

FACILITATED SOLUTIONS
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Facilitation Fridays

Putting the Gag on Office Gossip

David Falk, Sandy Koop Harder, Dave Dyck

Starting at 10:30 am (CDT)

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GOSSIP

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- Gossip: An exchange of negative information between two or more people about someone who isn't present.
- Rumour: An exchange between two or more people of unverified information (beliefs) about a topic.

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Common Features

- In the 1947 study, *Psychology of Rumor*, Gordon Allport and Joseph Postman concluded that, "as rumor travels it [...] grows shorter, more concise, more easily grasped and told."
- *Leveling*
- *Sharpening -> Exaggeration*
- *Assimilation*

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Interaction Cycle



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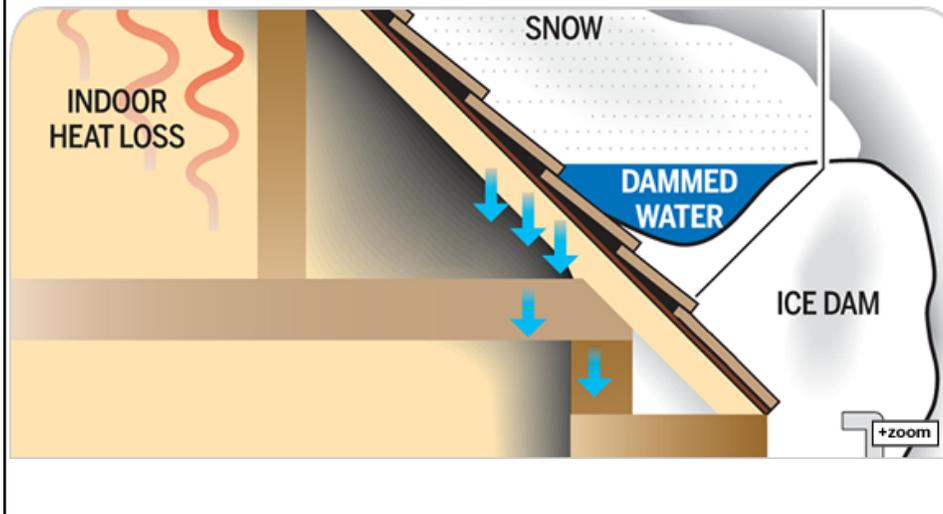
4 Types of Gossip

- Filling in the missing info
 - Pipe Dream
 - Fear Fueled
- Conflict Avoidance
- In/out (Othering) Reinforcing established norms, stories & perceptions
- Strategic/Manipulative (wedge)

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Type 1. Filling in the Missing Info

Info Seepage when the Information Flow is Dammed



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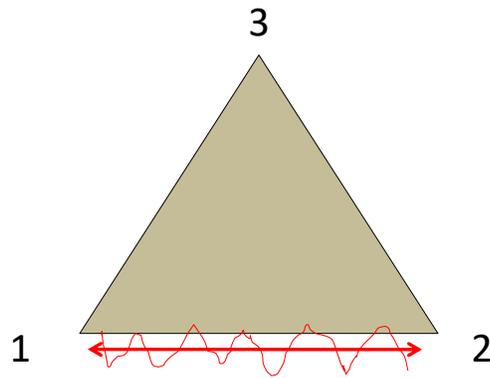
Missing Information

- In the absence of information, we make stuff up. We do it all the time, and then we believe it to be true! Our brain won't live with a void so it fills in the blanks. Most of what we make up is negative, and usually worse than the truth. Just listen to your internal dialog the next time the boss calls you into her office and you don't know what for.

