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Catty Women: Have You Been The Victim of an Attack?

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By **Jennifer Lubell** (</profile/38423/3449/jennifer-lubell>), *GALTime* Writer
on Wednesday, May 25, 2011

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Several jobs ago, I remember being at the copy machine when I confronted the guerrilla forces of a "catty" attack.

Two of my fellow female coworkers had slunk in, and although the conversation that followed seemed innocuous enough, right out of the corner of my eye, I saw it. The gimlet gleam in their stares, the raised eyebrows, the self-important little smiles that implied they harbored an embarrassing secret about me.



What are they saying about me?

Just then, the hairs on my neck stood up. I knew without a doubt that as soon as I left with my photocopied report, the whispering would start...

Granted, we're all guilty of catty behavior from time to time, but there are some women or entire cliques that feed on that sort of attitude.

Makes me wonder, what do these "mean girls" gain from putting others down?

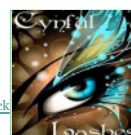
Quite simply, it makes them feel better -- it's the same dynamic as bullying, observes [Manhattan life coach Julie Melillo](#) (<http://www.yourdreamslifecoach.com>). "Seeing someone in pain makes them feel powerful. It's similar to a 4th grader stealing someone's lunch money, just to see if he can make another kid cry. It makes this kid, or this 'mean girl' feel important."

Most of these women "harbor quite a bit of unconscious insecurity, pain, and envy. The reason I say unconscious is because, most times when you confront them, they are quite surprised they have been viewed as mean," explains Karol Ward, a licensed psychotherapist, speaker and author of [Worried Sick: Break Free from Chronic Worry to Achieve Mental & Physical Health](#) (<http://www.amazon.com/Worried-Sick-Chronic-Achieve-Physical/dp/0425234118>).

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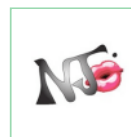
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Ward says these women feel the need to put others down for several reasons. "They have thwarted ambition and need to manipulate others to achieve what they want, have feelings of self-hatred or desire for attention that has been unfulfilled."

They're also seeking to gain power through a group, and often don't think independently, says Maryann Reid, author/editor of [Alphanista.com](http://www.Alphanista.com) (<http://www.Alphanista.com>).

They may have experienced some kind of criticism that marked them early on in childhood "and they saw how important that criticism made others feel or proved them right. They want the same power," Reid says, which is why they often team up against alpha females--strong, self-defined women who do not follow others, who are okay being the lone wolf. They also abhor successful or very attractive women, "and conspire to break that self-esteem down," she adds. "They need attention, and they act out to get it, be seen, and heard."

The best line of defense against these women? Be confident, advises Jane Kaiser, a life advice coach for teenage girls. "Be willing to see them for what they are--scared. True friendliness and a gentle demeanor will douse the flames of jealousy and ignorance. Ignore your natural instincts to sink to their level and fuel them on--you're better than that!"

Melillo agrees that the best tact is to keep your cool and tell it like it is. "So, if a mean girl is hitting on your man right in front of you, say 'Oh no, didn't I introduce you to my boyfriend? We're actually together now. Why don't I introduce you to some single guys over here! You're such a catch, I'm sure they'll love you!' Your kindness (and the lack of effect on you from the attack) is kryptonite for the mean girl."

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It's so true that they act surprised and innocent when they are caught. Then they try and blame you for catching them acting mean. It helps to know that they are insecure and have their own pain. Doesn't make me feel sorry for them but now they don't have all the power! I just walk away.

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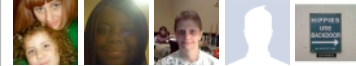
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