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# **blurred** **lives** PROJECT



A Cross-National, Co-Participatory Exploration Of Cyberbullying,  
Young People And Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

## *COMIC BOOK*

**Antonella Brighi, Consuelo Mameli, Annalisa Guarini, Damiano Menin,  
Trijntje Völlink, Roy Willems, Herbert Scheithauer, Nora Fiedler, Noel  
Purdy, Jayne Hamilton, Anne Rowan, Peter K. Smith, & Catherine Culbert**

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## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BLURRED LIVES PROJECT

Welcome to this resource designed for pupils by young people across Europe as part of the Blurred Lives Project - a cross-national, co-participatory exploration of cyberbullying, young people and socio-economic disadvantage. The Blurred Lives Project focused on the online experiences of 14-16-year olds in schools in disadvantaged urban areas in Northern Ireland, England, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands and aims to facilitate pupil voice through the creation of resources for teachers, pupils, parents and social networking providers.

The Blurred Lives Project is the first project in Europe to use a co-participatory approach and to initiate pupil-led development of resources based on what these pupils experience, how they define cyberbullying, and what they think interventions should look like.

In the first phase of the project an online survey was completed by around 500 pupils in 5+ schools in each country and explored pupils' online access and negative experiences. The second phase aimed to provide up-to-date resources for teachers, pupils and parents/carers, and make important recommendations to Social Networking Providers, building on ideas from the pupils themselves. This was done through a combination of Sequential Focus Groups, and Quality Circles, carried out intensively with two classes of 14-16-year-old pupils in each country (237 pupils in total).

The full range of original resources are available on the [Blurred Lives Project website](https://www.ou.nl/web/blurred-lives/project) \* and on the on the [Erasmus+ Project Results Platform](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/) °.

\* <https://www.ou.nl/web/blurred-lives/project>

° <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

## THE COMIC BOOK

This book contains resources for pupils, and more specifically contains examples of the comics produced by the pupils involved in the Quality Circles. Each story is aimed at raising awareness among young people of your age regarding the problem of cyberbullying and offers tools to combat it.

You can read this book alone or, even better, with one or more friends. You could also show this book to some of your teachers and suggest that they use this resource during school classes.

## NOTES

The comics you will find in this book have been redrawn, starting from the drawings made by the pupils, by a young professional cartoonist, *Roberto d'Agnano* (from Italy) working for the agency *The Best Solutions Group SRL*.

On the [Blurred Lives website](https://www.ou.nl/web/blurred-lives/project) you can find the original comics as they were designed by the young people involved in the project.



# *CYBERBULLYING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?*

**Most of the information you'll find in  
this section has been provided by  
students from  
Belfast, Northern Ireland**

## WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is bullying done online (for example, through the use of social media). Unlike face-to-face bullying, it is not necessary for attacks to be repeated several times; even a single online attack can lead to potentially negative consequences, which can sometimes be very serious.

**Data collected within the Blurred Lives project (from a sample of more than 2500 students) indicate that:**

- ❖ 69.5% of young people spend at least 3 to 5 hours online daily;
- ❖ 24.5% of young people claim to have personally had nasty experiences online;
- ❖ 32.9% of young people have seen or heard of some nasty or unpleasant experiences happening to someone they know well on the Internet.

If you've ever been a victim of cyberbullying, remember: you are not alone!

**Cyberbullying can come in many forms. Below are the most common ones:**

**Flaming** is the action of sending a hostile, angry, vulgar or offensive message to one or more people online, privately or publicly. There is talk of *flame war* when a first hostile message is followed by many others, in a sort of virtual fight.

**Harassment** indicates the repeated sending of hostile messages to one or more people. It differs from flaming because of its repetitive nature.

**Cyberstalking** is a form of online harassment that includes threats or intimidation.

**Denigration** consists in sending or publishing harmful, false or cruel materials (e.g. statements, pictures) about one or more people.

**Impersonation** (making a false profile) means the act of pretending to be someone else in sending or posting material that puts the person in a bad light, or puts him/her in danger.

**Outing** (dissemination of private information) consists of sending or publishing sensitive, private or embarrassing material concerning a person (e.g. forwarding messages or private images to others).

