



Avoiding Gossip and Rumors

Materials:

- Worksheet

Brainstorm: Why do you think we gossip? Accept responses and write them on the board.

Discuss: I'm sure that in the past, your teachers have talked about gossip and often, when we talk about gossip we pretty much discuss it as a bad thing. But psychologist, Dr. Megan Robbins, at the University of California, Riverside says "It's just social information and we learn a lot about the social world around us when we gossip." Gossiping is a social skill but there are good and bad gossipers. The difference is in how the gossip uses the information - do they use it in a responsible way? Are they trying to help or hurt someone? A good question to ask yourself, if you're trying to determine whether someone is a good or bad gossip, is whether you'd tell them something private about yourself. If the answer is yes, then they're good gossip. If the answer is no, then they're bad gossip. It's about trusting someone to use the information that they get in a responsible way.

Dive in! So, how do you make sure that you're a good gossip? One way to make sure you're a good gossip is to use a strategy to determine if information that we hear is something that we should pass on or not. It's called the THINK strategy and you should THINK before you speak.

- Is it True?
- Is it Helpful?
- Is it Important?
- Is it Necessary?
- Is it Kind?

If the information doesn't meet all 5 criteria, then you just don't pass it on.

Let's try an example. You have been invited to a party but one of your friends has not and you don't think they know about it. Should you tell them? Let's apply the THINK strategy

Is it true? - Yes, there is a party and your friend has not been invited.

Is it helpful? - How will your friend be helped if you tell them?

Is it important? - The party isn't really important.



High School

Is it necessary? - It isn't necessary for your friend to know or be invited to the party

Is it kind? - Your friend will be hurt to know that they haven't been invited. This example is a bit tricky, but in the end, you can answer a couple of the questions with a no answer. So you may decide not to tell your friend about the party.

Activity: Hand out the worksheet. Students can complete the activity individually or in pairs. When they are finished, review their answers and address any conflicting responses.

Reflect: If gossip is a social skill what types of information am I learning about my social group? How is this information helpful to me? What is my responsibility when friends share private information with me? What do I expect from them?

Extend and Enrich

The Good In Gossip/Sydney Hardern/TEDxYouth@Dayton <https://youtu.be/2148SA97yLQ>

From listening to gossip, provide a list of dos and don'ts for your friend group.

Professional Development

We often hear a lot of gossip in the staff room. In thinking about that sort of gossip, what have I learned about my colleagues or our students that has helped me to do my job better- Good gossip.

In thinking about that sort of gossip, what have I learned about my colleagues or our students that has gotten in the way of my job - Bad gossip.