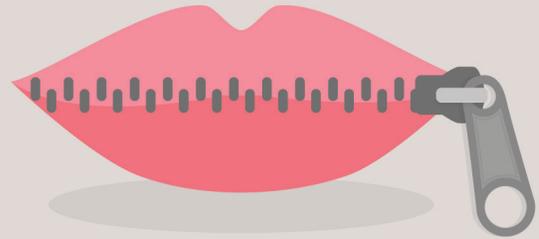


How Gossip at Work Affects You and Others



Did you know that conversations that keep you from focusing on your job can damage your health?

Gossiping at work affects you! Perhaps you are aware that your words have the power to crush, frighten, enrage or annoy other people—but what do those same words do to you? There are three types of stress-inducing words that can break your spirit, keep you from focusing on your job, and even more important, can damage your health. Let's look a bit more at the different types of gossip.

CRITICAL AND JUDGMENTAL

Being critical or judgmental sounds like, "I can't believe she lets her teenager go to the mall without an adult," or "He must think he's so special because he drives that fancy new car." When we make assumptions about another person's choices or behaviors, we run a huge risk. It is rare that we know the whole story and incomplete information is no better than a falsehood. Before you speak a criticism, ask yourself, "Do I know if this information is true? Does repeating it add value to myself or others?"

WHINING AND COMPLAINING

Though whining and complaining isn't always about workplace gossip, it does spread negativity and ultimately affects your professional relationships and reputation. Seeing the bad side of every situation is not just off-putting to others; it can lead to chronic stress in your own life that could affect your sleep, mood and immune system. Better to try to find ways to see the good in others and in situations. Focus on what you can control and stop complaining about what you cannot change.

RUDE AND INCONSIDERATE

Most of us would deny that we are cruel. After all, we don't deliberately spread malicious gossip at work, right? But what about those "harmless" slips that can have the same effect? Snubbing a colleague, name-dropping, rolling the eyes, laughing at the expense of someone else. These may not seem like gossip but they can have the same effect in a workplace. Your words have the power to set a positive tone or a negative tone. Sarcasm, pointed remarks, thoughtless or rude comments will cause feelings of anger and chaos for those around you. Conversely, pleasant remarks, compliments and positive recognition go a long way in lifting the mood of an entire group.

AVOID GETTING CAUGHT UP IN GOSSIP

The way a person conducts themselves at work is an important reflection of their values and work ethic. The best route to success is to avoid discussions with co-workers that might be construed as putting down another person or the organization. Stick to discussions related to getting the work done or to general current events. The best way to avoid gossip if you are present when a group of people begin chatting, is to politely excuse yourself and do not contribute to the conversation.

Avoid becoming a target by conducting yourself in a friendly, professional manner. There is nothing wrong with some occasional, lighthearted banter. However, be sure you know the other person well enough. And if you have made the mistake of offending someone at work, talk to them about it. Take responsibility and work hard to show that you won't be repeating it. Showing integrity and loyalty at work will go a long way to benefiting your success and overall mental wellbeing.

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