## Who is involved in cyberbullying episodes?

- The **cyberbully**: who carries out one of the aggressive online behaviours described above (e.g. harassment, denigration). S/he is often also a victim of online or offline bullying.
- The **cybervictim**: who suffers the online aggression. S/he is often also a victim of offline bullying.
- The **public**. The witnesses of cyberbullying episodes (for example, people reading hostile public posts). Depending on their behaviour, they can qualify as:
  - **Bully's helpers**: witnesses taking an active part in the online aggression, for example by teasing or insulting the victim, or by “liking” the bully's messages or forwarding the message to someone else.
  - **Defenders of the victim**: witnesses who come to the victim's defence, for example by telling the bullies to stop or reporting the episode.
  - **Passive witnesses**: witnesses not taking part, but who with their silence allow the episodes of cyberbullying to continue.

## Why do people bully?

There are lots of reasons why some people start bullying or cyberbullying others, including:

- Maybe they haven't learnt to respect difference e.g. race, religion, gender, disability;
- Maybe they haven't learnt how to resolve conflicts peacefully;
- Maybe they have been bullied themselves and they are seeking revenge;
- Maybe they come from homes where they witness violence and aggression and so it seems normal to behave like that.

## What are the effects of cyberbullying?

Being a victim of cyberbullying can have serious negative consequences for:

- **Psychological well-being**: victims of cyberbullying can feel sad or even depressed.
- **Social well-being**: victims of cyberbullying can feel lonely and lose confidence and interest in online and offline relations.
- **Physical health**: victims of cyberbullying may have trouble sleeping, headaches or eating problems.
- **School performance**: victims of cyberbullying are at risk of disengaging from school life or even dropping out.



**Comic title**

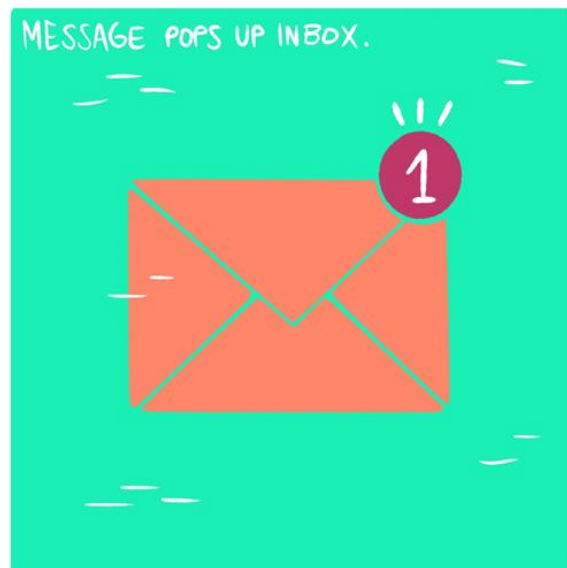
***ALL OR NOTHING***

**Created by**  
**Group “Stay Safe and Strong”,**  
**St. Thomas More Language**  
**College (Chelsea, England)**

Stay  
safe  
and strong.

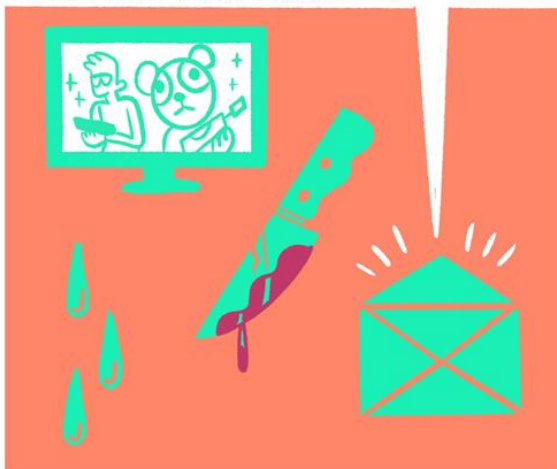


HUNTER SAT AT THE COMPUTER



MESSAGE POPS UP INBOX.

