Gossip

Note: “The Ugly Truth About Gossip” is gossip information and statistics that should be shared with students if there is time.

1. Get group into a circle and review the purpose and goals of the class meeting.

Say: **Today we are going to discuss how gossip is a type of bullying. Before we start can everyone remember what our four rules are?** Review each rule and what each rule means with your group

* **I will not bully others**
* **I will help others that are being bullied**
* **I will include students that are left out**
* **I will tell an adult when I know someone is being bullied**

1. Say: **Now we are going to talk gossip a type of bullying.**

**Background**

There is usually no shortage of gossip among young people – in school and elsewhere. Gossip is no stranger to many age groups, of course. It has power, and it can bully, hurt, control, backfire, boomerang, become more and more distorted, and cast a negative shadow on both the gossiper and the person who is gossiped about.

Gossip has been called the female counterpart to male aggression. It is more difficult to know who is the aggressor is when gossip is the weapon than when the first strike is shoving or hitting. In recent years, rumor-spreading has been listed as one kind of bullying. Some might argue that gossip is even crueler than physical bullying. Some might also argue credibly that men and boys gossip more than women and girls do. There will be plenty to discuss here.

**Objective**

\*Group members consider the role gossip plays in adolescent conversation.

\*They consider how gossip affects their lives and the lives of others.

\*They consider how much they participate in gossip themselves.

**Suggestions**

1. Ask the group to **define gossip**. Ask them whether it is a positive or negative force in society generally and in their lives. Steer the discussion toward gossip as related to conversation and relationships.

2**. Invite discussion about their experiences with gossip**. **Ask questions these below, perhaps in a polling manner (asking for raised hands), and encourage group members to elaborate when appropriate—discreetly, of course:**

-Have you ever been hurt by gossip?

-Have you ever known of someone else being hurt by gossip?

-Have you ever passed along some gossip and then found out it wasn’t true? What, if anything, did you do about it?

- Do you think you are a gossip?

-Do your peers think of you as a gossip?

-Do you knowingly add dramatic details to gossip when passing it on?

-How common is gossip?

-Who do you think gossips more—boys or girls?

-Do you know someone who refuses to gossip, or who seems not to be excited by it?

-Have you ever told someone that you didn’t want to hear his or her gossip?

-Are you able not to pass gossip along when you have heard something interesting?

-How do you usually respond to an invitation to hear some gossip?

-How often do you think gossip is actually true?

-Does your family gossip a lot?

-Does your group of friends gossip a lot?

-What do gossips get out of gossiping? (Possibilities: A sense of power, control, a feeling of belonging, a chance to hurt someone.)

-How would you rank these in importance in your social world:

• talking about things (possessions, purchases, clothing, houses, cars, hair, etc.)

•talking about people (who likes whom, friends and acquaintances, movie and music stars, people in the news, etc.)

•talking about ideas (thoughts about life, politics, meaning, creative ways to do things, insights about self and others, etc.)

-How would you rank these same items in terms of conversation quality?

Gossip Activities Choose one or Both

Paper Ball Gossip

1. **Have each students write a piece of gossip on notebook paper** (you can use ½ sheets). Make sure the gossip is not person specific. **Once the gossip is on the paper have each student crumble their paper into a ball**. (you may want to have a small paper fight) **Once students have traded rumor balls have them try to flatten out each paper ball. TRY TO GET OUT EVERY WRINKLE.**

**Discussion: “let’s say each wrinkle/mark is a hurtful word lie or a piece of gossip. Look at all the marks that are left on the paper. No matter how hard you try you CANNOT remove the mark that was left after you spread gossip. The same thing is true with words. Hurtful words cannot be taken back. Even if you apologize, those involved will never totally forget.**

Telephone

1. Play telephone- in your circle whisper “gossip” (make sure it’s silly and not person specific) into the ear of the person next to you. Important you cannot repeat the “gossip”. Repeat until everyone has heard the “gossip”. The last person should share the “gossip” with the group.

**Discussion-talk about how each person may have heard different things. Also discuss how much of the gossip that students hear may be untrue. Stress they should be the ONE that stops the line of gossip**

1. Thank the students again for participating in the class discussion and encourage them to follow our 4 school rules.

**The Ugly Truth about Gossip….**

retrieved from the following website:

**http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/fall04/fernandez/index.html**

**~Gossip- A Definition**

Dictionary.com(1) offers four definitions for gossip that will be referenced throughout this site:

gossip (n)

1. rumor or talk of a personal, sensational or intimate nature

2. a person who habitually spreads intimate or private rumors or facts

3. trivial, chatty talk or writing

**~Things to keep in mind:**

* The definition for gossip includes both oral communication and written communication.
* The definition refers to gossip as both trivial and intimate.
* Gossip is identified as both rumors and facts.

**~Redefining Gossip**

Combining these definitions, gossip will be used as:

***trivial writing or talk of an intimate nature about someone else, in either rumors or facts.***

**~The On-going Debate**

Gossip and news are often mistaken one for the other. We could look at the different definitions for each of these words to see exactly what the difference between them is, or we could ask the experts.

Ethicist, Randy Cohen announced in a radio broadcast on National Public Radio what he thought the main differences were between gossip and news.

According to Cohen, since gossip, like news, can be factual, ethics and intentions really count when determining if the information you are spreading is considered gossip or news. Was the information likely to do harm?- probably gossip. Or was it an attempt to help?- probably news.

Cohen eagerly supported the act of gossip, saying that it is an ethical obligation to discuss our friends completely and prudently.

**~The Findings**

Now that we are pretty certain that most of us are gossiping, and we're clear on whether or not we're spreading information or participating in "idle chat," the question is- exactly *who* is perpetuating the cycle of gossip?

It was reported by a Social Issues Research Center that gossip accounts for 55% of men's conversation time and 67% of women's, a much smaller gap between the two sexes than usually thought.

**~Are We Really that different?**

So why all of the assumptions that women gossip more than men? Is it because women aren't as discreet about it? Or that they have a wider range of tone inflection so it's more obvious? Some would argue that men discuss subjects considered more important, including politics. As one psychologist wrote, "It is said that women gossip more than men do. Perhaps they only do it better. Men just call it "networking. Men are much more interested in who is up and who is down. Women tend to gossip more about who's in and who has merit. "

But others would argue that we are all guilty of using gossip as a vital method of communication. Some would even say that we thrive on the juicy tidbits that we eagerly wait to hear and share. Whatever the reason, we all seem to be doing it, and loving every minute of it.