

## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH

Valley View PTO

presents

### RELATIONAL AGGRESSION: THE COVERT FORM OF BULLYING



Tuesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m., Valley Middle School

The term “**bullying**” has long been associated with physically and verbally abusive behavior. New research has shed light on an **equally pervasive form of bullying that often goes undetected – purposely intending to harm or manipulate relationships to hurt someone** – which is now referred to as “**RELATIONAL AGGRESSION**.” Relational aggression appears to be more salient in to girls, although boys do also exhibit some of the behaviors. Relationally aggressive behavior is found in children as young as preschool and into adulthood (ie. in the workplace).

The [Institute of Child Development’s Crick Social Development Lab at the University of Minnesota](#) has created the [Center on Relational Aggression \(CORA\)](#) to focus on the serious issue of Relational Aggression. On **Tuesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, at 11:30 a.m.**, a CORA speaker will address Valley View parents to enhance awareness of Relational Aggression and educate families about this type of bullying. Included in the presentation :

#### WHAT DOES RELATIONAL AGGRESSION LOOK LIKE ? :

- \* Covert, subtle, ‘under-the-radar’, difficult to see behavior
- \* Spreading rumors, gossiping, creating lies about victim
- \* Manipulating others to inflict hurt on victim

- \* Alliance building with friendships
- \* ‘Silent treatment’ ; ignoring
- \* Social exclusion ; staring, glaring

#### HOW TO DETECT A RELATIONALLY AGGRESSIVE BULLY ? :

Many relational bullies have well-developed social skills and are masters at manipulating adults and peers to appear innocent. *“Covert aggression isn’t just about not getting caught; half of it is looking like you’d never mistreat someone in the first place,” (Rachel Simmons, [Odd Girl Out](#)).* Other characteristics include:

- Vehement **DENIAL** of any wrongdoing (ie., “I never said that!” ; “I was only joking.”)
- Pushing the **BLAME** on the victim (ie., “She’s just jealous of me.” ; “She’s too sensitive.”)

#### WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT IF MY CHILD IS THE VICTIM, AGGRESSOR OR BYSTANDER ? :

Both the relationally victimized child *and* the aggressor can experience long term negative outcomes of Relational Aggression, such as depression and substance abuse. ‘Bystander’ parents can educate their child about Relational Aggression and to watch for being used by the aggressor as a ‘relational weapon’ against the victim. **Don’t miss this opportunity** to learn more about this important issue. Help your middle school child navigate the serious challenges – and consequences – of Relational Aggression with their relationships in school . . . and in later life.