

## HANDOUT: LAUREN'S ORDEAL

**Lauren: Cyberbullying****Debriefing:**

Work through this handout with a partner or individually. Be prepared to talk through your answers with the rest of the class.

In this case study, Lauren says:

*'There's no denying that the internet has become an invaluable part of my life, you know ... I don't know what I'd do without it.'*

How valuable is the internet to you in your life? Could you do without it? Why? Why not?

Lauren says:

*'What I never realised is that the internet is actually just another public place.'*

What does Lauren mean by this? What insight does it give you into how people should behave on the internet or the types of precautions you need to take?

Lauren describes how she was cyberbullied:

*'Well, I was best friends with this girl called Susan. We'd share all our secrets with each other, you know, she was one of those friends who you could tell anything to. During first term when we were really close, I gave her my MSN username and password. I didn't think anything of it at the time.'*

*A few months later we had a huge fight and we stopped being friends. When I went to school the next day, I noticed that people were suddenly avoiding me, and even my group of friends wouldn't talk to me. They just completely ignored me.'*

*Then I noticed other people in the school pointing at me and whispering things and laughing amongst themselves. I started to get text messages saying these awful things about me that weren't true, and I couldn't understand why people were doing this to me. I had no idea what the messages meant. When I arrived home I had a stack of new emails, some from people I didn't even know, and they were saying things about my private life that they couldn't possibly know.'*

*When I went on to Messenger there was hardly anyone online, which was really unusual. All I could think was that people must be blocking me. I logged on to my school's public message board and I was completely shocked to see that new topics had been posted about me, saying all these terrible things that weren't true at all. When things got that serious I had to tell my parents. They contacted the school and the message board was shut down until they could discover the truth behind the messages.'*

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*The next day someone set up a blog, containing my photo and a list of rumours and lies about me, and people started posting comments. This went on for about a week ... it was so hard to deal with, I was so stressed. I did what I could to deal with the problem ...*

*I contacted my ISP and put a spam filter on my account so only emails from people in my contacts list got through. I also blocked people in my contacts list that were sending me nasty messages.*

*But then I started getting text messages saying 'I hate you' or 'Why don't you just die?' That's when the police got involved. They traced the numbers from the threatening messages and visited the offenders. They eventually discovered that I had supposedly sent all my friends a message telling them all these secrets about my life, which was a complete lie.*

*And that's when it hit me what had happened. Susan must have used my username and password to log on as me, then she sent all the people on my contacts list a message, pretending to be me, saying all this stuff about my life that wasn't true.*

*I confronted Susan and she said it was just a bit of fun and didn't mean for it to get so serious. But the damage had been done. Pretty much all of the people in the group I was in aren't my friends anymore. There's just a couple of people at school that I still talk to and trust, but otherwise I tend to keep to myself and focus on my study.*

*Even though things are different now, I've been told that I did all the right things: I told my parents what was happening, the school was able to shut down the message board, I blocked emails from people I didn't know, and I saved all the abusive and threatening messages that I received on Messenger and my mobile, which can be used legally as evidence.*

*What I should never have done was give my personal details to someone else ... I never imagined that giving someone my username and password could affect my whole life the way it has.'*

**Activities:**

1. List some of the actions of cyberbullying that hurt Lauren.
2. What did Lauren do to combat the cyberbullying?
3. What lesson did Lauren learn from this cyberbullying experience?
4. People who didn't know Lauren became involved in bullying her. Why do you think that happened?