

The video opens with clips of real teens re-enacting bullying situations and sharing their experiences with harassment. The narrator explains that kids in this workshop on harassment are speaking honestly about what goes on in classrooms every day—the gossiping, taunting and bullying that can leave lifelong scars on everyone involved. “How do they cope with it? How do they stop it?” the narrator asks. He invites viewers to watch them discover the solution.

Three teens tell their stories. Sarah was rejected by two of her closest friends. For Zach it began when he came to the defense of a band member who was insulted by a rival band. Courtney doesn’t know what prompted the internet harassment she endured. She says that people were spreading ugly rumors about her.

Rebecca Lowry, the workshop moderator, states that the goal of the workshop is to empower students so that they realize they are not the only people in the world who are experiencing harassment. Students need to realize the harm that can be caused if they bully someone. They also need to be able to go out in the world and act appropriately if they see others being harassed.

The narrator asks, “What’s the big deal about harassment? Isn’t it just kids being kids?” Dr. Melissa Holt of the University of New Hampshire offers a response. She says the biggest misconception about harassment is that it doesn’t matter, that there are no long-term consequences for anyone involved. But in reality, kids who are victimized tend to miss school and get lower grades than their peers. Plus, bullies tend to skip school. “So actually it really is something that affects the educational experience, and it has some pretty strong psychological and social effects for the kids involved.”

Teens describe how it feels to be harassed. The narrator points out, “One survey showed that 85 percent of the students interviewed said that kids harass other kids at their schools. That’s a lot of kids left feeling angry, embarrassed, frustrated, scared and depressed.” Zach and Sarah share how harassment affected their lives. Zach says it was pretty much the only thing on his mind, day and night. It kept him from concentrating on his schoolwork. “It just stuck in my head.” Sarah avoided going on the computer because she was scared of the messages she might receive. She stopped hanging out with friends in case they would start harassing her too. “I just completely isolated myself from everything.”

Next, the workshop students participate in a role play situation in which a girl is rejected by a group at a cafeteria table. The teens discuss the question: Why do kids pick on others? Suggestions include wanting to protect one’s reputation and concern about status. “That’s what harassment is all about—thinking you are superior to other people,” says one teen.

The damage caused by harassment can last a lifetime. Dr. Holt tells viewers about research which suggests that adults who had been victims of harassment in their youth had lower self-esteem and were more depressed than those who weren’t victimized. “So it does have long-standing effects on the victim,” she confirms.