



# *The Benedictine Counselor*

## *Newsletter of Benedictine Counseling Services*

*A Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia*

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St. Benedict Monastery  
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### **Message from the Director:**

Christmas Blessings to you from Benedictine Counseling Services all through 2008. We look forward to the new year with hope to be able to reach more people in need of our services.

This month we have the second article on the topic of bullying in the school setting.

A more subtle form of bullying is presented by Corrie Daughters, school counselor at St. Charles Borromeo and St. Andrew's School (Clifton). She will write about using relationships to bully.

May Christ, the Prince of Peace fill your schools and families with his gifts.



### **Corrie Daughters, MA**

**BCS School Counselor  
St. Charles Borromeo and  
St. Andrew Catholic Schools**

### **What Is Relational Aggression?**

Bullying affects nearly 5 million K-8 students in the United States, and according to the National Association of School Psychologists, about 1 in 7 children is either a victim or a bully (Beane, 2005). Bullying is commonly thought of as overt physical and verbal violence, but bullying can also occur in more covert ways through what is known as relational aggression.

“Relational aggression (RA), also

called female bullying, is the use of relationships, rather than fists, to hurt another” (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003). Because RA is used in the social realm, it can appear in many different forms, such as gossip, rumors, exposing secrets, exclusion, cyber bullying, name calling, taunting, intimidation, manipulating affection, alliance building, boyfriend stealing, etc.

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By using these tactics, aggressors hurt their victims by manipulating how others view them. RA tends to be more covert than physical aggression and can often go undetected by outsiders, but it can cause long-term damage to those affected by it.

While RA can be used by both girls and boys, girls tend to suffer more from the social and emotional effects and “perceive it as more hurtful than boys do” (Yoon et. al., 2004). Because girls tend to be more concerned with relationships and social status than boys, girls are more affected by the damage to relationships that RA causes. RA is most prevalent among girls in early adolescence (middle school age) that are at the stage when they are developing an identity, seeking significant peer relationships, and breaking away from their families. When these tasks are interfered with, long-term effects may occur. Effects of RA for both victims and aggressors include increased school absences, increased depression, lower GPA, increased anxiety and sadness, increased anger, eating disorders, loneliness, low self-esteem, lack of trust, inability to control emotions, violence toward others, and even suicide. According to the Na-

tional Education Association, approximately 160,000 students miss school every day due to fear of being a victim of bullying.

Like all forms of bullying, it is important for adults to be informed about relational aggression and know what to look for. Parents and teachers can talk to children about RA and be more aware of the relationships among their children/students. They can also be good role models, especially for girls. Schools can include RA in their anti-bullying programs and make RA behaviors unacceptable in their classrooms and throughout the entire school.

**Resources:**

Beane, A L. *The Bully-Free Classroom*. Free Spirit Publishing. Minneapolis, MN, 2005.

Dellasega, C. & Nixon, C. *Girls Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying*. Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2003

Yoon, J.S., Barton, E., & Taiariol, J. (2004, August). Relational Aggression in Middle School: Educational Implications of Developmental Research. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 303-318

[www.relationalaggression.com](http://www.relationalaggression.com). Retrieved on Dec. 14, 2007.

During **January** we continue to celebrate the Christmas season with the feasts of Mary, Mother of God, the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. We can take Mary as someone to imitate in her humility, courage and great love of God. The Epiphany shows us that God is in love with the whole human family. No one is excluded from God’s love.

During January we also celebrate two people who were very influential in the founding of

the Catholic parochial school system in the United States: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. John Neumann, archbishop of Philadelphia. Mother Seton founded the American Sisters of Charity who taught in so many schools and St. John Neumann, as bishop made sure that the number of schools increased dramatically during his brief time.

We thank God for all his blessings, especially those nearest and dearest to us.

The **Anita Moreland Foundation** was begun to help BCS provide counseling and psychological assistance for people who would otherwise be unable to pay for services.

For more information contact: *Benedictine Counseling Services* below.

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