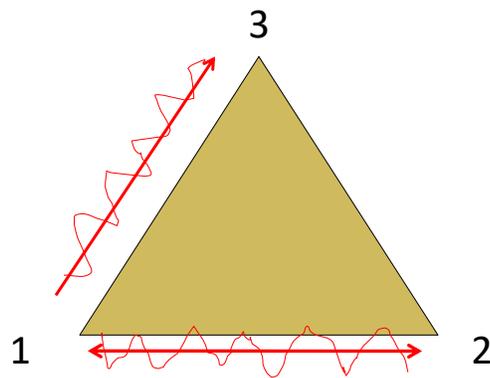
– **Holly Green Forbes 2012*

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Type 2: Conflict Avoidance

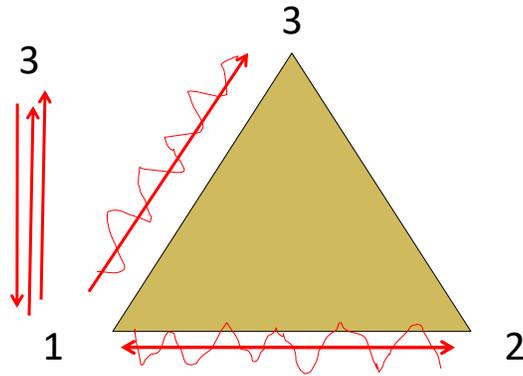


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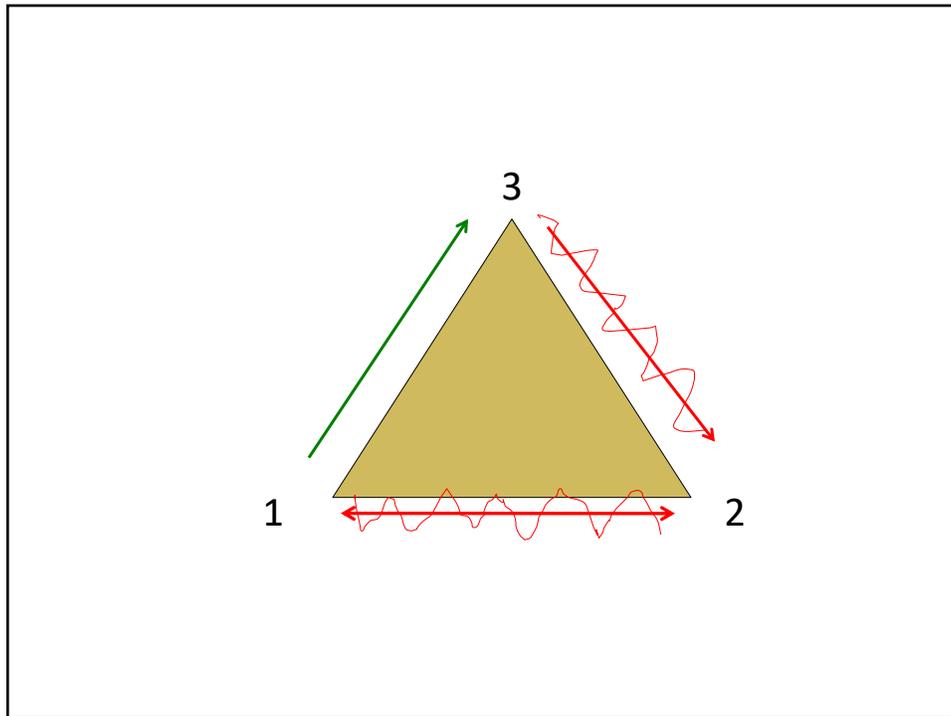
Avoidance -> Gossip



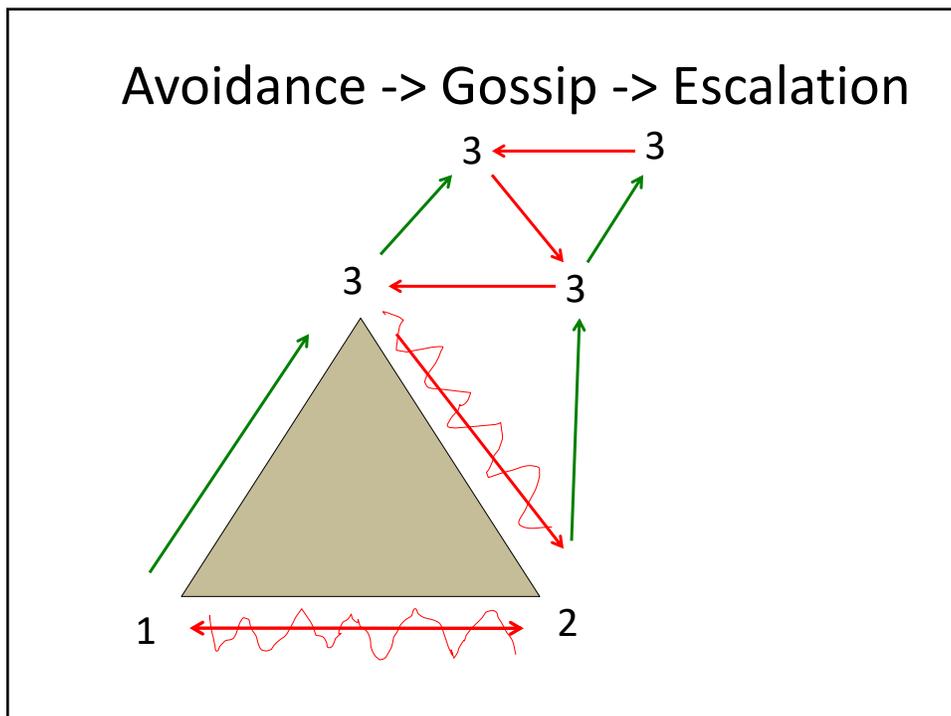
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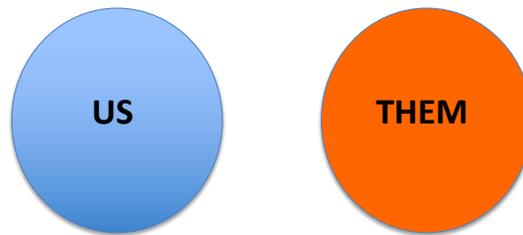


