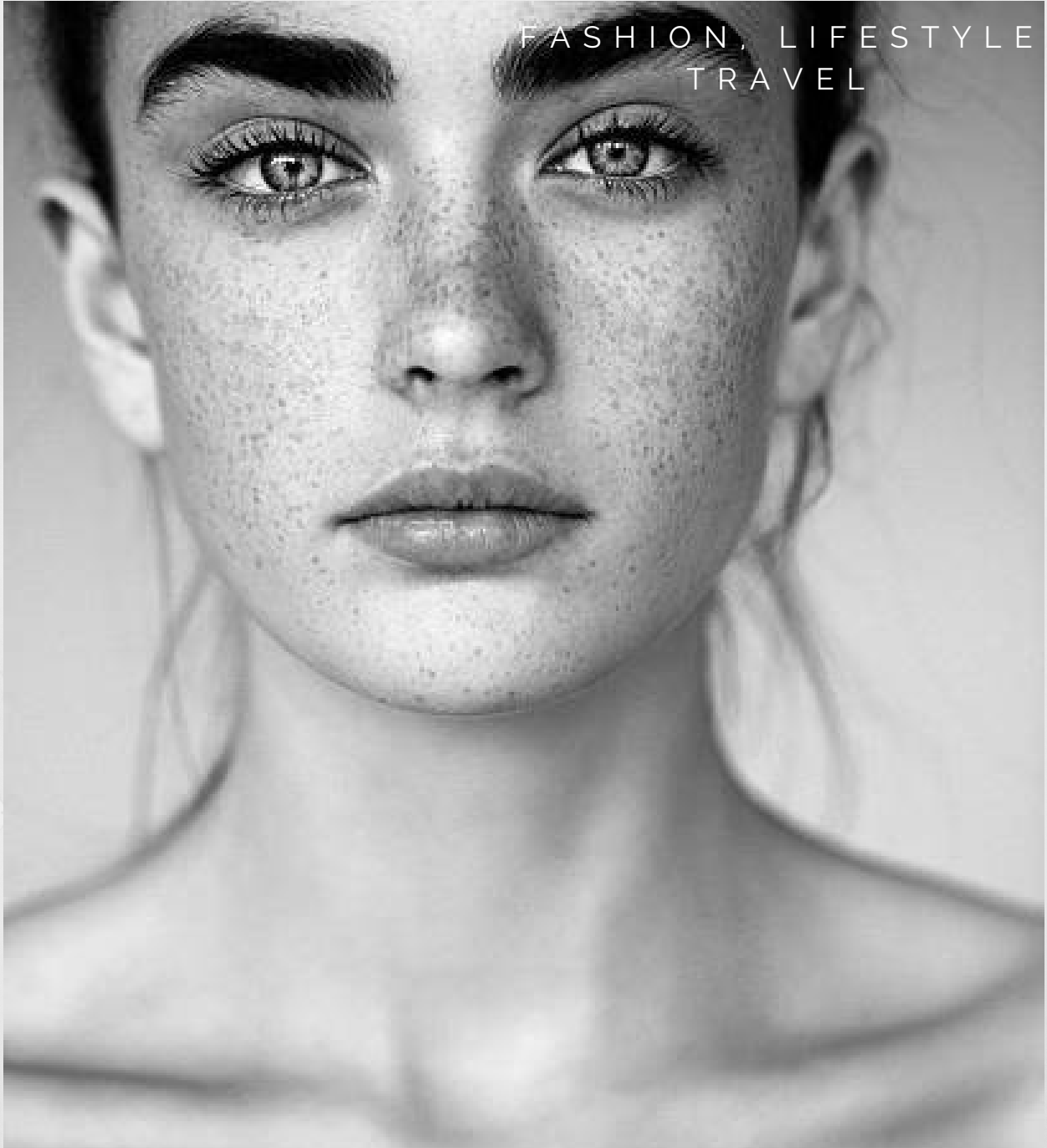


ISSUE 10

YOUTH

DECEMBER
2017

FASHION, LIFESTYLE,
TRAVEL



THE "MEAN GIRL"
PHENOMENON

WHY ARE YOUNG GRILS SO
COMPETITIVE BETWEEN
EACH OTHER? WHAT CAN
YOU DO?

What Is The "Mean Girl" Phenomenon?

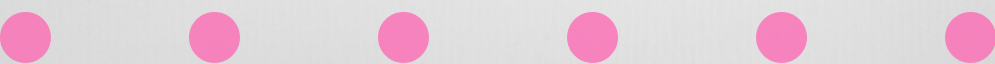
Image from google

The "mean girl" (I know you're all thinking, "like the movie?", but no, not the movie, like the girls in the movie) phenomenon is the concept on female-on-female competition. Up until more recently (meaning within the past 4 years) not much was known about female competition or aggression because "most research was carried out on and by men. Now, however, researchers have been focusing specifically on how and why women can become hostile toward one another" (Zuras, 2013). Although the studies have been more recent, the competition has been around since pretty much the beginning of time, and at one point or another everyone has experienced a "mean girl" in one way or another.



