

Assertive Communication

It can sometimes be effective to directly confront relational aggression. Some girls will be embarrassed by their behavior if you talk to them about it face to face. Some may even be brave enough to apologize or to change their behavior. At other times, you may learn that the hurtful behavior was unintentional or the result of a misunderstanding.

Helpful Hints:

- Use “I statements” (e.g. “I don’t like what you said online about me.”)—they make the other person less likely to respond defensively than if you use a “you statement” (e.g. “You were cruel online.”)
- Rehearse or role-play ahead of time what you plan to say
- Use words, tone, and body language which all communicate self-respect
- Make sure you are in a safe place when you speak with someone who has hurt you
- Ask other girls or adults for support
- Make an “assertiveness sandwich” (one negative comment between two positive ones)
 - Validate the other person (e.g. “I liked when we were friends”)
 - State your feelings about a behavior (e.g., “I felt hurt when you told another girl something I said to you in confidence.”)
 - Make a request for change (e.g. “I would appreciate an apology and hope you will be more careful in the future.”)
- Remember: Even if the other girl cannot respect your request, you can feel good about standing up for yourself.