

Question: Does Relational Aggression Result in Physical Symptoms?

OPHELIA TIP:

When a child reports physical symptoms, they should always be asked about relational aggression. If you find out what happened immediately before the symptoms started, you and your child can better understand how relational aggression may affect her/his physical health.

reported by:
Charisse Nixon, Ph.D.
and Amanda Cook

Yes. Both aggressors and targets report experiencing headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, trouble sleeping, loss of appetite and unexplained crying. The reporting of these different physical symptoms varied based on gender and the participants' status as target or aggressor.

Targets

As targets of relational aggression both girls and boys report that they experience physical symptoms. Being a target is directly related to exhibiting symptoms like headaches and trouble sleeping.

Gender effects

Reports of physical symptoms do vary by gender. Girls are more likely than boys to cry for no reason and to have trouble sleeping.

Physical symptoms in targeted boys and girls

Boys who were targets of relational aggression reported headaches, stomachaches, trouble sleeping and loss of appetite. Girls targeted by relational aggression reported only headaches and difficulty sleeping.

Aggressors

Boys who engaged in relational aggression reported they experienced fatigue and trouble sleeping. There was no relationship between girls' relationally aggressive behavior and physical symptoms.

For more information, visit www.OpheliaProject.org or call 1-888-256-5437.