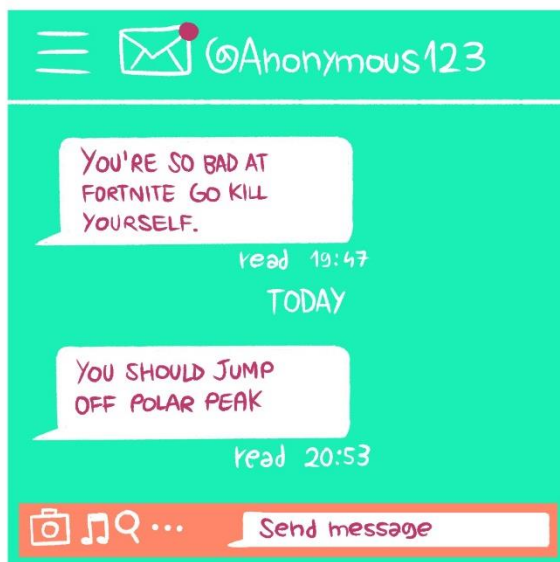
YOU ARE SO BAD AT FORTNITE, GO  
AND KILL YOURSELF



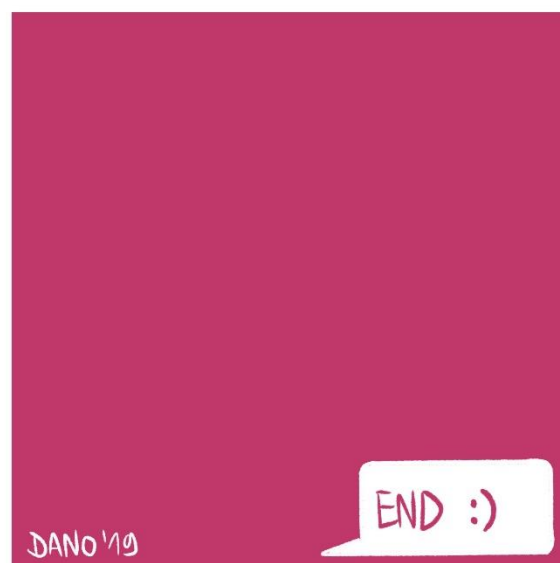
DANO '19



THE NEXT DAY POPS UP A FORTNITE MESSAGE.



HUNTER TELLS A TRUSTED ADULT ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN FORTNITE.



DANO '19

END :)



**Comic title**

***EVERYONE CAN DO  
SOMETHING - STOP  
CYBERBULLYING!***

**Created by  
Group “Dragon Cookies”,  
Gustave-Eiffel school  
(Berlin, Germany)**

ELLA TOOK A PICTURE, DECIDED IT LOOKED GOOD AND POSTED IT ON INSTAGRAM



A FEW HOURS LATER, SHE FOUND HATEFUL COMMENTS BEING POSTED UNDER THE IMAGE.

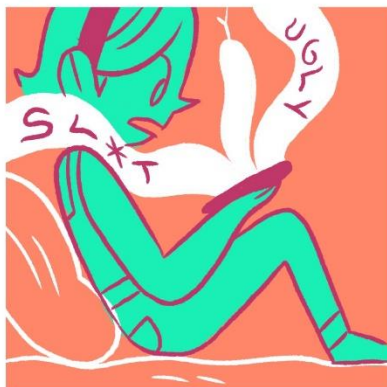
SHE DID NOT HESITATE AND DELETED ALL THE HATEFUL COMMENTS UNDER THE POST. WITH A SAD FACE SHE WENT TO BED AND TRIED TO FORGET ABOUT IT. BUT WHEN SHE WENT TO SCHOOL THE NEXT DAY, EVERYONE WAS LAUGHING AT HER AND SOME EVEN INSULTED HER.



SAD AND VERY CONFUSED SHE WENT HOME. WHEN SHE ARRIVED IN HER ROOM, SHE LOOKED AT THE POST AGAIN AND NOTICED EVEN MORE HATE COMMENTS BEING POSTED.

THEN SHE DELETED THE PICTURE COMPLETELY.

AFTER A FEW MINUTES SHE CALLED HER FRIEND DANIEUE, WHO ADVISED HER TO JUST REPORT THE BULLIES.





SHE REPORTED THE ACCOUNTS.

paul loco080\_:  
you are so ugly

It\_urbanec:  
little shit

rusor\_LUK9S:  
daughter of a whore

IN SCHOOL THE NEXT DAY, ELLA NOTICES THAT ALMOST EVERYONE HAS A SCREENSHOT OF THE INSTA-POST. THE STUDENTS CONTINUE TO SHARE THE PICTURE VIA WHATTSAPP.



