

## **RELATIONIONAL AGGRESSION**

Relational Aggression is an “intent to do harm ...to another’s reputation, social relationships, or feelings of inclusion by the peer group... (Putallaz, et.al, Journal of School Psychology).” “It damages what matters most to girls, which is a connection to the peer group (Gomes, Journal of Nursing Research & Practice).

Research has found a connection between being a victim of relational aggression and several negative outcomes including behavior challenges, internalizing problems, academic deficits, teacher-student conflicts, lack of school engagement, and later mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, social phobia, borderline personality disorder (Murray-Close, Journal of Developmental Psychopathology.)

### **Prevention**

- Help your child to learn about true friendship.
- Help your child avoid or limit manipulative or coercive friendships.
- Develop your child’s faith, gifts, and character.
- Be a good example by avoiding gossip and critical feedback of other people.
- Watch movies and read books about friendship and friendship problems and discuss positive ways of dealing with it.
- Be aware of the traps and pressures of popularity and encourage a variety of friendships based on trust, interests, and mutual respect.
- Monitor your child’s internet and texting communications.

### **Methods used in Relational Aggression:**

- Exclusion
- Negative gossip
- Social isolation
- Non-verbal communication
- Rolling eyes
- Glaring
- Turning away
- Pointing
- Giggling
- Using the silent treatment
- Cyberbullying

### **Warning Signs:**

- Sudden change in social group
- Change in behavior that is lasting for over a week
- Disinterest in things that were previously important to your child
- School avoidance

### **What to Do:**

- Listen
- Problem solve, letting your child take the lead
- Contact the teacher, counselor, or administration

**Resources**

Simmons, Rachel; *Odd Girl Out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls.*

Simmons, Rachel website with short video lessons for girls about learning to communicate respectfully in person and online: <http://www.rachelsimmons.com/blogs-and-video/>

Dellasega, Cheryl & Nixon, Charisse; *Girl wars: 12 strategies that will end female bullying.*

American Girl Advice Series: *A smart girl's guide to friendship troubles*