



# Relational Aggression

Bullying includes any behavior that is done to harm someone intentionally. Bullies use their physical, social or emotional power to cause hurt feelings and force their targets to obey their requests. Most bullying behaviors are repeated over time. Relational aggression is a specific type of emotional bullying that occurs when someone uses a friendship to target and manipulate someone else. It is most common among adolescent females.

## WHAT IS RELATIONAL AGGRESSION? HERE ARE SOME COMMON CHARACTERISTICS:

- **Hidden** - The bully and the target appear to be friends. The bully is covert in his or her aggression, making it difficult for adults to notice. Many bullies act friendly and respectful toward adults and other peers.
- **Social Exclusion** - Bullies often ignore their targets and exclude them from social activities. Bullies also use threats and manipulation to get other people to exclude a target.
- **Verbal** - Bullies may gossip about their targets, spread rumors and whisper as their targets pass.
- **Non-verbal** - Bullies may roll their eyes, give dirty looks or pass notes about their targets.
- **Online** - Bullies may share derogatory images or messages about a target on social media sites or through text messages.
- **Confusing** - Targets are often confused about why their "friends" bully them. In addition, bullies may target one person for a short period and then abruptly decide to include them in the social circle again.

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Openly communicate with your child and listen without judgment. Ask your child about her friends and let her know that she is always welcome to talk to you about anything.
- Believe your child if she tells you that a good friend of hers has been bullying her. Do not assume that the friend is incapable of such behavior.
- Reassure your child that she does not have to spend time with anyone who bullies her.
- Report any incidents of bullying or relational aggression to your child's school.
- Give your child opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities and make friends outside of school.
- Be a good role model. Show your child what it means to be a good friend. Avoid gossiping about or excluding your friends.

If you or someone you know is being bullied, please contact the 24 hour Parent & Youth Resource Hotline at **1-800-CHILDREN**.

You may also send a text or email to **1800children@kcsl.org**.

**For more online tip cards, visit [kcsl.org](http://kcsl.org) under the "Resources" tab.**



**Kansas Children's Service League**

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