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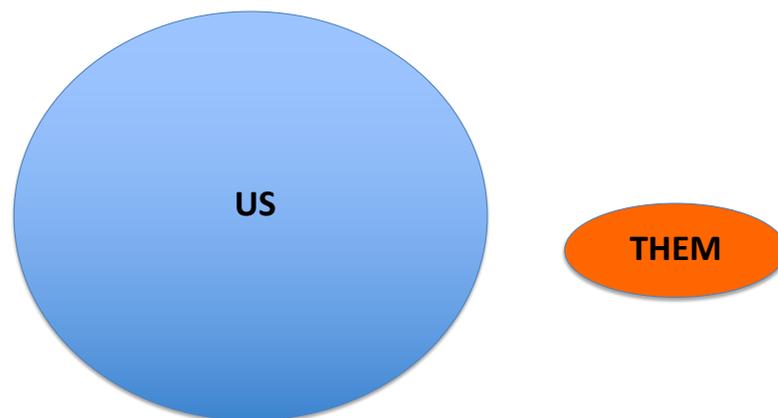
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Type 3: In/Out (Othering)

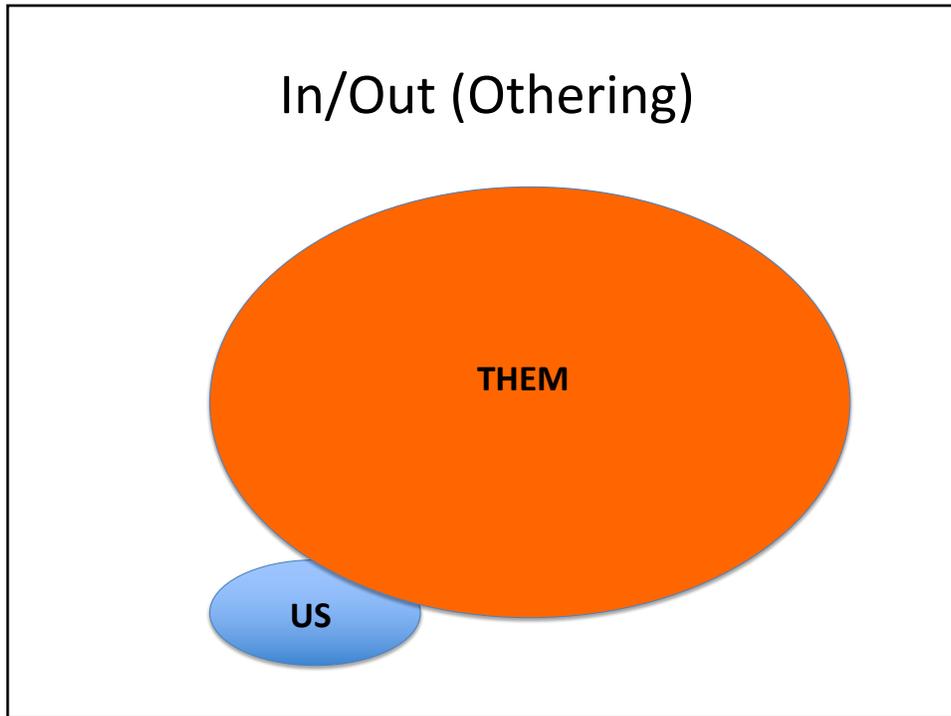


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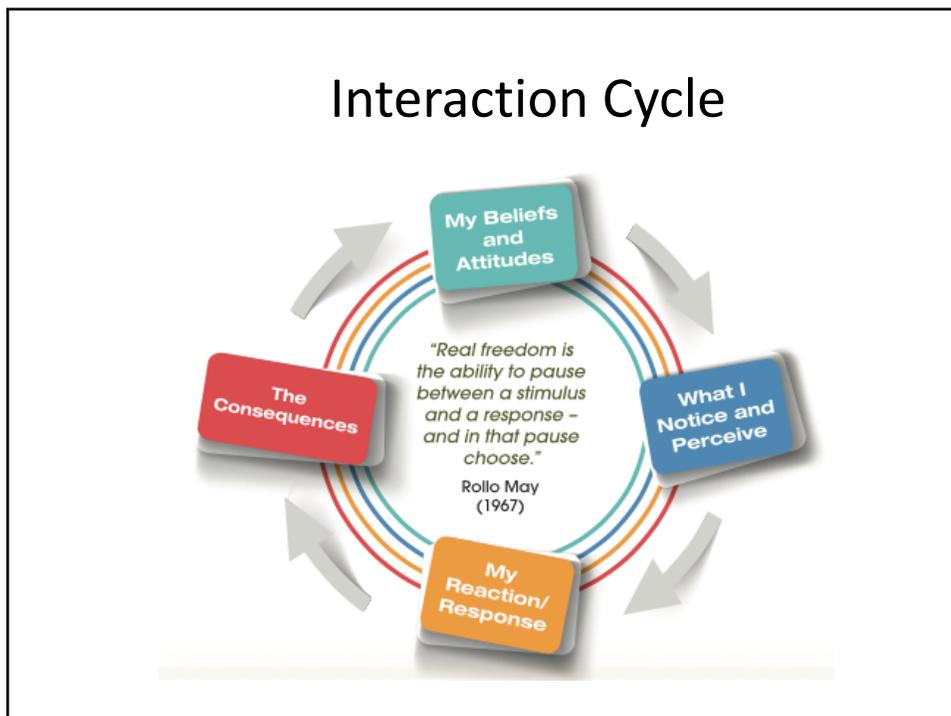
In/Out (Othering)



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Confirmation Bias

- Confirmation bias, also called myside bias, is the tendency to search for, interpret, or recall information in a way that confirms one's beliefs or hypotheses
- The effect is stronger for emotionally charged issues and for deeply entrenched beliefs

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Type 4: Strategic / Wedge



