

Background Information

Cyberbullying has become one of the most prevalent forms of emotional abuse for teenagers over the past decade.

Focus Questions

As you study the following case, keep these questions in mind:

1. Did the cyberbully start out with harmful intentions?
2. As a friend, what steps/actions would you take to help resolve this situation?
3. Is the situation so serious that it warrants police and/or school interference?
4. What can Eliza do to help Jane overcome her sadness and once again become involved in school activities?
5. What are some resources Eliza can use to help Jane?

The Case

Entering 6th grade has been both an exciting and overwhelming experience for Jane and Eliza. They attended the same elementary school and have been best friends since 3rd grade. The first quarter of the school year was all about students making new friends and getting along. The school had several socials and informational sessions for students and parents to get to know one another.

At the beginning of the second quarter, students from the area registered to attend Cotillion. Cotillion is a long-standing tradition in the South where many 6th-graders get dressed up and learn different traditional dances.

Eliza and Jane attended their first Cotillion dance and had a wonderful time. After the dance, a group of about 10 girls went out for a fancy dinner. It was the first time Jane and Eliza felt like they were mature. When the girls got home, they immediately started texting to all their friends about the evening. The conversations focused on the best outfits, what they would wear the next time, and the place they all wanted to eat after the next event. The day after Cotillion, the school was buzzing. Girls were talking about the “fashion aspect” of the evening, while the boys were basically making fun of the event and how their moms forced them to participate in such a dorky activity.

As Eliza sat eating lunch, she saw Jane walk in to the cafeteria. There was a big group of kids huddled around the new kid Jeffrey. She wondered what they were talking about but kept eating. She only had 20 minutes until next period. Jane stopped at the group and then turned around and rushed off. Eliza thought it was weird that Jane took off so quickly. She decided to check on her friend later.

After school, Eliza called, and Jane’s mom told her Jane had a stomach bug. Two days passed, and Jane had still not returned to school. Eliza found a group of girls that she met in History class and began sitting with them during lunch. During lunch, the girls were talking about the new kid Jeffrey and how funny and cool he was. The girls told Eliza that she had to follow him on Instagram. Every day, he posted something funny. Eliza started scrolling through his account on her phone and suddenly her jaw dropped. She saw a picture of Jeffrey dancing with Jane and the caption read: “Had to dance with this last night . . . look at her back! YUCK! It was dried out and pimply!” No wonder why Jane was so upset. She immediately slipped away to the bathroom and sent Jane another message.

Over the next week, Eliza kept trying to talk to her friend, but Jane refused to speak to her and totally avoided her at school. Eliza told Jane that she should not worry about it and everyone would forget in a few days. This went on for several days. Eliza became tired of trying to help her friend, only to be ignored. She eventually began to hang out more with her new friends.

Eliza was sad for Jane and missed her, but if her friend would not open up to her, what could she do?

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1. Did the bully have harmful intentions when posting the picture and comment?
2. What steps would you take to make the bully aware of the ramifications of his actions?
3. What are some ways that Jeffrey can fix his wrongdoing and help Jane?
4. Since this is one isolated situation, would you consider this cyberbullying?

The Case

Entering 6th grade has been both an exciting and overwhelming experience for Jeffrey. His father was recently transferred to Virginia from New York for his job. At Jeffrey's old school, he was well liked and popular; but at this new school, he feels like he floats around like a tiny fish in the sea. The school had several socials and informational sessions for students and parents to get to know one another, but all of the other students had the advantage of knowing at least some other students before the school year.

At the beginning of the second quarter, students from the area registered to attend Cotillion. Cotillion is a long-standing tradition in the South where many 6th-graders get dressed up and learn different traditional dances. Jeffrey's mom thought it would be a good idea for him to join Cotillion as a way to meet other kids. Jeffrey's mom took him to the dance, dropped him off, and then picked him up. All of the other kids carpooled and were going out after, but he did not know anyone well enough to ask to join and none of the kids extended him an invitation.

Two of Jeffrey's classmates, Eliza and Jane, also attended Cotillion. As Jeffrey watched them at the dance, he realized they knew so many other kids and were having a great time. The day after Cotillion, the school was buzzing. Girls were talking about the "fashion aspect" of the evening, while the boys were basically making fun of the event and how their moms forced them to participate in such a dorky activity.

Jeffrey knew he needed to find a way to break into the conversations and become part of the group. His mom had forwarded him a few photos she took of him when she arrived at the end. One of the pictures was him dancing with Jane. He pulled the picture of Jane up on his phone, posted it on Instagram, and wrote a funny caption under it that said: "Had to dance with this last night . . . look at her back! YUCK! It was dried out and pimply!" Immediately, kids started following his Instagram account. He was no longer a shadow in the background.

That day, Jane stayed after math to speak to her teacher and arrived at lunch a bit late. She saw a bunch of boys and a few girls standing around looking at an iPhone giggling. Jane walked up and peered over someone's shoulder and was horrified to see that it was a picture of her from the Cotillion dance. She briefly caught Jeffrey's eyes and then she ran off.

Jeffrey felt bad but figured she would be fine in a bit. It was just a joke. No harm, right?

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1. Did the cyberbully start out with harmful intentions?
2. As a victim, what steps/actions would you take to help resolve this situation?
3. Is the situation so serious that it warrants police and/or school interference?
4. Would you be as upset as Jane if this situation happened to you?

