



EPISODE 11 **RANCOCAS VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL** **MT. HOLLY, NJ**

- *Bullying, prejudice and cliques are fixtures in schools across America.*
- *Challenge Day is a one-day program that aims to break down these barriers.*

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rancocas Valley Regional High School is located just across the river from Philadelphia in the state of New Jersey. It is a school of about 2200 students that many refer to as “Rumor Valley High School.”

Featured students and their roles on campus:

Josh – “Popular”
Austin – “Emo”
Taylor – “Jock”
Steve – “Class Clown”
Sierra – “Mean Girl”

Cliques and the stereotypes people form about various groups on campus are a painful reality in every school.

- What are the cliques at your school? What stereotypes do you attribute to them?
- Have you or any of your friends ever been hurt by stereotypes or by being associated or labeled as a member of any of these groups?
- Do you relate to any of the students in this episode?



THEMES TO EXPLORE AND DISCUSS

1. Rumors & Gossip
2. The Pressure To Be Popular
3. Dealing with Illness & Disease

1. Rumors & Gossip

Notice

- Rancocas Valley Regional High School is often referred to as “Rumor Valley High.” How do you think stereotypes like that affect the ways students relate with one another at school? What nickname, if any, would you give your school?
- Why do you think rumors are so common? How do you think rumors and gossip affect the ways you interact with the people around you?
- Early in this episode, **Steve** acknowledges that he starts rumors just to make people angry. In what ways, if any, have you or your friends been affected by negative rumors or gossip? Have your friendships ever suffered because someone spread a negative rumor?

If you NOTICE that rumors are a problem in your school or in your life and you CHOOSE to Be the Change – you can ACT by doing one or more of the following...

Act

- If you don't like the way people describe your school, do what you can to contradict their beliefs. If people say you're a school of gossips, prove them wrong. Work together with your friends to actively change people's impressions.
- Be part of the solution. The next time you hear someone start to spread a negative rumor, let them know that it's not cool. Remind the person that no matter what the situation, spreading rumors and talking about people only makes the problem worse.
- Pretty much everyone knows what it's like to hurt by negative rumors. During Challenge Day, courageous young people often apologize for rumors they have spread or negative comments they have made. Your challenge is to match them. Think about all the people you may have hurt with your words or actions. Find as many of those people as you can and apologize.



2. The Pressure To Be Popular

Notice

- According to **Josh**, being popular is all about the right attitude, the right clothes and hanging with the right people. Do you agree with these standards? What, if anything, would you change about the way popularity works at your school?
- At Rancocas Valley Regional High School, there seems to be a clear hierarchy of groups, with popular people at the top and emos at the bottom. What are the groups at your school? How do you think these groupings affect the way people relate at school?
- Although he is considered “popular,” **Josh** admits he doesn’t really know who he can trust. Can you relate to Josh in any way? On a scale of one to ten, how comfortable are you with your status on campus? How much do you trust your friends? What, if anything, do you do to protect or change your status at school?

If you NOTICE that the pressure to be popular is a problem for you or those around you and you CHOOSE to Be the Change – you can ACT by doing one or more of the following...

Act

- According to **Josh**, popularity in part comes from having the “right friends.” Your challenge is to be a “real friend.” Celebrate your friends, be generous with your compliments, and let them know how much they matter.
- If you notice someone is being mistreated because of their social status, do what you can to change that. Say hi in the halls, get to know them, and help them feel noticed and appreciated. If you find something you like about the person, be sure to say so.
- If you find yourself worrying about your popularity or social status, stop. Remember, all you need be is yourself. Do your best to let go of status and to only spend your time around people who like and appreciate you for who you are.

3. Dealing with Illness & Disease

Notice

- Illness and disease are a part of life, but that doesn’t make dealing with them any easier. Is there anyone in your life that is currently struggling



with a life threatening illness or disease? If so, how are they dealing with it? How does their illness affect you?

- Who in your school or life is dealing with the fear of loss due to disease? Have you or anyone close to you ever lost a loved one?
- Have you ever personally dealt with illness or disease? If so, how did you cope?

If you NOTICE that illness and disease are causing pain or problems in your life and you CHOOSE to Be the Change – you can ACT by doing one or more of the following...

Act

- Is there anyone you love or care for who is dealing with any kind of illness or disease? If there is, take a moment to consider how you can positively contribute to the person's circumstance. Once you've thought about it, find a way to offer your support, help with a task, or in some other way make the person's life a little easier.
- Sometimes the hardest part of dealing with a disease or a loss is having to handle the feelings alone. If you know someone dealing with a disease or a loss, offer to listen.
- If you are dealing with fear, loss, stress or grief related to illness or disease, don't do it alone. Reach out, see a counselor, join a support group, or talk to someone you trust. Use your situation as an opportunity to heal and grow.

LEARN MORE AND SHARE

- If you're dealing with cyberbullying or online gossip and rumors, head to <http://www.athinline.org> for resources and ways to get help.
- If stuff going on at school is impacting your emotional health, check out <http://www.halfofus.com>.
- To further discuss the issues in this episode, head to <http://ifyoureallyknewme.mtv.com>.

