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Girls & Aggression: Dealing With it in Your After-school Program

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Objectives

- Overview of Trends
- Understanding Relational Aggression
- Strategies

Cyber Bullying PSA's

- Talent Show
- The Kitchen

Teen Pregnancy

- Rates have steadily declined since 1990
- Children born to teen mothers are less likely to succeed in school, are at greater risk of poverty, and are more likely to have health problems and engage in problem behavior

Girls and Gangs

- Girl-only gangs are more likely in small cities or rural areas
- Majority of girls involved w/ gangs are part of male-dominant gangs
- Girls are more likely to use guns as opposed to knives

ATOD

- The gender gap is quickly narrowing
- Girls outnumber boys in prescription drug abuse
- Average age to try alcohol is 13
- Marijuana is most common drug used
- More likely to drink to fit in with friends
- Girls who have been physically or sexually abused are more likely to experiment w/ hard core drugs

National Trends

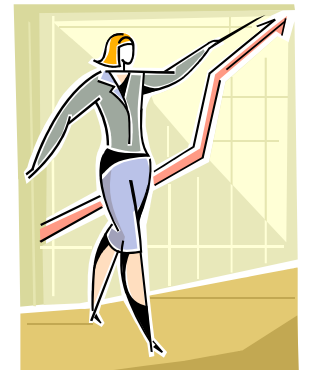


- National arrest rate for girls has steadily increased since early 1980s
- The arrest rate in 2003 nearly doubled the arrest rate in 1980
- Juvenile female offenders represent the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice system



National Trends

- In the 1980s, girls represented 1 in 10 of every juvenile arrest
- Now girls represent 1 in 4 of every juvenile arrest



And The Survey Says...

- Evidence suggests that girls are being arrested more for simple assaults DESPITE self-reports and victimization surveys that they are actually more violent
- Increases in arrests may be attributed to changes in enforcement policies NOT changes in girls' behavior

WHY?



- **Girls have always been violent, the juvenile justice system is what has changed**
- **Misinterpretation of the Female Empowerment Movement**
- **Social Learning Theory**
 - “Act Like a Lady” V. “Stand-up For Yourself”
- **Impact of Media**

Childhood aggression is one of the best known social predictors of future maladjustment.



Aggression

- **Physical Aggression**
 - Violence towards others
 - Fighting
 - Confrontations
 - Violence towards themselves
 - Self-mutilation
 - Depression
 - Suicide
- **Relational Aggression**



***Sticks and stones may break my bones but
words can never hurt me***



**More than three million children miss school each
year due to fear of being tormented by fellow
classmates**

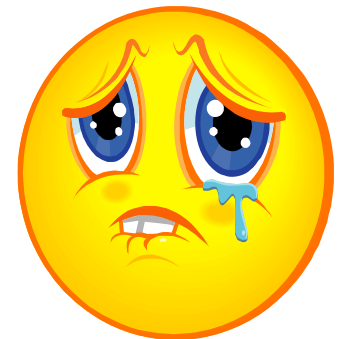


Relational Aggression



Relational Aggression

- Use of relationships to hurt one another
- Peaks in middle school
- Found across social strata, in rural and urban areas, all girl schools and coed, and in countries around the world



Types of RA

- Cyber RA: Use of computers to send hurtful messages via email, chat-room, websites, IM
- Techno RA: Text messaging, cell phone “three ways”



Cyberbullying

- “Talent Show”
- “The Kitchen”
- “Words Hurt”
- Megan Meir

- **search for clips on YouTube**

Cyberbullying

- Ed Code 48950- If off-campus speech or communication is protected free speech, no discipline may be imposed unless the expression (EC 48907) is “obscene, libelous, or slanderous” or incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises...or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.”

