



Relational Aggression

Bullying isn't always obvious. Sometimes it involves manipulating or damaging a person's relationships, which can be difficult to see. This type of bullying is known as Relational Aggression, a form of psychological abuse where the group is used as a weapon to hurt others. Because of its covert nature, relational aggression is often overlooked or mistaken for minor arguments.

Examples of Relational Aggression:

- Spreading rumours or malicious gossip
- Making fun of someone's appearance
- Social exclusion
- Verbal insults
- Cyberbullying
- Manipulative affection
- Alliance building
- Negative body language



Youth Action

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities (SACSC) Youth Action projects provide an opportunity for students to become leaders in their schools. Working as a team, students conduct research based on their own interests and address the issues they uncover. To find out more about Youth Action projects on relational aggression and other topics, please contact the SACSC office or visit our website for more information.

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Alberta
EDUCATION

Relational Aggression is Bullying...

...but it's not always easy to see.



The Effects of Relational Aggression

Short-Term Impact

Relational aggression can be devastating to a victim's self image. It undermines some of the most significant personal needs and goals of youth, which include the need for social inclusion, a positive sense of esteem and identity, and the development of meaningful friendships.

Frequent acts of aggression can cause loneliness, anxiety, depression, and low self esteem. Both bullying and victimization are associated with problems such as anxiety and depression, eating disorders, and poor academic performance. In some cases, relational aggression can result in a student refusing to attend school or seeking a transfer in order to escape the bullying.

Long-Term Impact

The damage caused by relational aggression can last a lifetime. Victims and aggressors are both at risk of developing adjustment problems that persist into their adult lives. This can lead to difficulties with relationships, depression, and even suicide.

Five Ways You Can Address Relational Aggression in Your School:

1. Increase awareness among school staff so they know what relational aggression is, and discuss ways to combat it.
2. Observe children in the classroom, at lunch, in the hall, and on the playground. Note students' nonverbal reaction to peers, and consider the following:
 - Who spends most of his/her time alone?
 - Who is a group leader?
 - How do his/her followers act toward others?
3. Discuss relational aggression with students in order to make sure they know that starting rumours, ridiculing others and other forms of covert aggression are not acceptable.
4. Believe the victim. Relationally aggressive bullies are often skillful at concealing their actions, and many educators may be reluctant to believe a model student is engaged in bullying.
5. Find assistance for the victim and perpetrator. Contact a parent or work with staff to foster their social and emotional development.

