

# Gossip, Rumors & Innuendo

*"Extraordinary people talk about ideas, average people talk about events and little people talk about other people. Which of these best describe you?"*

To many people, the idea of "violence" connotes the physical harm that one may do to another. However, there is another form of violence that is just as dangerous and insidious, and this is gossip, rumors, and innuendo. And it can be just as violent and sometimes more hurtful.

While your first inclination may be to consider the way we talk as not being violent, the fact remains, our words in the context of gossip, rumors, and innuendo often lead to hurt, pain and suffering. They can have a lifetime effect and lasting impression to the entire group.

Today there's an ever-increasing emphasis on gossip, rumors, and innuendo which is played out in any number of Reality TV shows, in celebrity gossip shows, in the print media, and in political campaigns. Just to prove this point, we contacted the National Enquirer and learned that they sell more than 3 million copies each week!

In company offices, in meetings, on the phone, in emails, in social settings, youth groups, and around the water cooler, people are spending more time talking about someone else - in language that is most often harmful, hurtful, critical, demeaning, and judgmental - and outside the presence of the one who is the subject of the conversation.

## **Understanding Gossip and Those Who Gossip**

Gossip is an emotional cancer in the workplace that eats away at the sense of well-being of the individual and the team.

One of the hallmarks of a true "team" is shared values - including mutual honesty, trust and respect. Where gossip rears its ugly head, these shared values are nonexistent. In fact, when gossip exists in the chapter, there can be no "team." The label "team" is meaningless. At best, there is but just "group".

Contrary to popular opinion, gossip is not benign; it's not idle; it's not tame; it's not "for the fun of it." It's certainly not entertainment, and if you are at all interested in living a quality life and running a quality organization, you must put an end to it!

## **Ending Gossip, Rumors, and Innuendo**

When dealing with gossip in school, your chapter and throughout your life, it's critical to explore not only the symptom, but also the root cause of this particular aspect of "violence". And, to discover root causes, it's well to turn the microscope on yourself and begin by answering a number of important questions:

1. What are my true motivations for gossiping?
2. What does gossiping get me?

3. Why am I willingly (consciously or unconsciously) choosing to cause another person harm, hurt, upset, or pain?
4. Is there another way to get this same result without harming another?

Honest and responsible responses to these questions can give you some insights into your personal relationship and help you to put an end to it in your group and throughout your life. Everything counts!

# How to Deal With Rumors

When dealing with rumors, you should not comment or address it unless there's some compelling reason to do so. Additionally, anyone who spreads or engages in a rumor or gossip is as guilty as the person who started the rumor. There's no way to prevent rumors but there are ways to deal with rumors.

## Instructions

- 1 ~ Try to ignore the rumors. It may be difficult to ignore a rumor, but it takes a stronger person to walk away and not acknowledge that you heard the rumor or have comments regarding the rumor.
- 2 ~ Discuss the rumor with the person spreading the rumor if you can't ignore it or if the rumor is false. Ask the person to stop spreading the rumor and where they got it from.
- 3 ~ Stay calm and let the rumor run its course. Rumors don't have a long life and disappear quickly.
- 4 ~ Avoid people who like to gossip and spread rumors. Tell them you are not interested in any gossip or rumors that they have to talk about and then change the subject to something else you would rather talk about. Walk away.
- 5 ~ Be mature. If you hear a rumor, stop it in its tracks. Let it go in one ear and out the other ear. Do not tell another person about the rumor. You should confront the person the rumor is about and let them know about it and then offer to help them overcome it. Track it down to the root.

## TIPS & WARNINGS

- At the first sign of gossip, stop it casually and politely. Be aggressive only if the person continuously persists.
- Always be friendly and polite to everyone.
- Don't get caught up in the gossip or rumors. It is easy to be brought into the line of spreading the violence and destruction along the way.
- Be aware that if someone is willing to talk about your neighbors and friends, they will also talk about you too.