"The existence of female competition may seem obvious to anyone who has been in a high-school cafeteria or a singles bar,"

- John Tierney for *The New York Times* (Zuras, 2013)

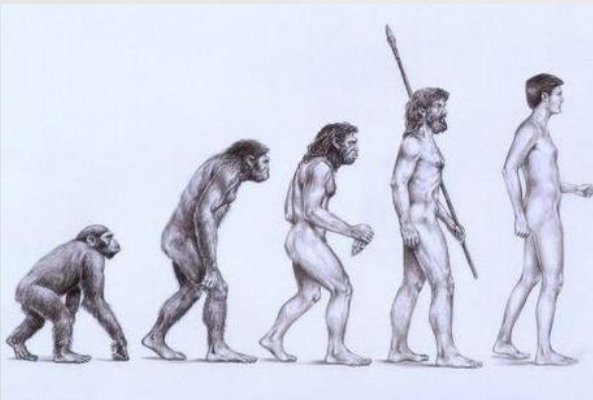


Evolutionary vs. Feminist

Psychological Theories

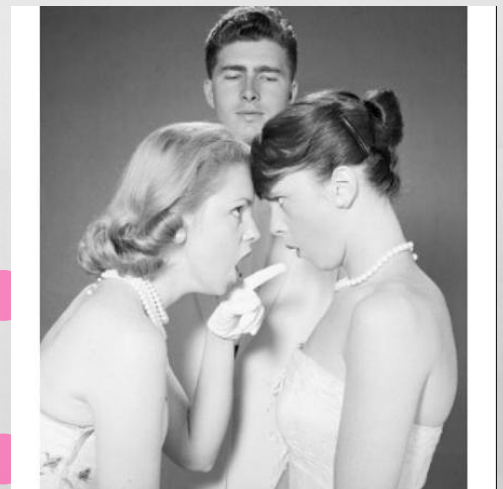
Evolutionary Psychology

The evolutionary psychology theory suggests, "that women need to protect themselves (read: their wombs) from physical harm, so indirect aggression keeps us safe while lowering the stock of other women" (Gordon, 2015). What this means is that evolutionary psychologists say that the reason behind female-on-female aggression or competition is because women are attempting to protect their wombs, whether they are pregnant or not, due to evolutionary reasons. In addition it is said that women also feel the need to protect their significant others from being taken by another female as well as talking down about other women in order to make them seem less desirable.



Feminist Psychology

Feminist psychology theory is another explanation as to why women are so mean to one another. This theory sums up the reasoning as "indirect aggression to internalizing the patriarchy" (Gordon, 2015) meaning that it is the influence of socialization that makes women so cut throat when it comes to other women. The justification is that women are living their lives in a male-dominated society and they in turn "internalize the male perspective...and adopt it as their own" (Shpancer, 2014). When doing so this causes the women to hold the way a man will view her above all else and will not hesitate to take another woman down for the "prize" so to speak.



How To Deal With Mean Girls

Six Things You Can Do :

1. Stand up to the mean girl, facing her directly might be scary, but it will show you're strong.
2. Ignore her. It might be difficult, but not giving her the attention she is looking for will likely cause her to stop.
3. Distract yourself, if you're in school, join extra circulars, and if not, start a new hobby.
4. Make a list about all the things that you love about yourself, this will help you to feel more confident.
5. Seek help, if things get physical or begin to go too far, ask for help from a friend, parent, or someone you trust.
6. Remember that we're all trying to achieve the same goals