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What do we gain from Gossip?

- Information – in the loop
- Connections closeness alliances
- Establishing/Maintaining norms
- Info (dirt) on our “Competition” can weaken their standing and enhance our position
- Shapes the pecking order
- Sense of control

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What is the cost of Gossip?

- Wasted time
- Hurt feelings and reputations
- Loss of trust
- Drop in morale
- Turnover
- Conflict escalation
- Heightened fear or expectations
- Absenteeism & Health costs

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Why? Gossip's Underling Needs



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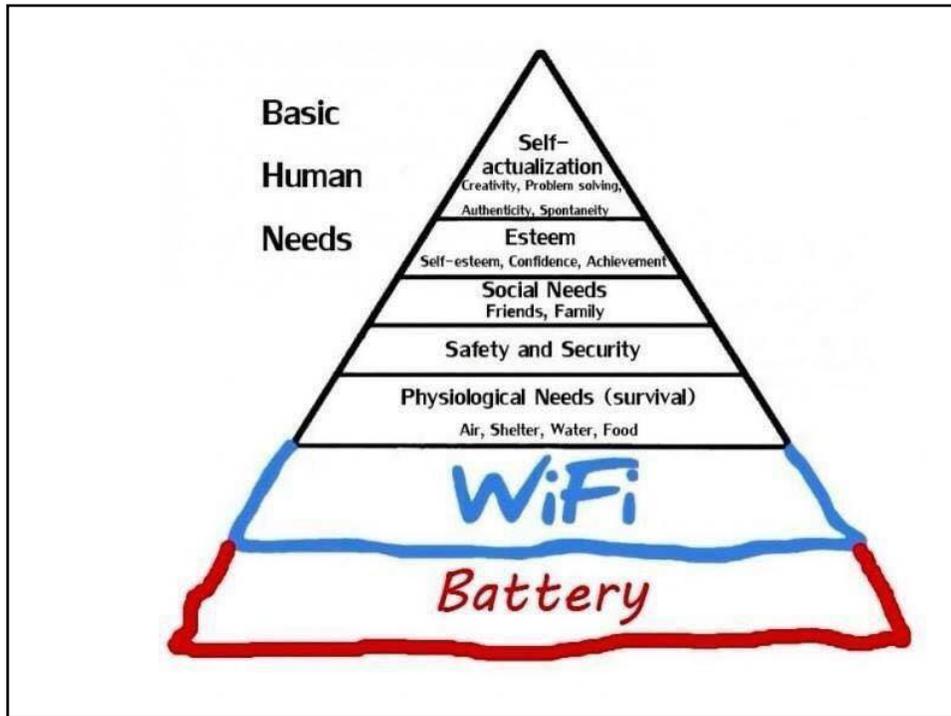


