

# Words

They sing.

They hurt.

They teach

They sanctify

- They were man's first, immeasurable feat of magic. They liberated us from ignorance and our barbarous past."

Leo Rosten

# Goals for today

- Identify what gossip is
- How this type of communication is destructive
- Results of gossip
- Types of gossip
- Why people gossip
- Solutions & strategies to deal with gossip
- We will discuss situations in small groups
- Creating boundaries
- Conclusion

What kind of work place would  
you like to work in?

How do you define gossip?

# NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

- To create a climate of trust and candor that will enable staff to speak and act in the best interests of children, families and the field of early childhood care and education
- Moral obligation to create this environment

# Gossip Definition

(Holly Elissa Bruno, MA,JD [hollyelissabruno@comcast.net](mailto:hollyelissabruno@comcast.net) )

- Gossip is destructive communication about a person who is not present with the intention of harming the other's reputation. Gossip is **neither** :
  1. Sharing accurate, necessary information;nor
  2. Holding an opinion about another person

# What is destructive communication?

- Person who puts their own agenda before the centers agenda
  - Complain and vent about personal & professional lives
- Everything is personal
  - She doesn't like me so she made me clean up the mess
- Focus on unnecessary information
  - What if she comes in late or other future event that hasn't happened

# Results of destructive communication

- Makes it hard for center to accomplish goals
- Makes it hard to have ethical conduct by other employees
- Reinforces this is an unprofessional business
- Because of word of mouth from an unhappy employee others may not want to apply to work at your center
- No one wants to work with a gossiper

# 7 Types of gossip

(Julie Bartkus [www.MotivateTeachers.com](http://www.MotivateTeachers.com))

## 1. Type one: Passing along information about others

- When changing rooms meet up with another employee and say “Don’t tell her I told you but she feels your not doing your job, so she is watching you
- Did you see she is wearing thong underwear
- Staff to parent “Johnny always acts like a bully”
- Staff to staff “Amanda is a real pain, I am so sorry you get her next year (Developing a bad reputation for a child)

# Gossip Type Two

2. Complaining about policies, procedures, bosses,....
  - “That’s not my job, what does she do?”
  - “I said I would substitute for (name) but now I am covering (name)”
  - “I do all the work and the art projects!”

# Gossip Type Three

## 3. Venting about mistreatment

- I can't believe she was mad at me after I cleaned all the mats
- I don't want to work with that person because....
- She always makes me clean the room and she does nothing.

The person gossiping is always the victim

# Gossip Type Four

## 4. Blaming others

- My name wasn't on the cleaning list so I didn't know to do it (name on list is out sick), so its not my fault I didn't do it
- I didn't do it that way in this class because that's not how it was done in my last class, so its not my fault I did it wrong

# Gossip Type Five

## 5. Sharing too much personal information

- How can she talk about my fiancé that way!
- If you don't want it to get around to others don't tell ANYONE at work

# Gossip Type Six

## 6. Sarcastic side remarks

- At a staff meeting
  - Whispers
  - Makes a gesture
  - Passes a note
  - Many types of body language

# Gossip Type Seven

## 7 Celebrity gossip

- Stars “Everybody loves Raymond”
- “Did you hear Amy’s going to be a grandma”
- “Wow that parent is hot!”

# Why do people gossip....

- An outmoded way to indirectly gain and maintain power, at the expense of community: “Some women cannot bear to experience themselves as lesser lights; in order to shine more brightly, they must rid the stage of greater lights” (Chesler, 2001, p. 465).

