



Mean Girls

Queen Bees and Wannabees
And How to Diffuse Their Sting

What are little girls made of?

- Sugar and spice and everything nice?
- Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can hurt forever.





Relational Aggression



- Emotional violence and bullying behavior focused on damaging an individual's social connections within the peer group
- Relationally aggressive behavior is evident in all age groups from preschool through adulthood

Why Focus on Girls?



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- Unlike males, women typically forge their identities through relationships with others
- Girls are more likely to use RA *within* their own friendship circles, in comparison to boys, who tend to aggress *outside* their friendship circles

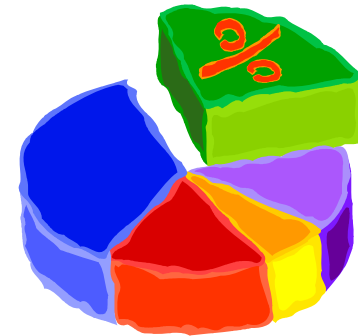
Two primary components of Relational Aggression

- Imbalance of power
- Intent to harm





Statistics



- Brigham Young University (2005) reports that girl bullying starts as early as preschool
- 25% of students report that teachers intervene in bullying situations, while 71% of teachers believe they always intervene (*bullybeware.com*)



Mean Girl Royalty



- The Queen
 - The aggressor. Defines right and wrong by the loyalty of any other girl. She is charming to adults and manipulatively affectionate.
 - Feels power and control over her environment
 - Feels she is superior to her peers



The Sidekick



- Supports the Queen because that is where the power is
- Often a mirror image of the Queen
- Feels the Queen is the authority figure in her life
- Allows herself to be pushed around by the Queen and will even lie for her

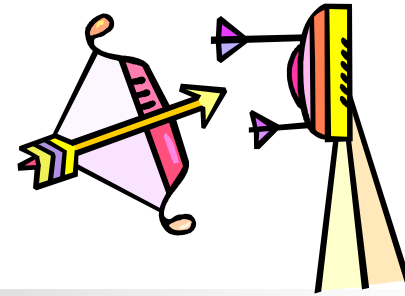
The Wannabee



- The Wannabee will do anything to be a part of the inner circle of the Queen and the Sidekick
- Gossiper and pleaser
 - Will dress and talk like the Queen to be a part of the group
- Doesn't have a personal opinion outside of what the Queen thinks
- Likes feeling of belonging and not being a target, however she is often gossiped about and used by the Queen



The Target



- She often feels helpless to stop the other girls' behavior
- Feels excluded
- Isolated
- Humiliated from the rejection she feels by the other girls
- Feels exposed and vulnerable resulting in temptations to change herself in order to fit in

The Bystander or Girls in the Middle (*GIM*)



- Not aggressors or targets but are caught somewhere in-between
- Peacemaker
- May want to go undetected but still have access to popular group

Methods of Relational Aggression



- Exclusion
- Ignoring
- Spreading rumors
- Verbal insults
- Teasing
- Intimidation



More Methods of RA

- Eye rolling
- Taunting
- Manipulative affection
- Three-way calling
- Videophones
- Cyber bullying

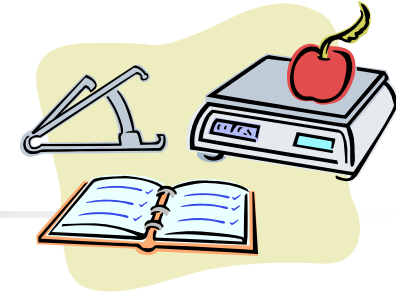


Short and Long Term Effects of Relational Aggression



- Interrupted identity formation
- Poor self-esteem
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Hopelessness
- Inability to trust
- Poor relational skills
- Loneliness/isolation
- Anger

More effects of RA



- Eating Disorders
- Feelings of rejection
- Gang involvement
- Depression
- Teen pregnancy
- Substance abuse
- Self injury



Even more



- Frustration
- Suicidal thoughts
- Delinquent behavior
- Homicidal thoughts
- Poor academic performance
- Stress/anxiety
- Separation anxiety



Cyber-Bullying



- Creating cruel or threatening messages
- Creating websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures and jokes ridiculing others
- Posting pictures of classmates online and asking students to rate them
- Breaking into an email account and sending vicious or embarrassing material to others



More Cyber Bullying



- Engaging someone in IM and tricking that person into revealing sensitive information and then forwarding it to others
- Taking a picture of someone (in a locker room) using a camera phone and sending that picture to others



