

# Gaga's anti-bullying stance can help, says expert

September 26 2011

---

Lady Gaga and other celebrities commenting on bullying have the chance to teach young people about the horrors of bullying abuse, says the director of the University at Buffalo's Alberti Center for the Prevention of Bullying Abuse, a power that makes it important they act responsibly.

"Lady Gaga tweeting about the tragic suicide of Williamsville student Jamey Rodemeyer is going to reach a different audience than the White House's summit on bullying," says Amanda Nickerson, a licensed psychologist and an expert in school crisis prevention and intervention, with an emphasis on violence and bullying.

"Lady Gaga is going to speak to the youth," says Nickerson. "Whatever she says is going to reach these young audiences. It's up to her and other well-known people who others look up to to say responsible things."

Nickerson, who heads a newly endowed center in UB's Graduate School of Education with a mission of becoming a national or international resource for the latest research and advice on bullying, says this week's suicide of the suburban Buffalo teen is another example of a tragedy that might have been exacerbated by bullying behavior.

Rodemeyer posted a lyric from the [Lady Gaga](#) song, "The Queen" on his Facebook page the night before he took his own life. Since then, the popular female singer has tweeted on the youth's death, including this message to her fans: "Jamey Rodemeyer, 14 years old, took his life

because of bullying. Bullying must become illegal. It is a hate crime."

Nickerson said New York State has a law that will take effect July 1, 2012, called "Dignity for All Students" that prohibits harassment and intimidation in schools on a wide variety of issues, including [sexual orientation](#), gender, race and weight. Many states already have laws against bullying.

"Hate crimes, discrimination, aggravated assault are already illegal," Nickerson points out.

Nickerson, who is available for media interviews by appointment, offers these thoughts on frequently asked questions following this week's tragedy:

## **What is cyberbullying?**

Cyberbullying is using technology (computers, cell phones and other electronic devices) to willfully harass, threaten, intimidate or otherwise inflict harm. Examples include sending hurtful text messages, spreading rumors, creating blogs or websites to make fun of others, or taking pictures and sending them to others.

## **How is it similar and different from other forms of bullying?**

As with other forms of bullying, cyberbullying can have devastating outcomes, such as depression, anger, sadness and fear of going to school.

It's different because it can be anonymous, viral (spreads quickly), and potentially easier to be cruel given the physical distance from the target and victim.

## What can we do to tackle the problem?

Parents can model appropriate behavior in life and online about treating others with respect and dignity. They can educate children about responsible use of technology. They can supervise activities, such as having the computer in a common room, going on the Internet with their children, using filtering software and being aware of passwords and contacts.

Schools can cultivate a safe and respectful school environment. They can educate students about responsible use of technology and digital citizenship.

They can also maintain and enforce clear and consistent policies against bullying and harassment (including cyberbullying that occurs off campus and results in disruptions in learning). And they can then inform students and parents of these rules.

Young people can identify a trusted adult (such as a parent, teacher, or someone else) to talk to about experiences with [bullying](#) and cyberbullying, either as the target or a witness. They can remember that having a cell phone, email, and other accounts is a privilege and not a right. They can remember not to send online communications (pictures, texts, etc.) that they wouldn't feel comfortable sharing with parent.

Provided by University at Buffalo

Citation: Gaga's anti-bullying stance can help, says expert (2011, September 26) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-09-gaga-anti-bullying-stance-expert.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.