ELLA CALLS DANIELLE ONCE MORE ASKING FOR ADVICE. THIS TIME DANIELLE RECOMMENDS INVOLVING HER PARENTS AND THE POLICE.



ELLA GOES TO THE POLICE STATION WITH HER MOM AND REPORTS THE INCIDENT.



IN ORDER TO HELP ELLA PROCESS HER EXPERIENCE, HER MUM IS TAKING HER TO SEE A THERAPIST.



END.



**Comic title**

***WE'RE LIKE BOOKS.  
WHO GOES BEYOND  
THE COVER?***

**Created by  
Group “Friends”, Fomal  
school (Bologna, Italy)**



Q ANONYMOUS

HI... I SEE YOU AT SCHOOL EVERYDAY.

REALLY?

YES.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

I'LL TELL YOU LATER ♥  
TELL ME SOMETHING ABOUT YOU!

WHAT CAN I TELL YOU...  
I LOVE MY MOTHER,  
I LOVE CATS, I ENJOY  
BEING ALONE.













**Comic title**

***ASK FOR HELP IF  
YOU'RE BEING  
BULLIED***

**Created by**

**Helicon VMBO school**

**(Eindhoven, The Netherlands)**







*CYBERBULLYING:  
#LET'S REFLECT*

## LET'S REFLECT!

### What types of cyberbullying have been represented in the comics?

Alone, in pairs or with a group of friends, try to identify which types of cyberbullying are represented in the comics drawn by the European students.

ENGLAND \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

GERMANY \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ITALY \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

THE NETHERLANDS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### What emotions do cybervictims feel?

Alone, in pairs or with a group of friends, try to identify which emotions are felt by the cybervictims represented in the comics drawn by the European students.


ENGLAND \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

GERMANY \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_


ITALY \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

THE NETHERLANDS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_


## Some ways to deal with cyberbullying: suggestions from young people from all over Europe through the Blurred Lives Project:




**Block the cyberbully.** In the comic "All or nothing", Hunter, at the suggestion of an adult, blocks the contact who sent him offensive messages and in this way prevents him from sending other bad messages. This strategy is easy and useful as well. If you don't know how to block a contact, ask a friend or an adult you trust, or search on Google for how to do it: you'll definitely find suggestions.




**Close an account and create a new one.** In the comic "All or nothing", Hunter, at the suggestion of an adult, closes his account and creates a new one. This strategy can be effective in preventing the cyberbully from sending other insults.




**Talk to someone about it!** In ALL the comics, the characters at some point decide to tell an adult, or a friend, their problem. Asking for help (from a friend, a trusted adult, a parent or a teacher) is a very effective strategy against cyberbullying. In fact, when we are victims of cyberbullying, we are often so sad or angry that it is difficult to think clearly. At other times, the problem is so serious that we simply can't do it alone.



**Don't stand by and watch!** The role of friends is fundamental. In the comic "We're like books. Who goes beyond the cover?", Claire sees her friend Kevin in difficulty and, taking the situation in hand, reports what happened to a teacher. This example teaches us that we should not remain indifferent to bullying and cyberbullying: we must act, even when we are not the victims.



**Ask for help ... from an expert.** In the comic "Everyone can do something", Ella eventually turns to a therapist/counsellor to help her cope with her cyberbullying experience. After a bad experience, sometimes the help given by friends or parents is simply not enough to "get better". In these cases, it is perfectly normal (and smart, too!) to ask an expert for help.



**Respond directly to nasty comments.** In the comic "We're like books. Who goes beyond the cover?", Kevin goes to talk to the bully after discovering his identity. This strategy, however, fuels the conflict and can lead to serious consequences, such as a fight. In this case, only the bully is expelled from the school. But are we sure that Kevin wouldn't have been expelled too?

## *SELF HARM AND SUICIDE PREVENTION INFORMATION*

In the Dutch comic “Ask for help if you're being bullied”, the victim is so sad that she ends up thinking about suicide. Faced with particularly stressful and negative life events, such as cyberbullying, young people can feel so hopeless that they start to hurt themselves or to think that life is meaningless. What challenging topics! ... Let's talk about them!

**Self-harm** is when a person hurts him/herself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences

**Suicide** is when a person intentionally causes their own death.

If **you** have recently been self-harming, or if you frequently think about suicide, remember: this is never your only option. Don't keep this “secret”; there is nothing wrong in feeling bad. Talk to an adult or a friend you trust and ask him/her for help. There is always a solution, even for the most complex and painful problems.

