

**Relational Aggression:  
Another form of Bullying**

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**Objectives for Course**

- Raise Awareness of R.A.
- Discuss short and Long term effects
- Explore the underlying contributing factors
- Share resources and strategies to address RA in schools

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## RA Survey

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## Bullying affects our youngest students

- Particular significance in the years during which students define their individual identities and in periods of social stress, such as the transitions from elementary to MS, and from MS to HS

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## Brainstorm Activity

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## What is RA?

"Emotional Violence and bullying behaviors focused on damaging an individual's social connections within the peer group." (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995)

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## Thought to Ponder

- Have you ever participated in Relational Aggression?
- Who hasn't ever indulged in gossip, shared 'knowing glances' with friends, rolled our eyes, said we weren't angry when we were, or excluded someone from an event?

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## Bullying has not declined

- Since 2002, slight changes have occurred in which kind of bullying is most common among grades, but the overall rates are stubbornly similar across all years statewide

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## Forms of RA

- Gossip-Where the abuser tells others personal information about the victim
- Lies-Where the abuser lies about the victim to others
- Betrayal-Where the abuser breaks agreements with the victim's friends
- Isolation-Where the abuser prevents the victim from socializing with the victim's friends

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## Forms of RA

- Exclusion-Where the abuser prevents the victim from socializing with the victim's friends
- Humiliation-Where the abuser humiliates or shames the victim in front of others

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## Types of RA

- Proactive-Behavior is a means for achieving a goal. (ex: Sara may need to exclude Cindy from the group to maintain social status)
- Reactive-Behavior that is response to provocation, with the intent to retaliate. (ex: Sam gets teased repeatedly and becomes a teaser in order to protect herself)

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## Motivation for RA

- Fear
- Power
- Control
- Popularity
- Security

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## The Latest Form of RA

Cyber-Bullying - "Using the Internet or other mobile devices to send or post harmful text or images to bully others."

Nancy Willard, Director, Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use

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## Examples of Cyber Bullying

- Creating websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures and jokes ridiculing others
- Posting pictures of classmates online and asking students to rate them
- Engaging someone in IM and tricking that person into revealing sensitive info, and forwarding it to others

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## Overview of the Roles

- The Queen
- The Sidekick
- The Gossip
- The Floater
- The Bully
- The Bystanders
- The Wannabee
- The Target

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## The Queen

- Her friends do what she wants
- She's not intimidated by other girls
- She can be charming to adults
- She's manipulatively affectionate
- She won't take responsibility for hurting another's feelings
- Defines right and wrong by loyalty/disloyalty around her

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## The Sidekick

- Feels the queen is the authority-tells her how to dress, think, feel, etc
- Allows herself to be pushed around by the Queen
- Will lie for the Queen

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## The Gossip

- Extremely secretive
- Seems to be friends with everyone
- Good communicator
- Seemingly nice-uses confidential info
- Seems harmless, but in truth intimidating
- Rarely excluded from group

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## The Floater

- Moves freely among the groups
- Doesn't want to exclude people
- Avoids conflict
- More likely to have higher self esteem, as her sense of self isn't based on one group
- Not competitive

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## Torn Bystander

- Finds self having to choose between friends
- Accommodating
- Peacemaker-wants everyone to get along
- Doesn't stand up to anyone she has conflict with

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## Wannabee

- Other girls' opinions and wants more important than hers
- Can't tell the difference between what she wants and what group wants
- Desperate for the "right" look
- Feels better about self when others come for help
- Loves to gossip

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## The Target

- Helpless to stop behavior
- Feels excluded and isolated
- Masks hurt feelings by rejecting people first
- Feels vulnerable and humiliated and may be tempted to change to fit in

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## Triangle Tag

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## Why & Why Now?

- Root Causes/Historical issues
- Emotional Needs (Glasser)

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## Female Preference

- Society's image is non-aggressive nurturer
- Aggressive Behavior: bitch, nag, or shrew

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## Hard wired

- Genetic survival favored the nurturing female
- Overt aggression: Carried greater risks if angered a male relative

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## Short & Long Term Effects of RA

- Loneliness/Isolation/Depression
- Suicidal or Homicidal Ideation
- Interrupted Identity Formation
- Poor Self Esteem
- Feelings of Powerlessness
- Inappropriate feelings of Power
- Inability to Trust
- Poor Relational Skills
- Anger/Hostility/Physical Aggression

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## Effects continued

- Frustration/Helplessness/Hopelessness
- Feelings of Rejection
- Stress/Anxiety
- Separation Anxiety
- Teen Pregnancy
- Substance Abuse
- Self Injury
- Eating Disorders
- Death

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## Impact of RA on schools

- Poor Academic Performance
- Delinquent Behavior
- Absenteeism/Truancy
- Increased Disciplinary Actions
- Frustrations for Faculty and Staff
- Environment of Fear and Disrespect

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## Strategies/Interventions

- Individual
- Group/Classroom
- School wide

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## It Hurts a lot

- If possible document the attack
- Don't publicly confront your attacker
- Don't retaliate
- Make your attacker an "unperson"
- Recruit reliable friends
- Seek adult input
- Face your attacker in private
- Take the problem to a responsible adult

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## Helping a targeted friend

- Don't participate in the gossiping
- Deny the lie
- Let her know you are on her side
- Offer to accompany her to adult authorities, or to go with her to confirm her story to her parents

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## Tips for Parents

- Involve girls in activities outside of school
- Encourage relationships with others who appreciate them
- Be available to listen and don't downplay importance of incident
- Teach kindness and model that behavior

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## Tips for Parents

- Talk about both sides
- If caught in the middle-encourage to take the high road
- Seek professional counseling
- Become computer savvy
- Don't allow computer in a bedroom
- Be aware of online activities
- Research filtering and parental control

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## Recommendations for Schools

- Building leadership is essential: A strong central infrastructure to implement and sustain effective anti-bullying programs
- Raise awareness of the significance and consequences
- Asset visibly and consistently that bullying is unacceptable

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## School Recommendations

- Create a culture of consideration and respect
- Establish clear, uniform procedures for reported incidences
- Assure all staff are aware of procedures
- Survey school about bullying
- Get a commitment to bully free

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## Other ideas?

- Share with people around you
- Report back to large group

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## Misguided Interventions

- Conflict Mediation
- Peer Mediation
- RA Groups
- Zero Tolerance Policy

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**Be A Role Model!**

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"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."  
-Helen Keller

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