# Why do people gossip...

## 1. Venting-letting off steam

- Destructive because it goes to the wrong people at the wrong time in the wrong place
  - Example: on the playground an employee tells another coworker not the person who they are mad at
- Constructive venting focuses on a solution

# Why people gossip .....

## 2. Lack of skill

- Staff do not have conflict resolution skills, or know how to do direct and open communication
- Staff don't have listening skills
- Conflict avoidant

## 3. Negative attitude

## 4. Bored

## 5. Find out information- get the scoop

# The fact is...

- 80% of child care leaders are conflict-avoidant; we fear direct confrontation (Bruno and Copeland(1999))

# Solutions to Gossip

- If no immediate solution staff member can:
  - Journal
  - Attend support groups like counseling centers, corporate care works, - give your staff contacts of organizations they can use
  - Professional therapy
  - Impartial person – husband, neighbor,...someone not at work
  - Toilet paper

# Strategies to help directors stop the gossip chain

- Remember your priorities
  - What works, not who is right or wrong
  - Health and education of the children
  - The environment you work in
- Help staff focus on them self – how can you do the best job
- Be assertive
- Hold your head high- don't make yourself worth depend on others

# 5 Strategies you can teach to break the gossip chain

Teach them to :

1. Be assertive – talk directly to the person who you have the issue with
2. Change the subject
3. Focus on how you can help them improve or point out the positive in the person
4. Walk away
5. Redirect

# Enforcing standards of behavior

- Name the inappropriate behavior; be concrete and specific
- State what is expected
- Require the staff members to take responsibility for resolving the problem
- Come up with a workable plan
- Set a date for follow-up and evaluation

# What is expected

- I,----, an employee of ----agree to promptly raise any issue I have with another staff member directly. I agree to work directly with my colleague to find a mutually agreeable solution that builds on both of our strengths. If, after a good faith effort, the conflict remains unresolved, I will request a meeting with my director and my colleague to resolve the conflict. I agree to take to that meeting at least two possible solutions that will honor both persons' as well as the organizations needs. I agree neither to gossip about, nor hold back from, resolving an issue that affect the quality of care and education. I will participate fully in staff development sessions on problem-solving techniques
- \_\_\_\_\_Signature \_\_\_\_\_Date

# 5 minute table discussions

- Look at the situation at your table and discuss:
  1. Destructive impact on the environment
  2. What type of gossip is it
  3. How would you handle this situation

# Situations

- All through out the month the director hears gossip and complaining about a certain issue. So she figures she'll address the complaints at the next staff meeting. The issue is addressed and the director offers to talk about it and clear the air but no one says anything: The room is filled with an uncomfortable silence as everyone looks around the room. The issue doesn't get resolved and the gossip continues

# List

1. Destructive impact on the environment
2. What type of gossip is it:
  1. Passing along info about others
  2. Sarcastic
  3. Celebrity
  4. Personal information
  5. Blaming
  6. Venting
  7. Complaining about policies or procedures
3. How would you handle this situation

How does workplace gossip impact  
you?

# Situation

- A teacher asked a parent several times to bring in an extra set of dry clothes for her child. The parent doesn't comply and the issue is not resolved. The teacher feels negative and tells her co-worker how horrible those parents are.

# List

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  6. Venting
  7. Complaining about policies or procedures
3. How would you handle this situation

How does gossip impact individual people?

# Create Boundaries

- Ask employee “Is this something I/you can work out on my/your own?”
- Offer to talk to other person with you as the facilitator. Review what might be discussed and how to say it.
- Start the formal procedure of discipline when it happens and note how it effects the environment

# Create Boundaries cont.

- If you notice a teacher gossiping with a parent interrupt and then have a one on one meeting later
- Have a written action plan

# In conclusion

- Remember you want a great place to work and so does your staff!!!!
- Understand gossip whys and types so you can better deal with the situation
- Have strategies ready to deal with gossip
- Create boundaries
- **DON'T LOOK THE OTHER WAY!**

# In conclusion

## How Gossip Hurts

- Lowers their self-confidence
- Keeps their focus on others
- Makes them feel better only because they're putting someone else down instead of making improvements in their life
- Keeps their thoughts drenched in negativity
- Can cost you, them, or their friends their job

# Conclusion

## **How Gossip Hurts others**

- Lowers others' self-image
- Cuts off communication
- Prevents your school from working together for a common objective
- Creates an atmosphere of tension frustration and anxiety
- This will not be fixed in a day, it is an ongoing solution

# Break the Gossip Chain

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