



What Do You Do If ...

You Suspect Your Daughter is a Perpetrator of Relational Aggression?

- Discuss relational aggression with your daughter. Define it. Give examples. Don't ignore it.
- Be a keen observer. Listen to how your daughter talks to her friends or about other kids. Use these as teachable moments.
- Establish rules and consequences for misbehavior. Hold her accountable. Focus on her behavior and avoid punitive judgments about her person. When necessary examine the use of natural consequences instead of punishment.
- Be firm, but patient. Learning to navigate relationships is an important life skill but it takes time. There are no quick fixes. Be a good role model.
- Resist the tendency to deny that your daughter may be a bully.
 - Among girls, the bullies are usually pretty, popular, and well-behaved in front of adults ... they know how to use their behavior and interactions to get something they want.
 - Girls who are happy and confident do not bully. Read between the lines. Assess your daughter's self esteem. If your daughter is a bully, empathize with her and foster her capacity for empathy as well.
- Your daughter may be engaging in bullying behavior to fit in with peers or avoid being bullied herself. Encourage independent thinking. Help her examine and question her motivations and values.
- Focus discussions in terms of possible consequences for her and others.
- Ask open-ended questions: "What do you think about..." Avoid questions that begin with "Why..."
- Evaluate your home atmosphere objectively. What is acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the home? How is this communicated? How is anger or aggression in the home handled? Is something happening at home that could be contributing to her current behavior?
- Monitor use of technology. Cell phones, digital cameras and computers are hot spots for relational aggression.
- Be aware of her emotional needs. Get her professional help if necessary.

Did You Know?

- Relational Aggression is a relatively new term. Many adults, including parents and educators, still believe that some of the bullying behaviors girls engage in are a normal developmental phase or simply a rite of passage.
- Schools are required to have policies addressing bullying behavior. Become familiar with your school's policy. Make sure your child knows which behaviors are acceptable and which are not.
- The adolescent brain is often hijacked by the emotional and impulsive before the more mature, rational thought process can prevail. Teach your daughter to recognize and manage her emotions before jumping to conclusions. This is especially important with electronic communication.