

## **Frienemies: With Friends Like This who Needs Enemies?**

### Bullying

- 4 markers of Bullying (Barbara Coloroso)
  - Imbalance of power
  - Intent to harm
  - Threat of further aggression
  - Terror
- Victimization, repeated and over time
  - Physical (Intimidation, Non-verbal)
  - Verbal
  - Relational
  
- 3 Roles (bully, bullied, bystander). All three are sources for interventions. Each one can learn how to handle the situation differently. Children swap roles in different situations.

Gender differences in Bullying: Boys tend to be more physically and verbally aggressive (overt) whereas girls tend to engage in more covert, social forms of aggression, called Relational Aggression.

### Relational Aggression (RA)

Acts intended to harm another person's peer relationships or feelings of inclusion via manipulation or coercion

- negative rumor spreading
- blatant ignoring (ditching, shunning)
- threatening to terminate a friendship if they do not comply
- sniggering
- aggressive non-verbals
- e-ggression (text, on-line attacks)

Research Shows...

- Girls are more likely to use RA within friendships vs. boys who aggress outside their circles
- Girls who use RA demonstrate less empathy
- Girls who use RA normalize the behavior & often see it as retaliatory/justified
- RA is "OK" with girls whereas physical aggression (PA) is OK with boys
- Many victims of RA also experience Physical Aggression

### Technology.

Technology, such as cell phone (texting) and instant messaging has made public humiliation instant and permanent. Once rumors are "sent", "everyone" knows about it. Technology should be a privilege and not a rite. Use should be monitored and limited. Can be a DANGEROUS tool for harassment.

Ask yourself?

- Should kids be able to be on-line alone in their rooms?
- Why are kids on-line?
- Is it OK to have a computer/phone/TV in room?
- Do parental blocks work?
- Do you know how to see your computer's history?
- Is it OK to have web cameras?
- At what age is a cell phone necessary?

Bullying and peer aggression is nothing new, but technology has taken it to a different level of humiliation. Texting and instant messaging, has made rumor spreading and verbal assault instant and permanent. Once rumors are "sent", "everyone" knows about it.

Interventions. The best interventions are layered and involve entire communities.

- Parents should be addressing aggressive and coercive behaviors at home
- Coaches should be addressing intimidation and humiliation on the fields
- Teachers and principals should be active in creating healthy, safe school climates

What Can I Do?

- 👉 Be supportive & know you cannot "fix" it
- 👉 Be involved but do not take over
- 👉 Demand curriculum in schools
- 👉 Conflict resolution skills – peer mediation
- 👉 Seek mentors
- 👉 Monitor TV/video games/media activities
- 👉 Teach and model critical thinking (let's replay this together)
- 👉 YOU CAN ONLY CONTROL YOU

What to do with your kids

- 👉 Give emotional vocabulary
  - 👉 What were you feeling just before you hit him?
  - 👉 That was really mean. How did that feel for you?
- 👉 Strong sense of self (you can only control yourself)
- 👉 VALIDATE the experience
- 👉 Teach them to find allies – not necessary avoidance
- 👉 Role play with them

School Programs

- Coaching/Training for teachers
- Teaching Assertiveness skills for kids and adults
  - neutral statements
  - "I" statements
  - Conflict resolution
- Rehearsal: role plays (kids need to PRACTICE being assertive)