digital reputation, like any other form of reputation, refers to the generalised view others take of a person's identity. The digital component refers to the evidence of a person's interactions, comments and behaviours online and how this combines to form a whole impression of an individual.

A digital reputation is as real, lasting and important as an individual's general reputation. It affects a person's image and how their identity and beliefs are understood.

> **Image-based abuse**
>
> Image-based abuse happens when someone shares, or threatens to share, an intimate, nude or sexual image or video, without the permission of the person in the image or video.
>
> The images can be real photos, photos that have been changed or altered, or drawn pictures or videos.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying occurs when the internet, email or mobile phones are used to deliberately and repeatedly engage in hostile behaviour to harm or upset someone. Cyberbullying can result in those involved experiencing social, psychological and academic difficulties.

Cyberbullying behaviours include:

- sending abusive texts or emails
- posting unkind messages or inappropriate images on social networking sites
- tagging unflattering, private or offensive images with a person's name to discredit or hurt them
- impersonating others online
- excluding others online.

Slide notes

The following pages contain notes which should assist with the presentation of the included slide content.

Middle or upper?

When you reach Slide 4 in the slide show, you will be offered the buttons 'Middle Secondary' and 'Upper Secondary' instead of 'Next'. Simply select whichever reflects the age of your audience. The only difference in these is that the 'Upper Secondary' slides deal with the legal situation as students approach the age of 18.
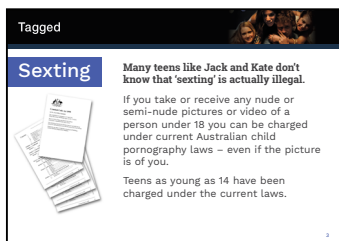
After selecting, be sure to note the slide number in order to align the slide notes.
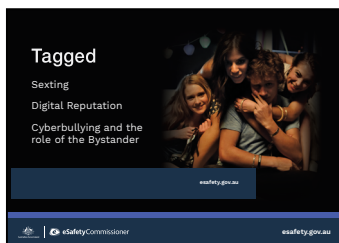
Slide 1
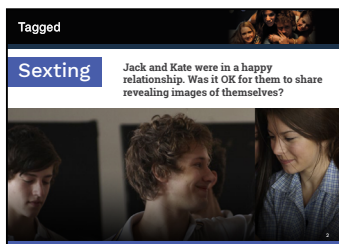
Slide 2

Slide 3

- Sexting may be considered illegal if participants are under 18. This may be the case even if the image sent involves only one person, or if all participants are willing.
- Sexting images and videos can have implications at school and may result in expulsion.
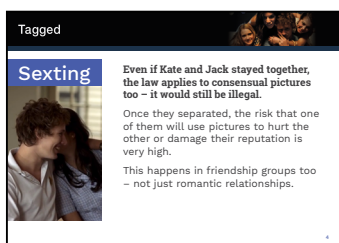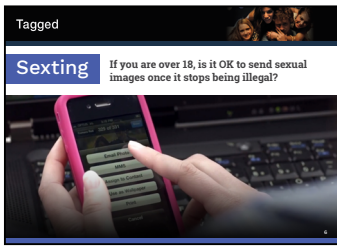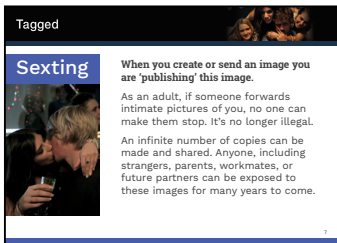
Slide 4

- The social ramifications of sexting can be enormous if images or videos spread beyond friendship groups or couples.
- Sexting images are very hard to retain control of once they are sent beyond the friendship group or couple.
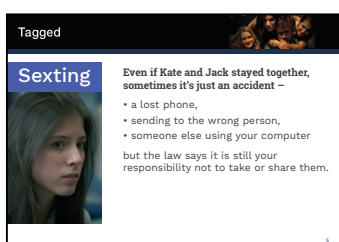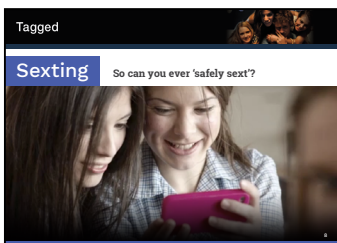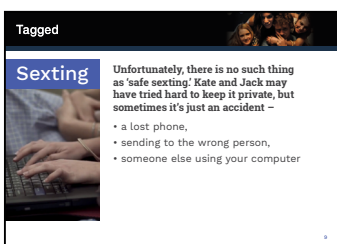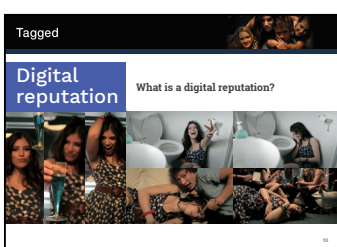
Slide 5

Slide 6

Slide 7

- Sexting images can be misused for sexual pleasure by strangers.
- Sexting images and videos can create issues in families, friendship groups and schools.
- Sexting images and videos can have a negative impact on future relationships because the images can remain available online.
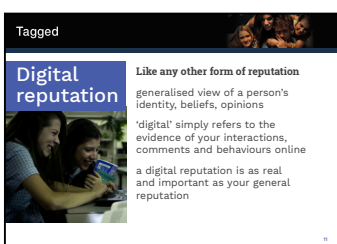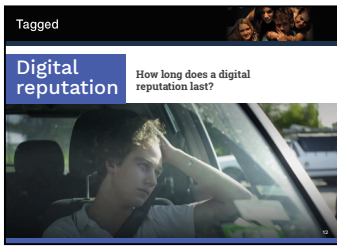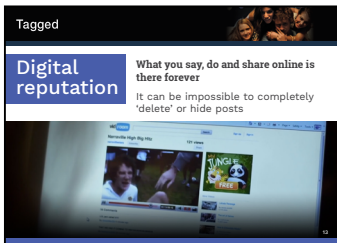
Slide 8

