

# Queen Bee, Don't Wannabe

By Jackie Block, LMFT

"Queen Bees and Wannabes," by Rosalind Wiseman, is a must have guide to navigate and survive the world of adolescence. As a parent, you listen with anxiety and flounder in your feeble attempts to help which, at times, only backfire. As a teenage girl, you ride the rollercoaster of highs and lows which come with every school day that either confirms your place among your peers or leaves you out cold.

## Social Order

Understanding the rules of the clique are important, It starts with the *Queen Bee* who uses fear and control as her weapon. She organizes everyone so well that she uses her power to keep things moving, keep herself the focus, and is quick to put anyone in their place if they don't agree. The *Queen Bee* feels the power she has and gets the attention she seeks. The price she pays is the loss of self because she is so busy trying to keep up her image.

*The Sidekick*, is the best friend of the *Queen Bee*. The *Queen Bee* is her boss she gains power from the relationship and feels included and popular because of it. The *Sidekick* loses the right to have her own opinion and as time goes on forgets she may have one.

*The Banker* is the girl who gains the trust of others, gets information and uses it to strengthen her position in the clique. She usually is good at avoiding wrath of any kind. She gains power and security in her position but loses by having no trusted resource.

*The Floater* has the best of all worlds. She has self-confidence, is attractive but not too attractive and is good at avoiding conflicts. She will stand up for herself when needed and is genuinely liked for who she is. The floater loses nothing.

*The Torn Bystander* is caught between doing the right thing and what the *Queen Bee* wants. She is often found in the middle of situations and just wants everyone to get along. She has access to popularity, but loses much as she gives up the things she likes and may likely present herself as less intelligent.

*The Pleaser/Wannabe/Messenger* is either in the group or trying to stay or get in. She does what is asked, dresses like, and enthusiastically supports the *Queen Bee*. She changes with the moment to fit in. She gains the feeling of belonging but loses her sense of self and has trouble keeping boundaries.

*The Target* is the victim. The role evolves out of challenging the top three. This girl has no allies and she hides her hurt by rejecting first. Believe it or not the target can learn empathy, be more objective and find true friendships. She loses by feeling helpless and anxious because of the cruelty.

## Identifying a Problem

If your daughter is ready to talk, drop everything and listen - it has to be on her time not yours.

Look for signs of distress:

- a. She hangs around by you but doesn't share anything.
- b. She reports not feeling well and wants to stay home.
- c. She asks to go on an errand with you.
- d. She asks to watch TV with you.

- e. She weaves a possible problem into a conversation.
- f. She tries to get you alone.

### **How to Help**

1. Be a good listener. Paraphrase and affirm feelings. Don't question validity, or become judgmental and a fixer.
2. Let your daughter take ownership and let her do the problem solving and try it out. She needs to feel empowered.
3. This is serious business - don't make fun.
4. Show support, if there are difficult things to talk about and she is struggling sharing them with you, suggest an older sibling, or friend.
5. If asked to offer solutions look at how she can confront the person who is causing the problem - role play if necessary. Clearly have her describe what is bothering her. Have her state what she does and does not want to happen. Teach her how to acknowledge the feelings of the person who has wronged her.
6. Find out who she can ask for help at school.
7. Be careful of your involvement in the problem as it may backfire and make things worse for your daughter.

### **Mirror Mirror**

As parents we re-experience our own adolescence as our children go through it. It is important to understand and not make light of the fact that trying on different images is part of growing up. The goal is to be supportive enough for your daughter to come to know what she truly enjoys and wants in life. Honesty and clarity will be the easiest route for both of you to take.

Teach your teen how to create good boundaries. Model for your daughter how to give clear messages that focus on the content not the emotion.

Know your children's friends and know their parents. Keep the network of communication open. Be wise and enjoy the ride!

Read Rosalind Wiseman's book Queen Bees & Wannabes.