Abraham
Maslow

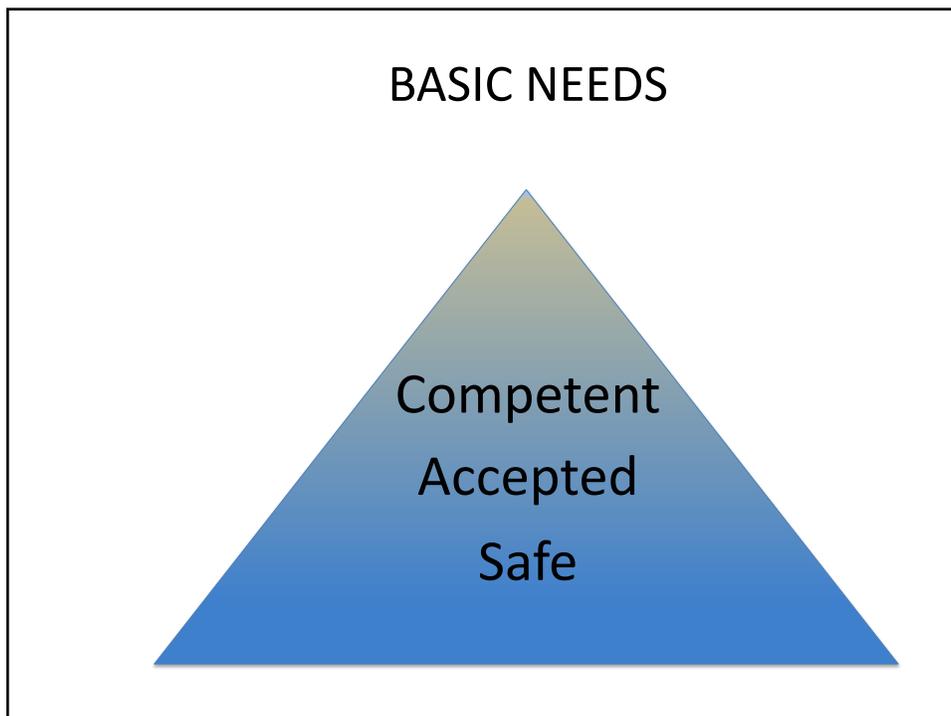
1908-1970

The father of humanistic
psychology and creator
of Maslow's Hierarchy
of Needs.

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How to STOP Gossip?



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S.T.O.P. Gossip

No matter what roles we may play we all have responsibilities to stop gossip.

S. Source

T. Target

O. Observer

P. Person with Authority

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S. What you can do as The **SOURCE**



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You spot it... You got it



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Exposure Filter

Ask yourself:

- Would I repeat this gossip directly to the person it's about?
- Would I want to be quoted on TV, in the papers, online or in the company newsletter?

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Personal (or Corporate) Value Filter

- Would I encourage my children to engage in the behavior of gossip?
- Would I engage in it if it were about a relative or personal friend?
- Does gossiping match my commitments to my self and others?
- Is this behaviour consistent of what I would expect (hope for) of others at work?

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Consider how to obtain the potential gains (meet needs) without Gossip?