Cyberbullying

- Victims/Targets of bullying should NOT respond to the messages, instead:
 - Save and print out the messages (w/ full email headers) or pictures as evidence
- If the cyberbullying is initiated off campus, it is necessary to show that it has *substantially* impacted school attendance or educational program in order for the district to impose discipline on the student perpetrator

“The Players”

- Victims (Targets), Aggressors (Bullies) and “GIM” (Girl in the Middle or Bystander)
- The same dynamic is at work inside each girl: insecurity, fear, desire to be accepted and liked
- By not stopping the aggression, the GIM is also an aggressor
 - 70-80% of students are bystanders

Consequences of RA

- Peer rejection
- Decreased acts of pro-social behavior
- Antisocial and borderline personality features in young adults
- RA may be as strong a risk factor for future delinquency, crime, and substance abuse as is physical aggression



Consequences for VICTIM:

- Mental health problems such as those cited previously (depression, loneliness, alienation, emotional distress, and isolation) for both victim and initiator
- Bulimic symptoms (at college level)
- Increasingly, acts of physical violence between girls are preceded by relational aggression

Signs of the Victims

Victim of relational aggression may act:

- Secretive, Sullen, Moody, Anxious, Depressed, Angry, Sad

Victims may engage in destructive behaviors such as:

- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Eating either too much or too little
- Acting out in class
- Engaging in risky sexual behavior
- Talking about or attempting suicide

Aggression: Strategies

Strategies

- Reinforce prosocial behaviors
 - Classroom Management
 - Policies
 - School Climate
- Anger Management
- Conflict Resolution
- Offer intervention group for students

Program Strategies

- Assess the RA/bullying issue in your program
 - Share survey results w/ staff, parents, & students along w/ plan of action
- Offer training for staff and parents
- Include program-wide/classroom rules on RA/bullying
- Establish policies & consequences

Program Strategies

- Assemblies
- Group Lessons
 - Empathy
 - Character-education
- Media campaign
- Poetry/Art contests
- Forums

Program Strategies

- Consistent rules/norms
 - Make sure they are clearly visible
 - Include students in the process
- Address incidents of RA immediately
 - Keep records (referrals, warning letter to parent, etc.)
- Reward acts of kindness
- Ongoing Activities/Lessons

Program Strategies

- Facilitate discussion of RA in group setting
 - Use media to spark conversation
 - “Mean Girls”
 - Public Service Announcements
 - Discuss the effects of relational aggression
- Have students practice resolving conflicts w/o aggression or violence
- Provide “Get To Know” Ice-breakers
 - Stress students’ similarities

General Strategies

- Work with victims on being assertive not aggressive
- Club Ophelia (www.clubophelia.com)
 - Arts based curriculum addresses relational aggression in after-school programs
- Foster self-esteem
- Youth panel to discuss RA (high school students can focus on girl friendships and remind students what a good friend acts and sounds like)

Role Play – *Guess My Style*

- Explain aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive communication
- Groups of two act out an assigned communication style
 - *“How does it feel to be assertive/passive?”*
 - *“In what situations is it hard to be assertive?”*
 - *“How can assertive communication help you reach your goals?”*
 - *“If you changed your communication style, how might that affect relationships in your life?”*

Role Play – *Guess My Style*

- Show alternative responses/behaviors
- Role play pro-social body language
- Conflict is normal- it is how you respond/handle the situation that is important

Classroom Strategy

In My Shoes

- Students are asked to complete the following statement” You’ve been in my shoes if _____”
- If statement applies to students, they are asked to stand.
- Repeat and discuss similarities between group members.

Strategies

- Have students visit GirlsAllowed.org and read Anni's diary.
 - Follow-up with students on what they learned. How do Anni's experiences relate to them?