If you know (or strongly suspect) that **one of your friends** has recently been self-harming, or that s/he is thinking about suicide, remember: you can make a difference by supporting him/her. Here are some tips for you:

- Do not judge your friend, and do not minimize his/her problems with sentences such as “you're exaggerating” or “everything will be fine”.
- Listen to your friend and support him/her.
- Don't keep the secret, even if your friend asked you to. Self harm and thinking about suicide are very serious issues and you can't handle the situation alone, no matter how smart you are. Seek help from an adult you trust (a parent, a teacher or a school counsellor), and do it as soon as possible.

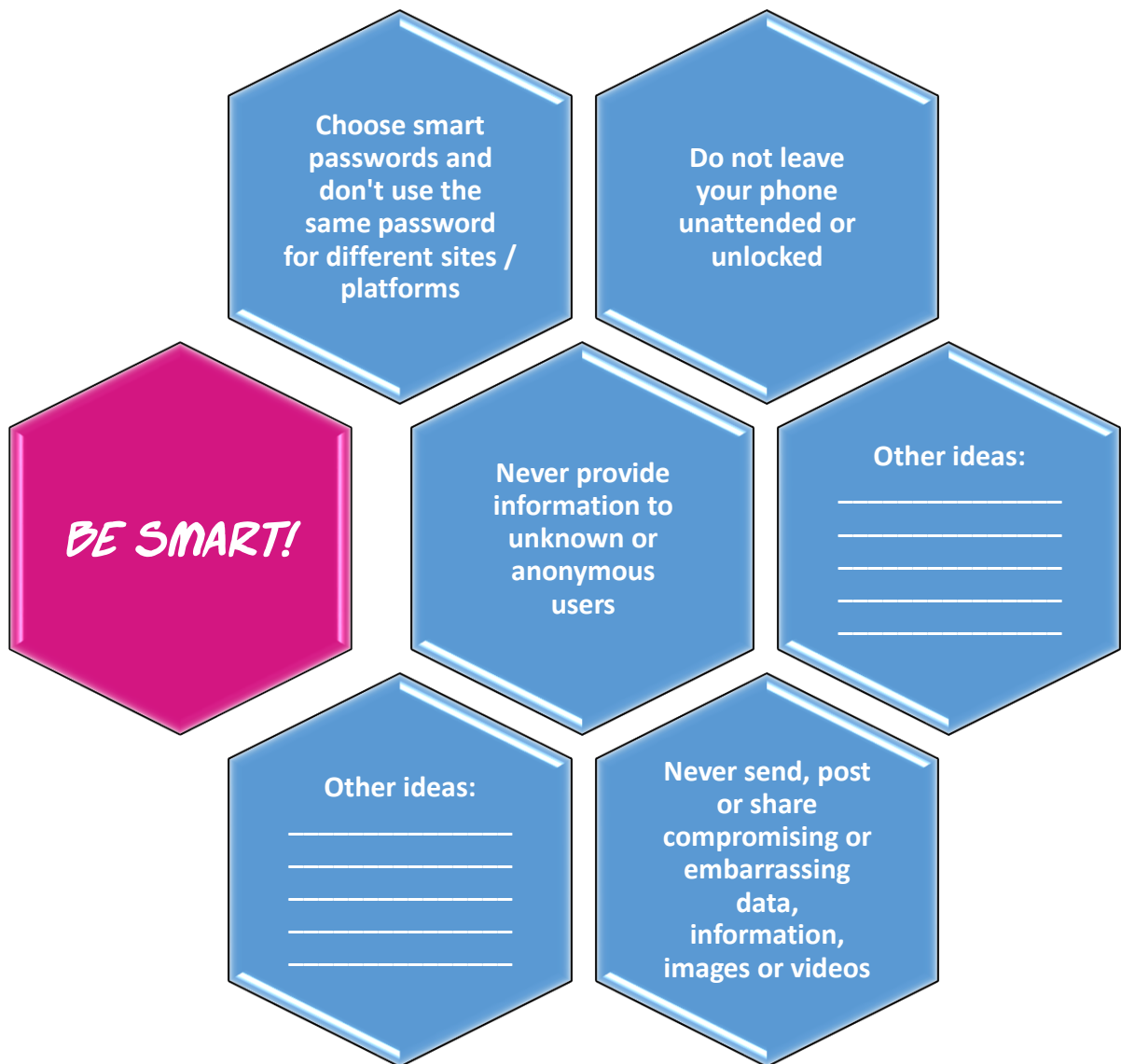
# *CYBERBULLYING: #WHATTODO*

*TIPS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE  
FROM ALL OVER EUROPE*

