

Preventative Measures for Relational Aggression

- Education is key. Teach your children what relational aggression (RA) is. Use examples. This may seem obvious but many children, especially girls, do not know that RA is bullying. Girls that would never consider beating up someone think it is okay to start rumors or build alliances that exclude someone.
- Clearly express your values and expectations for behavior. Create a climate of affection and appreciation in your home. Don't allow your children to be disrespectful to you or to siblings.
- Foster self esteem and self confidence.
 - Self-esteem is dependent on feelings of competence, success and achievement.
 - Focus on your daughter's achievements and capabilities more than her appearance.
 - Try not to solve the problem for your daughter, but engage her in discussions to help her solve the problem on her own.
- Teach her the important life skills of anger management and assertiveness. Being angry is human but children need strategies to express their anger appropriately and without fear of reprisal. Parents should model how to express anger without becoming aggressive.
- Be empathic; validate your daughter's feelings and experiences. Teach her to be empathic, to be aware of other people's feelings.
- Teach and model good friendship skills. Having at least one solid friend is essential.
- Create opportunities for your child to meet a variety of peers and potential friends. Get to know your daughter's friends.
- Set rules for safe and responsible use of electronic communications tools, which are breeding grounds for RA. Supervise their use closely.
- Discuss group dynamics and roles. Find out where your child fits in. Make sure your child knows how to get out of a group when it does not serve her well.
- Create ongoing opportunities for your children to talk about their lives. When they do, *actively* listen:
 - *Listen attentively.* If you are too distracted, most children would prefer you be honest and make a later time available when you can truly listen. Kids know when you are only half-listening, even if they do not acknowledge this. It leaves them feeling unimportant and that their problems are equally unimportant.
 - *Acknowledge her feelings.* Be sure to ask her about how she feels when something has happened. Let her know that how she feels is important to you.

Did You Know?

- There are a number of great resources to help you learn more about relational aggression and how to parent girls effectively. Here are some of our favorites:

Books:

Queen Bees & Wannabees, the bestseller by Rosalind Wiseman, was recently updated. It offers a unique view of the different roles girls play in and out of cliques as Queen Bees, Targets and By-standers, and how this defines how they and others are treated.

Girl Wars—12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying, by Cheryl Dellasega, Ph.D. & Clarisse Nixon, Ph.D. , offers useful strategies from two noted researchers in the field.

Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls, by Rachel Simmons. When this book was first published in 2002 it blew the lid off the secrecy surrounding girl bullying.

Get Out of My Life but First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall?, by Anthony E. Wolf. A favorite when it was first published in 1991; Updated in 2002.

Websites:

www.daughters.com
www.girlsinc.org
www.opheliaproject.org
Dove Campaign for Beauty:
<http://dove.msn.com/#/cfrb/>

Cyber-bullying & online safety:
www.cyberbullying.us
www.wiredsafety.org