- Information – in the loop
- Connections closeness alliances
- Establishing/maintaining norms
- Can weaken our “competition’s” standing/enhance our own standing

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Own Your 100%

- Take responsibility for your role in the positive and negative occurrences in your life (*Sam Chapman*)
 - *If you feel like you are out of the loop...*
 - *If you have tension/conflict with others...*
 - *If you hate your job...*
 - *If your life / work balance is off*

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Conscious Complaining

Karla McLaren *The Language of Emotions* (2010)

- In private
- Permission your self to complain
- Let it rip
- Give thanks
- End ritual
- Go do something fun



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Empathy / Compassion

- We need to communicate online with compassion, consume news with compassion and click with compassion. Just imagine walking a mile in someone else's headline"
– Monica Lewinsky (TED talk March 2015)

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T. What you can do As the **TARGET**



"Sticks and Stones..."

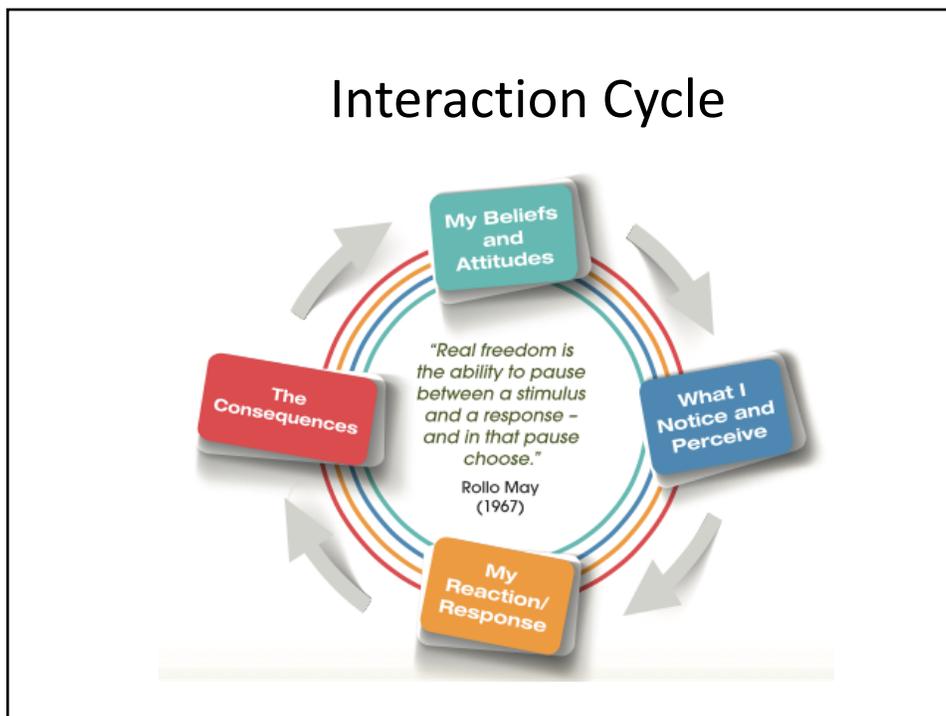
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The **TARGET'S** Dilemma

"Despite denying all the gossip and swearing a rumor isn't true, co-workers and supervisors can still remain suspicious of a gossip victim because, well, what else are they going to say in their defense?"

Matt Shollenberger, a licensed counselor from West Chester, Pennsylvania

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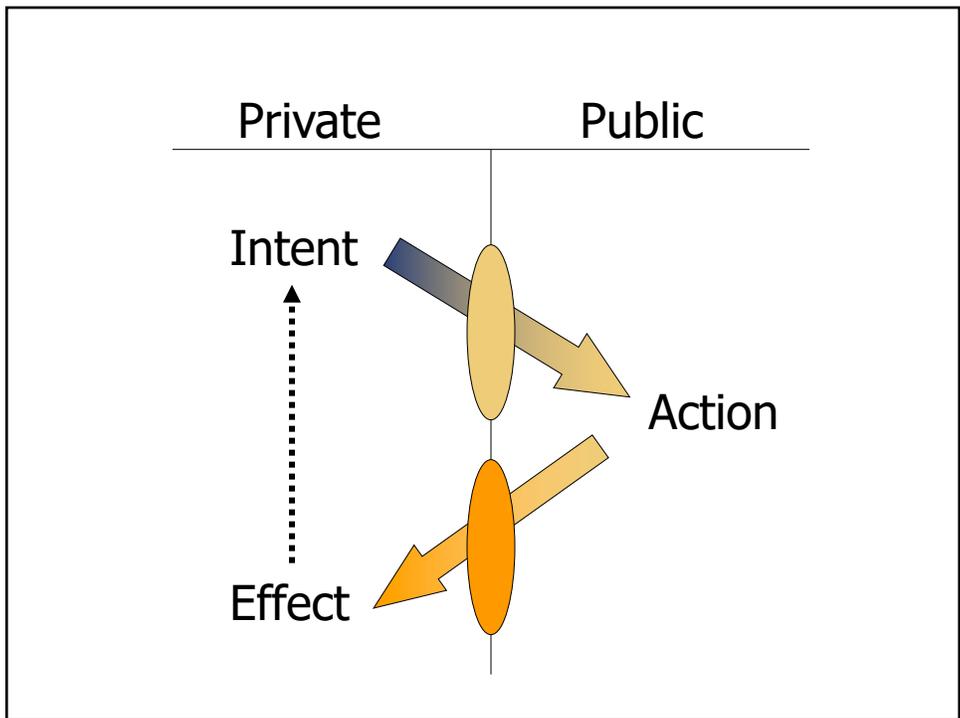


