



# FACTSHEET

# Relational Aggression

How gossip and rumours can damage social relationships

Relational Aggression is behaviour often seen in women who seek to destroy a person's relationships through rumours, gossip and the social manipulation of groups.

Women are less likely to use physical aggression than men; this means they often resort to non-physical covert tactics like *Relational Aggression*. Women who use aggression at work are 71% more likely to target another woman than a man (Workplace Bullying Institute Survey, 2007). In social circles, female friendships rather than male friendships are more commonly riddled with relational aggression. Being socially isolated or ridiculed is one of the most painful experiences in female friendships. Studies show that men are less bothered by this behaviour than women, who place much more weight on the friendships they hold, which influence feelings of belonging and value.



## Taking Action

### In the Workplace:

- Relational Aggression in the workplace is never acceptable and is considered a form of bullying.
- In the first instance, you should (if possible) approach the person and let them know their behaviour has upset you and why. Keep it about how 'you' are impacted and don't assume the behaviour is deliberate, as this can put the person on edge.
- Always keep notes on the behaviour and how it has impacted you in case you decide to make a complaint to your management, as they will always ask for specifics.

### In your Intimate and Social Relationship:

- Workplaces have processes and procedures for dealing with bad behaviour, yet in the social world, the same protections do not apply.
- Always set clear boundaries and be willing to address behaviour that impacts your well-being and sense of self.
- Be assertive with the person so they know you are not a "pushover" and speak to someone if you need further support. This can be a friend or a professional.

**"Don't let negative and toxic people rent space in your head. Raise the rent and kick them out"**

*Robert Tew*

## Things to Consider

### In the Workplace:

- Be sure to ask for independent advice, as sometimes we can presume something is aggressive when it may be a personal interpretation.
- Follow workplace processes and procedures. The bully will know these, learn how to protect themselves, and lie to do so.

### In your Intimate and Social Relationship:

- Remember: You're in control of your response and behaviour, as others are responsible for theirs.
- You have the choice to walk away.
- Don't let others walk all over you; show your worth with your feet by leaving the relationship or disengaging with the person.
- You have the control to make the change.

*Are you needing assistance with a toxic female issue?*

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