

Chapter 8 – Coping with Gossip and Social Turmoil

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To teens, gossip is considered hard evidence and they are acutely aware of the “imaginary audience.” Gossip gets altered and embellished as it spreads, as is illustrated in the telephone game where a statement is whispered in one student’s ear and the statement gets whispered to all students one at a time. By the end, the statement is generally not even the same topic as the original statement.



3 Key Skills:

- 1 – Making good friend choices.
- 2 – Negotiating conflict.
- 3 – Making responsible, healthy, ethical choices.

Relational aggression:

- ◆ Destroys self-confidence and self-esteem.
- ◆ It can lead to substance abuse, eating disorders, and thoughts of self-harm.

React and Respond

Important steps in dealing with gossip:

- ◆ Listen!
- ◆ Validate the target’s emotions and recognize the painfulness.
- ◆ Don’t criticize or accuse the victim of gossip.
- ◆ Discuss problem-solving.

Don’t Spread Meanness. Instead,

- ◆ “That doesn’t sound right.”
- ◆ Ask questions about the gossip.
- ◆ Refuse to engage in gossip.

Potential Teen Mental Health.

- ◆ Joylessness.
- ◆ Suicide ideation and completion.
- ◆ Increase in social isolation.

Conversation Starters:

- ◆ When you’re ready to talk, I’m here to listen.
- ◆ I’m so sorry this happened.
- ◆ I can understand why you’re upset.
- ◆ Is there anything you’d like to try that might improve the situation?
- ◆ How would you handle the situation?
- ◆ If someone tried to gossip to you, how would you change the topic?

Points to Remember:

- ◆ Identify your trusted adult.
- ◆ Targets of gossip often develop resiliency.
- ◆ Gossip reveals more about the gossiper than the target.
- ◆ Look at gossip objectively.
- ◆ Consider therapy.

Be Proactive

Proactive Lesson on Empathy and Kindness:

- ◆ Students squeeze toothpaste from small tubes.
- ◆ Tell students to put the toothpaste back in the tube.
- ◆ Once we say hurtful words, we cannot take them back.



How To Be Proactive:

- ◆ Teach empathy.
- ◆ Go online with your child to look at appropriate/inappropriate comments to teach them.
- ◆ Remind child to not friend anyone they don’t know.
- ◆ Do not post inappropriate pictures.
- ◆ Seek adult help.
- ◆ Block or unfollow/unfriend.
- ◆ Discourage oversharing.
- ◆ Spot check your child’s online life.
- ◆ Words online are never truly