The Case

Entering 6th grade has been both an exciting and overwhelming experience for Jane. She and her best friend Eliza have been talking about middle school and all the amazing things that happen during this time since 3rd grade. The first quarter of the school year was all about students making new friends and getting along. The school had several socials and informational sessions for students and parents to get to know one another.

At the beginning of the second quarter, students from the area registered to attend Cotillion. Cotillion is a long-standing tradition in the South where many 6th-graders get dressed up and learn different traditional dances.

Eliza and Jane attended their first Cotillion dance and had a wonderful time. After the dance, a group of about 10 girls went out for a fancy dinner. It was the first time Jane and Eliza felt like they were mature. When the girls got home, they immediately started texting to all their friends about the evening. The conversation focused on the best outfits, what they would wear the next time, and the place they all wanted to eat after the next event. The day after Cotillion, the school was buzzing. Girls were talking about the “fashion aspect” of the evening, while the boys were basically making fun of the event and how their moms forced them to participate in such a dorky activity.

That day, Jane stayed after math to speak to her teacher and arrived at lunch a bit late. She saw a bunch of boys and a few girls standing around looking at an iPhone giggling. Jane walked up and peered over someone’s shoulder and was horrified to see that it was a picture of herself from the Cotillion dance posted on Instagram. A boy from the school posted the picture and wrote: “Had to dance with this last night . . . look at her back! YUCK! It was dried out and pimply!”

Jane’s eyes filled with tears. She was mortified and felt ill. She quietly slipped away to the nurse’s office, said she had stomachache, and called her mom to bring her home. She stayed home for two days. Her friend Eliza kept calling, but Jane refused to speak to her. Three days later, Jane finally returned to school. She was quiet and withdrawn and basically went to class without speaking to anyone. Her friends tried to speak to her, but she was short and snappy. At lunch, she hid in the library. Eliza finally found out about the picture everyone was laughing at and went to speak to Jane. She told Jane that she should not worry about it and everyone would forget in a few days. This went on for several days. Eliza became tired of trying to help her friend only to be ignored. She eventually began to hang out with some new friends she met during lunch.

Jane decided she didn’t want to go to any more school functions. She was going to just lay low forever. If she was not noticed, then nothing painful like this would ever happen again.

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1. Did the cyberbully start out with harmful intentions?
2. As a parent, what steps/actions would you take to help resolve this situation?
3. Is the situation so serious that it warrants police and/or school interference?
4. What can the parent do to redirect Jane into other activities and more positive social interactions?

The Case

Jane's mom was so nervous about having her oldest child go to 6th grade. Jane attended the same elementary school and has been best friends with a girl named Eliza since 3rd grade. Jane's mom was so glad that her daughter had a friend to share this new experience with and to confide in if needed. The girls were so excited about middle school and all of the activities they would participate in as new students. The first quarter of the school year was all about students making new friends and getting along. The school had several socials and informational sessions for students and parents to get to know one another.

At the beginning of the second quarter, students from the area registered to attend Cotillion. Cotillion is a long-standing tradition in the South where many 6th-graders get dressed up and learn different traditional dances. Eliza and Jane were so excited that they were finally at the age they could attend Cotillion. They had heard stories for years from Eliza's older sisters, and it sounded so fun.

Eliza and Jane attended their first Cotillion dance and had a wonderful time. When the girls got home, they immediately started texting to all their friends about the evening. The conversation focused on the best outfits, what they would wear the next time, and the place they all wanted to eat after the next event. Jane's mom was linked in to her daughter's phone and giggled as she read along with the sweet messages all of the girls were sending. The day after Cotillion, the school was buzzing. Girls were talking about the "fashion aspect" of the evening, while the boys were basically making fun of the event and how their moms forced them to participate in such a dorky activity.

The day after Cotillion, Jane's mom received a call from the school nurse, saying Jane wasn't feeling well and needed to be picked up. For the next few days, Jane basically stayed in bed. Three days later, Jane finally returned to school. When Jane returned home from school, she was quiet and withdrawn and went right to her room. Her parents tried to speak to her, but she was short and snappy. Her friends tried to call her at home, but she kept telling her mom that she didn't want to talk to them.

That Friday night was the first home football game. Since the beginning of the school year, all of the girls had planned on meeting at the yogurt store across from the school and then walking over to the game together. When Friday night came, Jane refused to go to the game. She said she had a headache and went to her room, put earphones in, and listened to music. Her mother was confused and did not understand her sudden disinterest in participating. Then Jane's mother also realized that Eliza was not really around much lately. She

asked Jane about it and was told that Eliza was just too busy now. Jane's mom decided to call Eliza to see if she could help find out what was going on. When she spoke to Eliza, she heard the story of what happened the day after Cotillion. She found out that the day after Cotillion, Jane had stayed after math to speak to her teacher and arrived at lunch a bit late. She learned that Jane then saw a bunch of boys and a few girls standing around looking at an iPhone giggling. When Jane walked up and peered over someone's shoulder, she was horrified to see that it was a picture of her from the Cotillion dance posted on Instagram (a popular social media site for middle school students). A boy from the school posted the picture and wrote: "Had to dance with this last night . . . look at her back! YUCK! It was dried out and pimply!"

Now Jane's mom knew the situation. After hearing about this incident, Jane's recent behavior made much more sense to her mom.