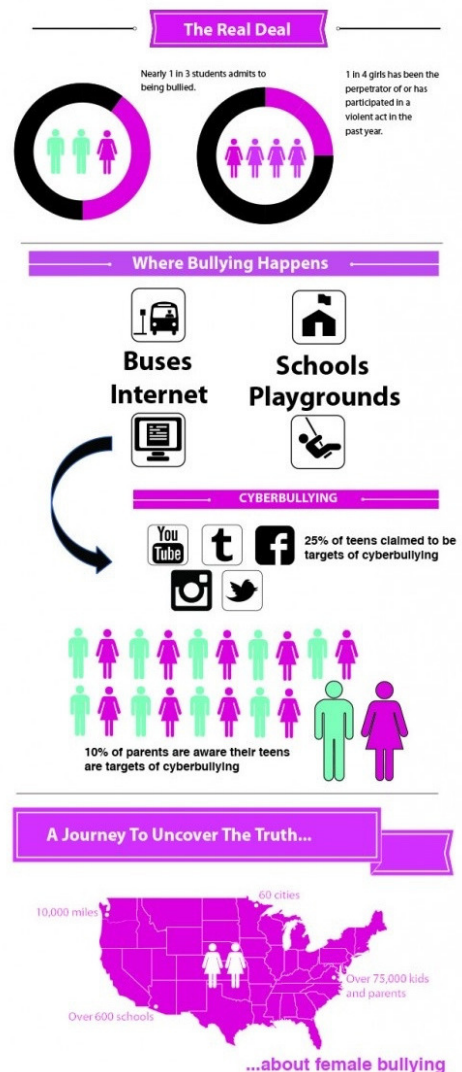
Mean Girl Behavior From an Early Age

The "mean girl" attitude and the forming of cliques starts from a very early age. From as early as kindergarten relational aggression is used and only gets worse with age, and friendship starts being used as almost a form of currency or in order to have power over someone. You can talk to school administration, but unfortunately, not everyone cares about this topic too much and attribute it to "girls being girls". Yes, of course it is normal to change friend group as you age or your interests or schools change, however that's not always why you stop being friends with someone (or even a group of people. A multitude of things can influence friend group changes or shifts as I mentioned, but I can tell you from personal experience that there is almost nothing worse than one day having your group of friends and the next day having them turn their backs on you. Unfortunately this is a normal part of life for everyone, but something about being a young girl makes it even worse. When you're young you don't know that the reason your friends aren't friends with you anymore is because of evolutionary reasons or because they are chasing after a boy (that they probably won't be with for longer than a week anyway) and feel threatened by you, you just assume it was something you did.

relational aggression
definition: "the use of
friendship as a
weapon"
- Simmons for *PBS
Parents*

Image from google

Bullying effects **33%** of adolescent girls



Why is This a Problem?



Images from
google



Whether it's a mean girl elementary school, high school, or in the work place, it's never fun to deal with. Although some of the "mean girl" actions can be considered to be "out of our control", they still can be harmful. These actions leave lasting impressions on others and are horribly mean. The actions women inflict on each other can cause self image issues, grade drops, or even anxiety when going to places where the bullying is happening (such as school or work).

Final Thoughts

Now, I'm not saying that every woman on the face of the planet needs to be friends with one another, but I do think that if more women made a conscious effort to remember that everyone has the same goals in mind, that everyone would be a lot more understanding and excepting of each other. Now I know what you're thinking, not everyone has the same exact goals or values, and you're right, but I think we can all agree that we all want to be happy (no matter who you are). So, yes, the "mean girl" phenomenon can partially be attributed to science, but "it can be changed" (Fretté, 2012). Now, no one said it would be easy, but if taken in baby steps, it could happen, maybe never fully eliminated, but definitely a lot better than it is now (espccially with today's social media). At the end of the day, I think we can all agree that the world would be a better place if we were all just a little nicer to each other.

WHEN WOMEN
SUPPORT EACH
OTHER,
INCREDIBLE
THINGS HAPPEN.

Sources

- Caporimo, Alison. "The Science Behind The Mean Girl Phenomenon." Allure, Condé Nast, 25 May 2011, www.allure.com/story/is-there-science-behind-the-me
- Chapman, Melissa. "How to deal with mean girl cliques ." She Knows, Disqus, 25 Feb. 2009, www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/807915/how-to-deal-with-mean-girl-cliques.
- Fretté, Juliette. "Why Women Are Mean to Other Women." The Huffington Post, Oath Inc, 26 Nov. 2012, 2:31 PM, www.huffingtonpost.com/juliette-frette/jealousy_b_1914374.html.
- Gordon, Emily V. "Why Women Compete With Each Other." The New York Times, The New York Times Company, 31 Oct. 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/opinion/sunday/why-women-compete-with-each-other.html.
- Gordon, Andrea. "Schools Keep Eye on 'Mean Girls'." Toronto Star, 28 Sept. 2016, p. GT.3.
- Merten, Don E. "The Meaning of Meanness: Popularity, Competition, and Conflict among Junior High School Girls." Sociology of Education, vol. 70, no. 3, 1997, pp. 175–191.
- Russell, and King. "Mean Girls: PID-5 Personality Traits and Everyday Sadism Predict Hostile Femininity." Personality and Individual Differences, vol. 104, 2017, pp. 252–257.
- Shpancer, Norman. "Feminine Foes: New Science Explores Female Competition." Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, 26 Jan. 2014, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/insight-therapy/201401/feminine-foes-new-science-explores-female-competition.
- "Understanding Elementary School Friendships. School & Social Life. Raising Girls. Parenting." PBS Parents, Public Broadcasting Service, 11 Oct. 2013, www.pbs.org/parents/parenting/raising-girls/friends-social-life/understanding-elementary-school-friendships/.
- Zuras, Matthew. "The Science Of Why Girls Are Mean (Supposedly)." Refinery 29, 20 Nov. 2013, 12:30 PM, www.refinery29.com/2013/11/57737/female-aggression-studies.