Strategies

- Offer a series of “girl talk sessions”
 - “it’s not therapy or a lecture, just a wonderful diverse group of girls discussing topics that affect them every day” April, 17 yrs. old- (Girl Wars, 2003, pg.175)
- Empowerment Conferences
- Youth and Adult Guest Speakers
 - Self-esteem
 - Body Image
 - Friendships
 - Healthy Relationships

Strategies

- Host a monthly movie night
 - Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants
 - The Whale Rider
 - Real Women Have Curves
 - Odd Girl Out
 - Going on 13
 - **Facilitate discussion with students**



Wed Resources

- Club Ophelia
<http://www.clubophelia.com/camp/>
- Names Do Hurt
<http://www.namesdohurt.com/>
- Step Up Female Bullying Program
http://www.stop-violence.org/programs_youth.aspx

In Summary...

- Girls are not inherently mean
- Power and relational aggression go hand in hand
- Balance peer relationships with adult relationships
 - Parents need to stay connected to their adolescent daughter
- Girls need alternatives to aggressive behavior

- Provide meaningful activities for girls to participate in
- Stress the need for trust in relationships
- Talk to adults and girls about RA
- Help expand girls' support networks
- Promote self-esteem- girls who feel good about themselves can be kind to others w/o being taken advantage of

Source: Girls Wars, 2003

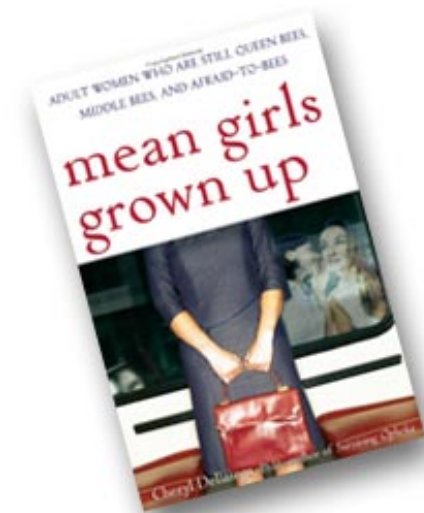
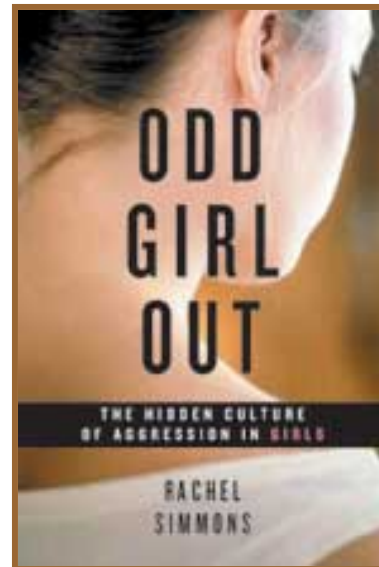
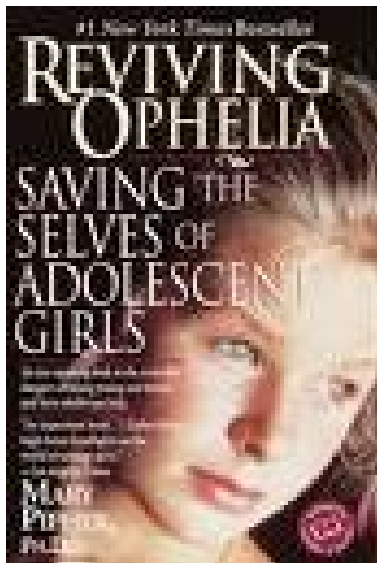
Recommended Readings

- ***Queen Bees & Wannabe's*** by Rosalind Wiseman
- ***Mean Girls Grow Up*** by Rosalind Wiseman
- ***Odd Girl Out*** by Rachel Simmons
- ***Odd Girl Speaks Out: Girls Write about Bullies, Cliques, Popularity, and Jealousy*** by Rachel Simmons



Recommended Readings

- ***Girl Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying*** by Cheryl Dellasega & Charisee Nixon
- ***Reviving Ophelia***, Mary Pipher



Bibliography

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- Spergel, I. (1995). The Youth Gang Problem.
- Thrasher, F. M. (1936). The Gang: A study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago. (2nd rev.).
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