

Team LEAD

## **Bystander Tips for dealing with R.A. issues.**

When we ask kids to stand up for what is right and to try to minimize relational aggression among their peers, we must give them some practical techniques that they can realistically put into action. The following tips are those students suggested and found helpful. These were effective actions they felt comfortable taking and used regularly.

- Remember to **SUPPORT THE TARGET**. You may not actually be able to stop every aggressor. The worst part of being the target, however, is that feeling of being totally alone and that everyone else agrees with the aggressor.

- **As a bystander, you can lessen the pain of R.A. by:**

being there for the target.

showing the target you are sympathetic and do not agree with the aggressor by countering a negative comment with something positive or simply walking away with the target.

offering a pat on the back, kind words, or an invitation to sit by you and your friends; other easy little efforts on your part make a huge difference in the mood of the moment for the target.

remembering that ONE person DOES make a difference; by making a statement of support for the target, you change the entire scene for that person. You take away the pain of being alone.

- **DON'T IGNORE RELATIONAL AGGRESSION.**

You can change the “Cool to be cruel” norm to “Cool to be kind” by noticing relational aggression among your peers and standing up to it; you will soon realize that you are not alone as many kids will jump in to support you. All it takes is that first voice.

- **You can respond to R.A. in the following ways:**

**Team LEAD**

When you hear a nasty remark, gossip, or rumor, simply walking away and not listening makes a statement.

Say something like, “That’s just gossip (or a rumor). Don’t believe that stuff.” OR “Let’s talk about something else.” OR “We don’t know all the facts, and it’s none of our business anyway. Let’s drop it.”

When confronted with rumors and gossip, CHANGE THE SUBJECT and DON’T SPREAD IT!

If someone is being verbally aggressive to someone else, say, “Hey, that’s not cool,” and support the target.

Counter verbal aggression with something positive and make a move; either get the target to walk away with you or convince the aggressor to move on.

Don’t be afraid to simply say, “That’s mean. Knock it off.”

Simply coming up with an “out” for a target can make a huge difference. For instance, saying, “Hey, Joe, come here. I need to ask you about that test.....etc...and moving him down the hall and away from the aggressors” helps the target save face and removes him from the situation.

Watch how you treat your own circle of friends; in fact, this is the best place to start and sometimes the hardest place to change your behavior.

Remember that “teasing” is good-natured, affectionate, and never cruel.

Friendly “teasing” or “joking around” is supposed to make someone feel special, valued, and appreciated; it is never meant to hurt someone or make them look bad in front of others.

When someone tells you to stop or looks upset or hurt, a real friend stops teasing and apologizes.

Team LEAD

**Words of Caution:**

**DON'T BULLY THE BULLY!**

Make sure students understand that the whole point of this program is not to take one person's side and alienate or disrespect the other person. The goal is to be peacemakers, to positively impact a situation so that no one leaves feeling angry or hurt. To this end, bystanders need to be careful not to "gang up" on the aggressor negatively, in effect, bullying back. While supporting the target, always leave the aggressor with a way to save face, either by using humor or encouraging the aggressor to join all of you, etc. depending on the situation. If the aggressor then chooses to storm off, that was his or her decision; you at least left the door open. Being aggressive toward the aggressor defeats the purpose.

**BE SAFE AND GET HELP!**

Make sure that students understand that standing up for the Team LEAD ideals DOES NOT MEAN PUTTING YOURSELF IN HARM'S WAY! If they find themselves witness to a dangerous or violent act, standing up means going to get an adult to help immediately or dialing 911. It does not mean stepping into the middle of the violence alone.