

NAME _____

DATE _____

What Is Online Disinhibition?

Part 1 Directions

Take notes on the KQED *Above the Noise* video "**Is the Internet Making You Meaner?**" by answering the questions below.

1. What is the "online disinhibition effect"?

The online disinhibition effect is when people behave differently online than they would in real life.

(1:31)

2. What are the two different types of online disinhibition? How are they different?

"Toxic disinhibition" is when you have a tendency to act meaner than you would in real life. You might say things that are more hostile or hurtful than you would in person. "Benign disinhibition" is when people open up and share more than they normally would. This can help them connect to others and create a more positive online experience. (2:12)

3. What are three causes of online disinhibition? Describe each.

One cause is anonymity. When people don't know who we really are, we're less worried about real-life consequences for our words and actions. It also makes us more likely to open up about personal challenges we're facing. (2:50) The second cause is lag time. Because things we post might not be seen right away, we have the option of posting and then not sticking around for the fallout. It also allows us to have more think time and respond more thoughtfully. (3:19) The last cause is lack of nonverbal cues. When you can't see body language and facial expressions, it's harder to know how your words are impacting someone. You might be saying something hurtful and keep going because there was no signal that it was having that effect. (3:47)



What Is Online Disinhibition?

Part 2 Directions

Although online disinhibition can sometimes lead to positive outcomes, it can often cause people to make hostile or mean comments. These comments can cause toxic drama and can even lead to cyberbullying. To counter this effect, we can pause before we post and think about how online disinhibition -- anonymity, lag time, and lack of nonverbal cues -- might be impacting our ideas and words. Complete the table below to analyze how online disinhibition might be countered.

Example	How might anonymity, lag time, or lack of nonverbal cues be affecting this situation?	What could be done to counter online disinhibition in this situation?
A group of people target a celebrity online with hurtful comments and stories all using the same hashtag.	In this situation, anonymity is probably a big factor. The people in the group wouldn't want to be identified in real life. People wouldn't want to be their friends, and it could affect their job or school status.	If anyone recognized the usernames of the people in the group, they could identify who they are in real life. They could also stand with the celebrity by posting positive comments in response.
A teenager posts pictures from his vacation, and people from his school post mean comments making fun of what he's doing and how he looks.	Lag time and lack of nonverbal cues are probably factors here. His classmates might change their comments if they knew he was reading them right then or if they could see his facial expressions and body language as he read them.	One of his friends could stand with him by posting positive comments on the pictures. The teenager could also talk to mean commenters in person and tell them how it affected him.
Write an example from your own life or that you can imagine: Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.

