

## Girl Bullying, Mean Girl Behavior, Relational Aggression, RA

### What is it?

The term “bullying” has long been associated with physically and verbally abusive behavior. New research has shed light on an equally pervasive form of bullying that often goes unnoticed—purposely intending to harm or manipulate relationships to hurt someone—which is now referred to as “Relational Aggression.” What is it?

- It is aggressive behavior with the intent to harm
- It is repeated over time
- It involves both overt (blatant) and covert (hidden, indirect) actions
- It is the damage or threat of damage to relationships, feelings of acceptance, friendships, reputations, or group inclusion
- It is the use of exclusionary behaviors to undermine another individual’s self-worth
- It primarily occurs between the mid-to-late elementary years into middle school/junior high school
- It can leave life-long scars
- It can affect the way girls and women feel about themselves
- It can affect relationships with other females and males well into adulthood
- It is real, and it hurts

### Did You Know?

- Adults play a critical role in preventing and intervening in relational aggression. The first step is not letting it go unnoticed by learning how to identify bullying behaviors.
- Examples of Relational Aggression include:
  - ◆ *Exclusion*—forming cliques, not inviting someone and letting others know, turning your back when someone walks up, saving seats.
  - ◆ *Alliance building*—requiring friends to drop others in order to be in your group, using lies or gossip to get others mad at someone
  - ◆ Rumor spreading—sharing secrets, rumors or confidential information to retaliate against someone, organizing 3-way phone calls without participants knowing
  - ◆ *Indirect actions*—making something appear unintentional (just kidding, can’t you take a joke, no offense but), using sarcasm, pretending to compliment someone you don’t like
  - ◆ *Covert actions*—negative body language, rolling eyes, passing notes
  - ◆ *Cyberbullying*—using the internet, e-mail, cell phones or other technology to damage someone’s reputation or relationships