Slide 9

Slide 10

Slide 11

- Your digital reputation is your responsibility.
- Ethically and legally you must take personal responsibility for the images and videos you take or share, and the comments you make about yourselves or others.
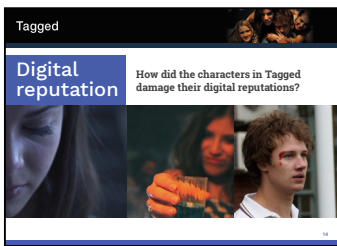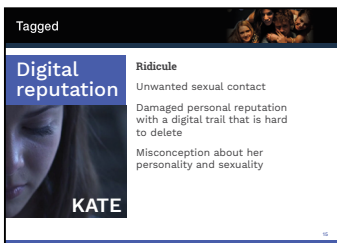
Slide 12

Digital reputation — How long does a digital reputation last?

Slide 13

Digital reputation — What you say, do and share online is there forever. It can be impossible to completely 'delete' or hide posts

- Have you ever posted something about your family or friends during a time you were really angry at them that is not how you generally feel about them? How would it affect your relationship during the good times if they read what you thought about them when upset?
- Do you feel you have similar opinions now as you did at age 10 or 12? What about similar friendship groups or tastes in music? Would you be embarrassed now if some of those views still defined your reputation?
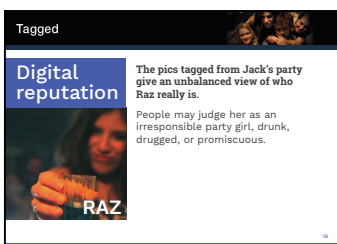
Slide 14

Digital reputation — How did the characters in Tagged damage their digital reputations?

- How would you like others to see you?
- How do you think you can create an impression more closely aligned with what you really want?

Slide 15

Digital reputation — Ridicule. Unwanted sexual contact. Damaged personal reputation with a digital trail that is hard to delete. Misconception about her personality and sexuality. KATE
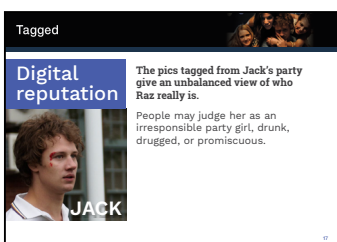
- Have you ever seen your friends post a comment or picture just to be funny or shocking that you think could be misinterpreted by someone? What conclusions might people draw about your friend based on those comments?
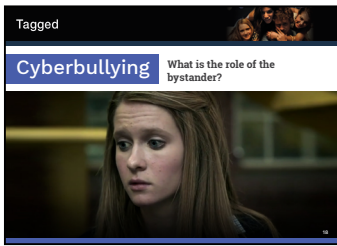
Slide 16

Digital reputation — The pics tagged from Jack's party give an unbalanced view of who Raz really is. People may judge her as an irresponsible party girl, drunk, drugged, or promiscuous. RAZ

- What would an online search reveal about you? Would it be a balanced view?
- What are some of the words you would never want attached to your reputation?

Slide 17

Digital reputation — The pics tagged from Jack's party give an unbalanced view of who Raz really is. People may judge her as an irresponsible party girl, drunk, drugged, or promiscuous. JACK

- If Jack was to be in a fight in the future that was not his fault, or be accused of behaving improperly with women, he may have a hard time defending himself because of his online reputation.
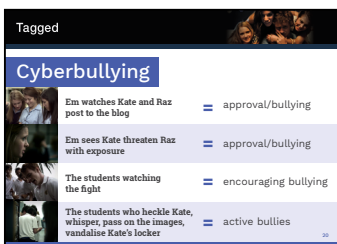
Slide 18
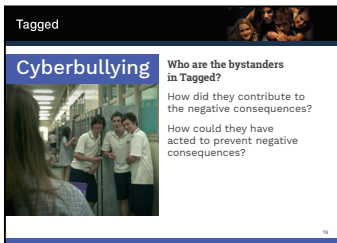
Slide 19

- By ignoring someone who is cyberbullying others when you go online or who is sharing sexting images to hurt someone, are you really 'not involved'?
- By doing nothing, what are you really doing?
- Do your actions support the bully or the bullied?

Slide 20

- The students who 'heckle' Kate over the sexualised images are acting aggressively and destructively. They are harassing her in a very serious and threatening way.
- A bystander is just as involved in bullying by giving unspoken approval and more power to the bully.
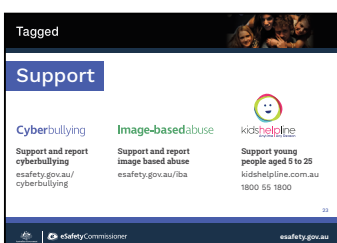
Slide 21

- Have you ever seen your friends post a comment or picture just to be funny or shocking that you think could be misinterpreted by someone? What conclusions might people draw about your friend based on those comments?
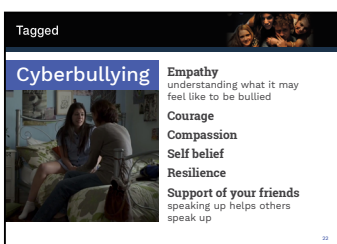
Slide 22

Slide 23

- People who have been involved in a sexting or cyberbullying incident need support from friends, family and the school.
- Helping friends and fellow students who are involved in cyberbullying or sexting early on can save them a lot of pain down the track.
- Telling adults can be embarrassing but teachers, parents and police can help block sexting images from being shared more widely and stop cyberbullying.