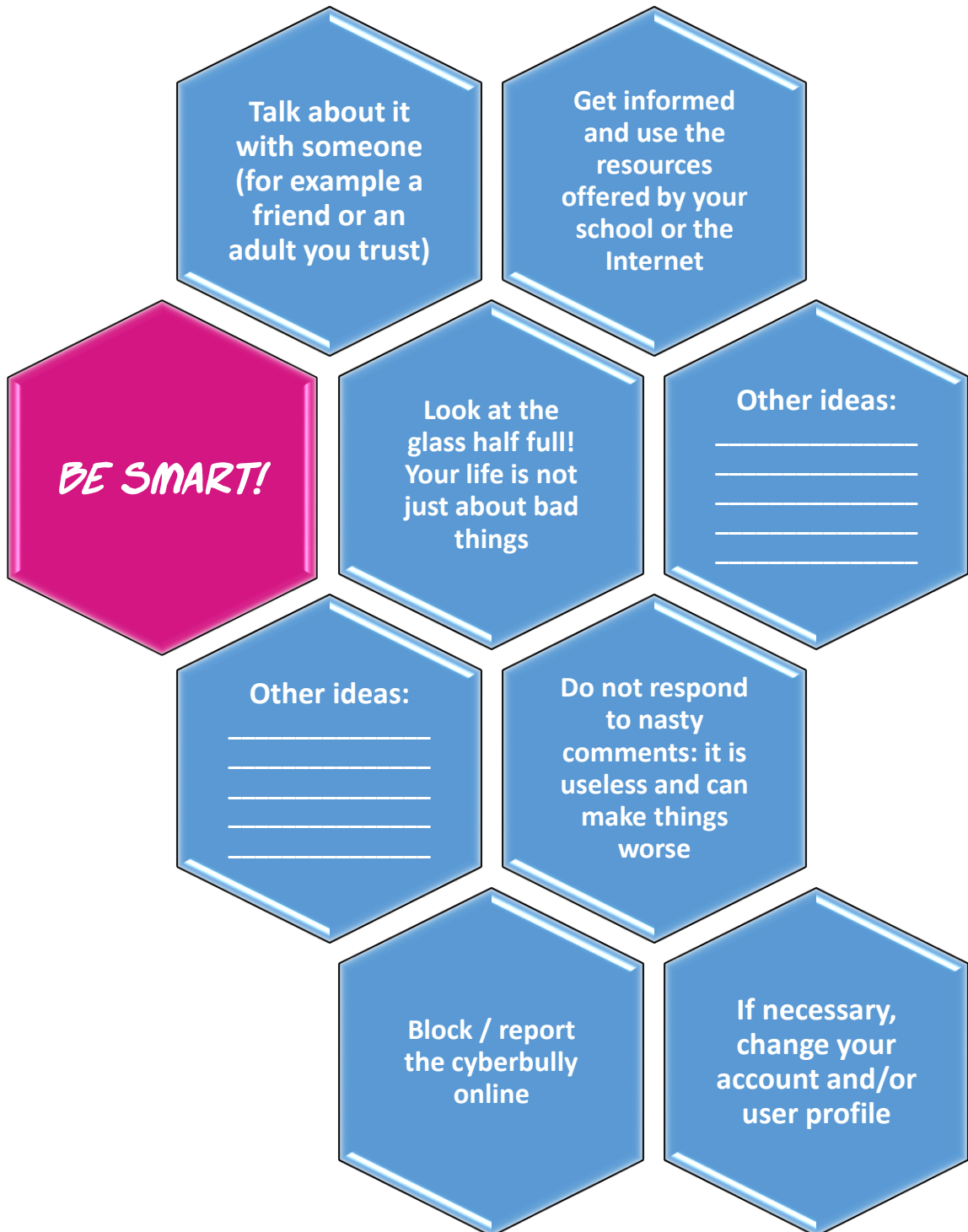


## LET'S PREVENT CYBERBULLYING!

Anyone can be a victim of cyberbullying! However, it is possible in some cases to reduce the risk of being subjected to online aggression by using some useful strategies.

