

# ACCEPTABLE SOCIAL NETWORKING?

Ian made a plan to get back at Mike for telling some personal secrets about him. He created a fictional profile on a social networking site so he could carry on a fake online romance with Mike. The cyber romance went on for weeks. Mike was hooked by a person he thought was a student at a neighboring high school, a friend of his friends. At that point, Ian told all their friends about his trick on Mike. When asked why he did it, Ian said, "To teach him a lesson."

## What's the Problem?

Was Ian justified in teaching Mike a lesson?

How do you think Mike felt when he found out his "relationship" was only a cruel trick?

What problems might result due to Ian's actions?

## Think About It

It's easy to try out new identities online, and many teens do it. Being online is all about expressing oneself with social networks, blogs, chat, messaging, and videos. But when self-expression is at the expense of another person, it's wrong. When does it cross the line from "just kidding" into *cyberbullying*? If the cruelty or threats are intentional and repeated, you're already there.

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## Find Solutions

What advice could you give Ian about self-control and respect?

What advice could you give Mike?

Consider if Ian had told some other friends what he was doing. What could these bystanders have done?

## Take Action

### Create a Top Ten Tips List

Sending menacing electronic messages, forwarding private conversations, spreading e-rumors, posting embarrassing photos—how can teens help one another avoid these situations? Start with the Be CyberSmart! tips on this page, do some brainstorming, try some research, and develop your own Top Ten Tips list.

## Be CyberSmart!

- Watch your words online. Before sending or posting, reread them to see if they can be misinterpreted.
- Use acronyms like *JK* (“just kidding”) to make sure others understand your intent.
- If you get angry, take the time to cool down and consider how to react before you click the Send button.