Intervention for Cyber-Bullying

- Address cyber-bullying in the school anti-bullying policies
- Observe students' use of computers at school
- Educate the faculty, staff and students about cyber-bullying and its effects and dangers
- Know your district policy on cyber-bullying
- If extreme (threats of violence, extortion, obscenity, harassment or child pornography) notify law enforcement



Misguided Interventions in Addressing RA

- **Peer mediation of conflicts:** Bullying is not a conflict but an abuse that involves an imbalance of power. Having peers mediate a situation of RA implies a responsibility on the part of the victim for the abuse.
- **Zero Tolerance Policy:** These are created for disciplinary problems that warrant suspension or expulsion from school. Because of the extreme punishment, students and adults alike are hesitant to report RA behavior. Suspension and expulsion may be necessary to protect students, however a zero tolerance policy should not be utilized as an RA policy.



Strategies to combat RA

Inform yourself and others

- Girls need to be educated about RA
- Provide information
- Explain how RA hurts girls and who usually is involved
- Share stories of other girls so that she knows that she is not alone
- Stress empathy

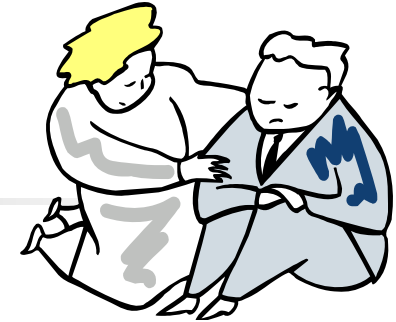
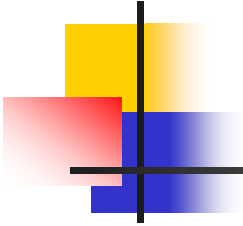


Teach Empathy



Empathy

- Stress empathy
 - Being able to identify another's feelings
 - Maybe she dresses like me because she wants to be like me
 - Sara looks like she is feeling sad
 - Take another's perspective
 - "If I were new to the school, I'd want someone to ask me to eat lunch with her."
 - Demonstrate empathetic behavior
 - Hand on someone's shoulder
 - Send a friendly card or note



- Demonstrate empathetic behavior
 - Hand on someone's shoulder
 - Send a friendly card or note
 - Send a friendly email



Develop Personal Power

Girls who develop confidence through their academic or athletic skills have a sense of self-esteem that is independent from peers and can't be destroyed by RA

- For girls with floundering self-esteem, an activity with a team or group will be a better option than an activity that focuses on the individual (swimming or dance)
- Compliment a girl on her intellect and contributions to class or society
- Stress the importance of individuality



Give Girls the Courage to be Kind

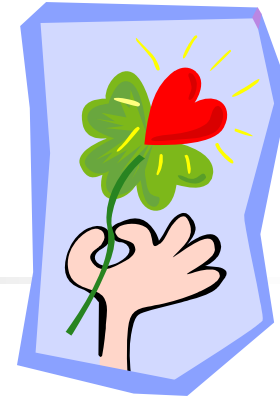


Kindness

- Framing RA in a moral context – as behavior that hurts and even damages another person will help reverse the beliefs that RA is “fun” or “just something to do”



Kindness



- Talk about specific ways to help others and plan activities that will put these ideas into action
- Ask: "Who did you help today?"

Tips for Educators



- Take time to observe children in different settings such as the classroom, at lunch, in the hall, after school.
- Create a classroom environment in which bullying is unacceptable.
- Use plays or literature writing to reinforce positive behaviors.
- Believe the victim.
- Model appropriate behavior.



Be a M.O.D.E.L.

- **M**odel appropriate behavior
- **O**bserve girls
- **D**on't ignore behaviors
- **E**mphasize the difference between "tattling" and "telling"
- **L**isten empathetically



Relationship Boundaries

- Talk about the role of boys in the Girl-Girl Conflict
 - Rumors
 - Going out with best friend's boyfriend
 - Separate responsibility in a relationship



Listen

- Sometimes it is important to change the environment
 - Schedule changes
 - School changes



Books



- Blanco, Jodee – *Please Stop Laughing at Me*
- Dellasega, Cheryl – *Girl Wars*
- Garbarino, James – *And Words Can Hurt Forever*
- Simmons, Rachel – *Odd Girl Out*
- Simmons, Rachel – *Odd Girl Speaks Out*



Sources for help and info

www.academic.org

www.girlsempowered.com

www.clubophelia.com

www.girlscircle.com

www.relationalaggression.com

