

#chilling4charity or #chilling4Likes?

"Hi I'm Jane White and this is my Ice Bucket Challenge. I would like to thank John Smith for nominating me. I nominate etc. etc, you have 24 hours to complete the challenge and donate \$10 to the ALS foundation or you have to donate \$100." I am sure this is not an unfamiliar sentence to you. You have probably seen videos of friends, family or even celebrities doing the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge- or perhaps even uploaded one of yourself. What is the real reason for doing the ice bucket challenge? Is it to raise money for the ALS foundation? Or is it to raise personal popularity status online? The truth might just be more bone-chilling than cold water to the face.

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is the latest social media craze that is happening all over the world. The original intention for the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge was to raise awareness of the disease; Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Dumping a bucket of icy cold water over your head and donating \$10 to the ALS foundation is the original version of the Ice Bucket Challenge, you must post the video of your challenge online and nominate three friends to do the challenge; if they do not complete it within 24 hours then they have to donate \$100 to the ALS foundation. Unfortunately donating money now seems to have been forgotten or deemed unimportant. There are many different versions of the challenge, most of the Ice Bucket Challenges objectives are not to raise money and awareness but rather, a growing trend of uploading a video of yourself doing the ice challenge, avoiding donation and increasing social status- this is the incorrect version of the Ice Bucket Challenge.

The ALS Foundation has collected \$94 million in donations so far as a result of the ice bucket challenge, which is a very pleasing result for them and people who suffer from ALS. However, if the total number people taking part in the ice challenge donated, the amount collected could be much higher. For example the Charities Aid Foundation found out that in the UK only 109/o of people taking part in the challenge donated ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice\\_Bucket\\_Challenge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_Bucket_Challenge).) It is also clear that in New Zealand we might be in a similar situation with a New Zealand Ice Challenge facebook page having nearly 8500 likes, showing a large number of potential participants but with no mention of donation. The facts are that many people in videos getting water dumped on their heads are simply doing it for popularity rather than raising money for charity. This is especially true for teenagers who are the main users of social networking sites where the Ice Bucket Challenge became popular. When asked how she heard about the Ice Bucket Challenge Aicha Wijland (18) said, "Through Facebook, everyone was doing it." Through social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, teenagers can watch each other's videos and nominate each other to do the Ice Bucket Challenge, they can also see how many 'likes', 'shares' and 're-tweets' their video has, in this way the Ice

Bucket Challenge's focus has changed from raising money to being a popularity contest between participants. "Definitely about personal popularity, it was a social thing. The amount of likes and comments was more important than the message," said E\_\_ C\_\_ (18). "There was no focus on spreading awareness of ALS or any other diseases, but rather about the attention it produced. A large majority of teenagers never donated and never intended to donate to the ALS charity."

① In contrast though, some teenagers did see the Ice Bucket Challenge as a way to promote awareness, "It's making donating to charity a popular thing to do," said L\_\_ N\_\_ (17). She clearly states that although the initial intention to post a video onto a social networking site was for popularity, the message of donation that comes with the video and is only going to be positive for the ALS foundation. Some students recognise that the charity aspect was becoming unimportant and went out of their way to make sure that if they were going to dump a bucket of cold water over their head; at least some charity would benefit. "Someone tagged me in the Ice Challenge but I don't like that it's an ultimatum for avoiding charity- so I will do the ice challenge, but only if someone agrees to donate \$10." said A\_\_ W\_\_ (18), ① She believed that in order to make a difference, teenagers needed to stop concentrating on the amount of attention they get from the challenge but instead start donating money to worthy charities, "The world isn't a perfect place, we all have to start to make a difference. It isn't going to change otherwise."

It is clear that the best way to donate is just to make a simple money contribution, no strings attached or ice needed. That is not to say that the Ice Bucket Challenge is bad; it did make teenagers become aware of a disease that they otherwise wouldn't know about. Social media is a powerful tool for spreading a message and the Ice Bucket challenge could be the future for charitable awareness; but in order for it to make an accurate impact we cannot follow trends, but instead go out and help the world.