What starts as a joke can end up hurting someone.

How witnesses react can make a BIG difference in stopping cyberbullying and making it hurt less.

Lots of times kids will say they're not bullying, they're 'just joking' – in fact, it's the number one reason for being mean online. Other times, people will play down how serious the situation really is.

Ask yourself:

- *Am I letting things go because the person being mean says he's only joking?* Something that's a joke to one person can be really hurtful to someone else – even if the person making the joke doesn't mean anything by it.

- *Am I letting things go because I think the person being targeted isn't really being hurt?* We don't always know how people are feeling. A lot of people hide when their feelings are hurt, because if they admit it the bullying will get worse.

- *Am I letting things go because I think it's just drama?* Sometimes when we see drama starting, we just want to settle down with some popcorn and watch. But even if something starts as drama, it's easy for it to get serious – especially if nobody does anything to help the people involved cool down and step away.

- *Am I letting things go because one or more of the people involved is a guy?* Guys often feel a lot of pressure to make it look like bullying doesn't bother them, but it can still hurt. Don't ever assume that someone doesn't need you to reach out and lend a hand.

If you're not sure that what's happening is cyberbullying, there are still lots of things you can do to make things better without risking making them worse:

- *Comfort the person who is being targeted privately.* One of the worst things about being bullied is feeling that nobody cares about what's happening. Letting some-one know you care can be a big help and won't make things worse.

- *Help the target report what's happening or talk about it to their parents or friends.* Kids say that helping them talk to parents or friends or report it to the service provider is one of the best things witnesses can do. It's also important to help them *document* what's happening by keeping copies or making screenshots (see www.take-a-screenshot.org for how to do this) so they have evidence if they decide to report it.

- *Post something nice about the target.* If you want to do something public, stay positive: let people know that you're not on the bully's side by posting something good about the target. You can also say things like "We don't say mean things to people here" or "Bullying isn't what this place is about" to make sure everyone knows this behaviour isn't tolerated in your online community.

- *Talk to the person doing the bullying privately.* If you want to talk to the bully, do it with something like a private message, text or IM so they don't feel embarrassed. If they say they're only joking, remind them that what's a joke to one person can really hurt someone else. If they say they're getting back for something done to them or to a friend, tell them that escalating the drama will only make things worse.

- *If something is **happening right now** that you have to stop,* try distracting the person who's doing the bullying or giving the target a chance to get out of the situation without being embarrassed.