



Minnesota Women of Today

Leadership Toolbox – Positive Gossip Activity

Gossip is something we all do. Most gossip involves sharing who did what, how, with whom. Most, if not everyone, has dealt with the negative aspects of gossip. Another function of gossip is to get or give advice about how to navigate a social situation. Gossip does not always involve an absent third person. It is possible to gossip about oneself. For example, a person might strategically share information about oneself to bolster one's significance or influence. This Positive Gossip activity is a 15-minute communication exercise that allows participants to reflect on their experiences together and positively gossip about each other.



It typically works best at the end of an event or meeting. You can mention at the start of the event that you will do this exercise at the end. This may make the participants more aware of positive traits of other people which will make the exercise more effective and the group atmosphere throughout even more positive. Begin with reading the Introduction to the group and share the THINK Rule. Together we can start turning around the damaging patterns of negative gossip.

Introduction

Did you know negative gossip can suppress personal performance, innovation, and collaboration. It leads to discontent and creates rifts between individuals and teams.

Creating a climate of appreciative personal feedback can dramatically boost performance for individuals and groups. It is possible to begin turning a vicious self-reinforcing cycle of negative gossip into a virtuous self-reinforcing cycle of positive feedback.

Positive Gossip is an antidote for discontent and indifference that spreads casually from person to person. Positive gossip behavior may include praising the absent individuals, providing support for the person, and/or defending that person in their absence. Say something positive about the person being attacked. Voicing something complimentary about the person will help take the wind out of the rumor's sails. It can also be a tactful way to discourage the sharing of gossip in general.

The THINK Rule

Before talking about others remember the Think Rule. Ask yourself, is it:
T rue, **H**elpful, **I**nspiring, **N**ecessary, and **K**ind.

Opportunities to share positive examples are abundant! When looking for that positive touch ask yourself, "What was accomplished?", "How was it done?", "Why does it matter?"

Group Activities

The goal of these activities is to not only practice positive gossip but see and discuss the results. Select one of the two activities to perform at your event.

Activity A: This activity requires one facilitator and two groups. Facilitator: Divide members into two groups. And direct activity as follows.

- Group One: One at a time, each member of the group will say something you appreciate about a different member of Group Two. Do your best to not repeat answers. Keep answers short, one sentence.
- Group Two: One at a time, each member of the group will say a skill they admire about a member of Group One. Do your best to not repeat answers. Keep answers short, one sentence.
- Group Discussion: How did this activity make you feel? Have you ever been hurt by gossip? How will your approach to gossip change going forward?
- Finish the activity by reading the Change the Climate section.

Activity B: This activity requires one facilitator and groups of three. Facilitator: Divide members into groups of three. If needed, groups of four. Direct activity as follows.

- Two of the three members of each group will positively gossip about what they think the other one did well during the meeting/event or what they generally liked about them. Each person should come up with two different things. It is important to be sincere in your words. The person receiving the positive gossip should be listening and remembering what was said about them. Continue this until all members of the group have had an opportunity to be gossiped about.
- Return to a large group and create a circle. One at a time, each person will share one thing that was said about them. Starting with an "I" Statement. Examples: "I am a good listener", "I am a useful member of the team.", "I am kindhearted."
- Once everyone has had a turn, finish the activity by reading the Change the Climate section and discussing ways you can bring more positivity into your chapter, meeting, event, district, etc.

Change the Climate

Gossip, whether it is negative or positive, serves several purposes including defining our social status within our group, assessing and managing reputations, and influencing others. As individuals and as an organization, we have the ability to inspire and lift others up using simple gossip. Start shifting a climate of generalized negativity to a culture of "things may get better around here" by simply making an effort to focus on the positive accomplishments of others.

- A member wants to take on a new challenge. Tell others why the person deserved the opportunity. "It's a perfect fit for her. She's got amazing _____ skills."
- Interject a negative conversation about someone with a positive statement.
- Recognize those who made a project or event possible in your report or newsletter.
- At a meeting, have everyone share something positive they observed or appreciated about a different member that week/month.
- Create a "spotlight" wall to recognize members', achievements, and/or contributions.