

Navigating Relational Aggression



Blue Ground

Relational aggression is subtle, deniable, and often invisible to others — but deeply felt by the women who experience it. It shows up as exclusion, quiet undermining, back-channelling, or small behaviours that erode confidence and belonging.

Women in policing often internalise these experiences, blaming themselves or trying to “push through.” This resource helps women name the behaviour, understand the pattern, and respond with clarity and self-leadership.

Why This Matters

Relational aggression impacts confidence, wellbeing, and team culture. When women can recognise subtle harm early, they can protect their energy, set boundaries, and stay steady in high-pressure environments.

Who This Is For

- Women in policing
- Women experiencing subtle harm or exclusion
- Supervisors wanting insight into women's lived experience
- Anyone navigating relational pressure at work

What You'll Learn

- What relational aggression is
- How subtle harm shows up in policing
- How to protect your energy and confidence
- Practical scripts for responding with self-leadership

Navigating Relational Aggression in Policing

Relational aggression is subtle, deniable harm that affects confidence, belonging, and emotional steadiness. It includes exclusion, quiet undermining, back-channelling, and behaviours that make women question themselves.

This resource helps women recognise relational aggression early, protect their energy, and respond with grounded self-leadership.

Relational aggression often looks like:

- being left out of conversations or decisions
- quiet criticism or undermining
- back-channeling framed as “concern”
- subtle exclusion or coldness
- shifting alliances or cliques
- being talked about instead of spoken to

Women often internalise these behaviours because they are:

- subtle
- socially normalised
- easy for others to dismiss
- hard to prove
- emotionally draining

Relational aggression impacts:

- confidence
- emotional bandwidth
- sense of belonging
- performance
- wellbeing

Naming it is the first step in protecting yourself.

Women often try to rationalise or minimise subtle harm, telling themselves they’re “overreacting” or should “push through.” But relational aggression is not imagined — it is a pattern. Once women can name it clearly, they stop internalising it and start responding from steadiness, clarity, and self-leadership.

How Relational Aggression Shows Up

A. Quiet Undermining

Side comments, dismissive looks, or indirect questioning of your competence. These behaviours are deniable but destabilising.

B. Exclusion

Being left out of conversations, decisions, or social circles. This creates uncertainty and erodes belonging.

C. Back-Channeling

People talking about you instead of to you. Often framed as “concern,” but used to influence perception.

D. Performative Support

Acting supportive publicly while criticising privately. This creates confusion and emotional whiplash.

E. Social Power Plays

Cliques, alliances, or shifting loyalties that create instability and undermine confidence

These patterns are subtle, but their impact is not. They drain emotional bandwidth, erode confidence, and make women question themselves.

Relational aggression is not conflict — it is covert harm. Naming it helps women respond with clarity rather than self-doubt.

Practical Tools

Tool 1: The Clarity Anchor	Tool 2: The Direct Reset	Tool 3: The Boundary Line
<p>A grounding script to protect your energy:</p> <p>“I’m noticing this behaviour doesn’t feel aligned. I’m going to stay steady and respond from clarity.”</p> <p>This keeps you centred and reduces emotional reactivity.</p>	<p>A calm, clean way to interrupt subtle harm:</p> <p>“I want to check something with you. Here’s what I’m noticing...”</p> <p>This brings behaviour into the open without aggression.</p>	<p>A simple, steady boundary:</p> <p>“I’m not available for side conversations. If something needs to be discussed, let’s talk directly.”</p> <p>This protects your energy and reduces back-channeling.</p>

The Clarity Anchor

What It Is

A grounding script that helps women stay centred when subtle harm triggers self-doubt, confusion, or emotional reactivity.

Why It Matters

Relational aggression works by destabilising confidence. The Clarity Anchor interrupts that pattern and brings women back into themselves before responding.

The Script

“I’m noticing this behaviour doesn’t feel aligned. I’m going to stay steady and respond from clarity.”

Operational Examples

- when someone makes a quiet undermining comment
- when you feel excluded or iced out
- when you sense back-channeling or shifting alliances

Why It Works in Policing

- reduces emotional reactivity
- restores internal authority
- prevents women from absorbing subtle harm

The Direct Reset

What It Is

A calm, clean way to bring behaviour into the open without aggression or escalation.

Why It Matters

Relational aggression thrives in silence. A Direct Reset interrupts the pattern early and signals that you are paying attention.

The Line

“I want to check something with you. Here’s what I’m noticing...”

Operational Examples

- when someone repeatedly excludes you from decisions
- when you hear about conversations happening behind your back
- when someone is warm publicly but cold privately

Why It Works in Policing

- brings clarity without confrontation
- reduces deniability
- shifts the dynamic from covert to overt

The Direct Reset is not about calling someone out — it’s about calling the behaviour into the light.

The Boundary Line

What It Is

A steady, non-negotiable boundary that protects your energy and stops back-channeling.

Why It Matters

Subtle harm often escalates when women absorb it silently. This line interrupts the pattern and redirects communication into clean, direct channels.

The Line

“I’m not available for side conversations. If something needs to be discussed, let’s talk directly.”

Operational Examples

- when someone tries to pull you into gossip
- when colleagues talk about others instead of to them
- when you sense triangulation or alliance-building

Why It Works in Policing

- protects emotional bandwidth
- models clean communication
- reduces relational noise and power plays

Over time, this line teaches others that you operate from clarity, not covert dynamics.

Relational aggression loses power when it is named. When women respond with clarity, boundaries, and self-leadership, they protect their confidence and reshape the culture around them.

