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Dec 3 2009 9:17 AM EST

MTV Launches 'A Thin Line' To Stop Digital Abuse

Shows, contests and online tools are aimed at halting the spread of sexting and cyberbullying.

By MTV News Staff

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MTV announced on Thursday (December 3) the launch of a multi-year initiative called **"A Thin Line"** aimed at stopping the spread of abuse in the form of sexting, cyberbullying and digital dating abuse. The goal of the initiative is to empower America's youth to identify, respond to and stop the spread of the various forms of digital harassment.

"Our audience lives online, and while every generation deals with their own set of abuse issues, the digital sphere exponentially increases opportunities for misuse," said Stephen Friedman, general manager of MTV. "There is a very thin line between private and public, this moment and forever, love and abuse, and words and wounds. A Thin Line is built to empower our audience to draw their own line between digital use and digital abuse."

According to a **new study** released on Thursday by MTV and *The Associated Press* that explores the full scope of digital abuse, 50 percent of 14-to-24-year-olds have been the target of some form of digital abuse, 30 percent have sent or received nude photos of other young people on their cell phones or online and 12 percent of those who have sexted have contemplated suicide, a rate four times higher than those who haven't. The study explores the pervasiveness of digital abuse, how it's affecting America's youth, how they're responding to it, their concerns and much more.

A Thin Line will address digital abuse issues on a number of fronts, including on-air, online and with real-world initiatives integrated into MTV's top-rated programming. Among the programming efforts will be an MTV News special focused on sexting that will air on Valentine's Day 2010 called "True Life: I Have Digital Drama," public service announcements (including two by acclaimed director Joel Schumacher, "Public Nudity" and "Tattoo"), innovative online and mobile tools, and the Redraw the Line Challenge, which will ask young people to submit their ideas for creative solutions to halt the spread of digital abuse.

On Thursday, MTV also launched **AThinLine.org**, a place where young people can get access to information, resources and support on issues related to digital abuse.

For the initiative, MTV has partnered with Facebook, MySpace, the Family Violence Prevention Fund, WiredSafety, the Anti-Defamation League, Blue Shield of California Foundation, LovelsRespect.org, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, Liz Claiborne Inc., DoSomething.org, **Break the Cycle**, Ruder Finn, Teenangels, and PBS' "Frontline." Thursday's launch of A Thin Line coincided with Liz Claiborne Inc.'s It's Time to Talk Day, an annual day dedicated to encouraging Americans to speak up and raise national attention for domestic violence, including teen dating violence and intimate partner abuse.

"The safety of our users is paramount to us, and only by working together can we seek to educate young people about the dangers of digital abuse and cyberbullying," said Tim Sparapani, director of public policy at Facebook. "We applaud and support MTV for all of the work it has done to launch A Thin Line and are pleased to be a part of this important initiative which both empowers and educates."

Working with the Blue Shield of California Foundation, MTV launched the **Redraw the Line Challenge**, a contest that asks young people to come up with a digital antidote to digital abuse — from new mobile or Web-based services to social games or viral content. The winning individual or team will receive a \$10,000 prize and a chance to work with MTV to see their idea come to life. Entries are due by February 19, 2010.



Photo: Athinline.org

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