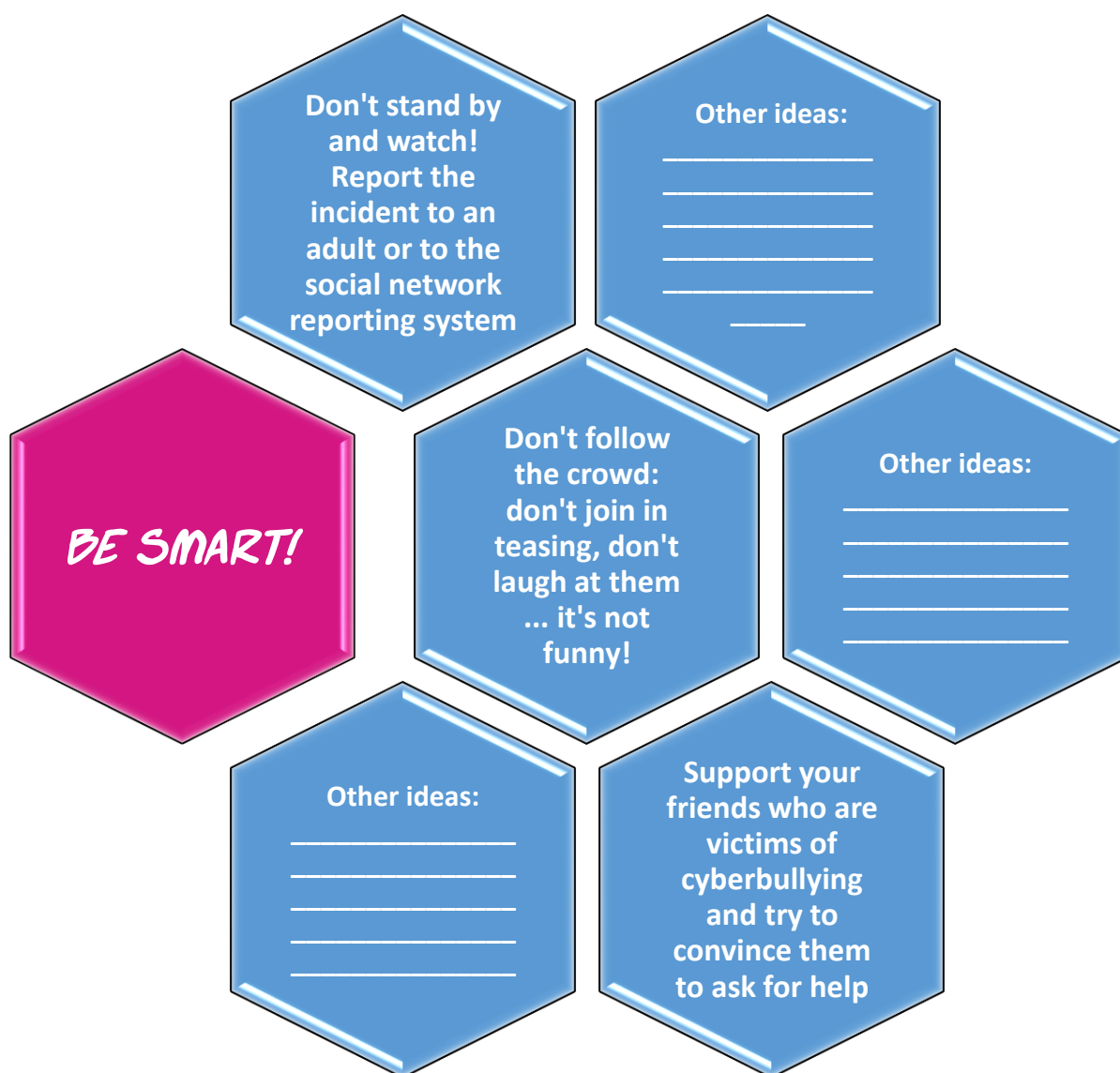


## IF YOU'RE A VICTIM OF CYBERBULLYING





## IF YOU WITNESS CYBERBULLYING





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## THE END