



Primary: I didn't mean it

Pretending to be someone else online or offline may seem like a joke but it is actually lying.

What's the issue?

When you are playing around on the web or using other online communication tools you can forget that you are actually still interacting with real people. What you do will affect them, often in ways that you didn't intend. It can be even harder to judge other people's reactions online than face-to-face, so you have to be even more cautious about your actions.

Why does it matter?

- Pretending to be someone else online or offline can be identity fraud, which is illegal.
- Your online activities affect your offline relationships.
- You can't always judge correctly, or control, what effect your actions will have on other people or situations.
- Making other people the target of your pranks and jokes is often not funny for them. If it is deliberate and ongoing, or other people join in, it is bullying.



Advice

It's better to be you!

- You can use pseudonyms to protect your identity but the only way to develop real friendships is by being a real person. People should know that the 'you' they are interacting with is the real you.

Use your imagination to think about cause and effect

- Stop and think about what possible outcomes your actions might have, don't just think of one—go wild! You might change your mind once you think through the possible consequences.

People react in all different ways

- Sometimes we feel like we know someone so well we know exactly how they will feel and what they will do in a specific situation. You have to be careful not to overdo the guesswork though because things change and you don't know what someone may be feeling or experiencing at any particular time.