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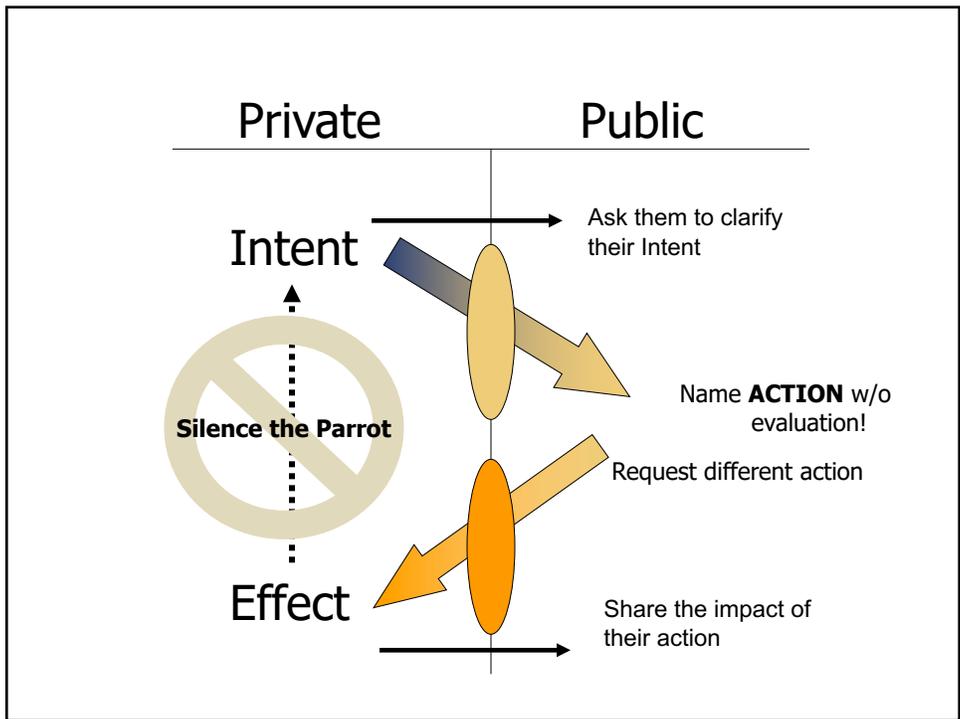
As the Target

- For Gossip that reinforcing established stories/perceptions
 - Prove them wrong!
 - Act deliberately and consistently in ways that do not reinforce the bias
- Diplomatically confront!
- Report/Request help.

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O. What you can do as the **OBSERVER**



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Start Small

- Remove gossip from your work life, and no longer listen to or participate in negative conversation about someone who is not in earshot. Just by making this small step you can transform your work life.

Sam Chapman "The No-Gossip Zone"

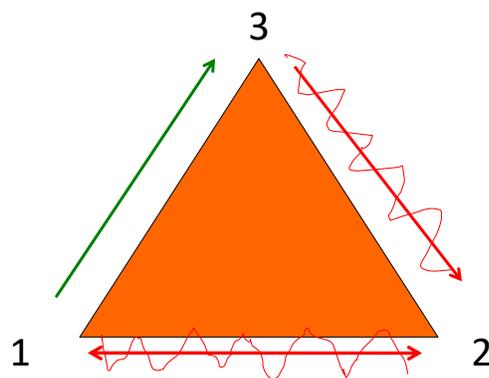
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Observer (listener)

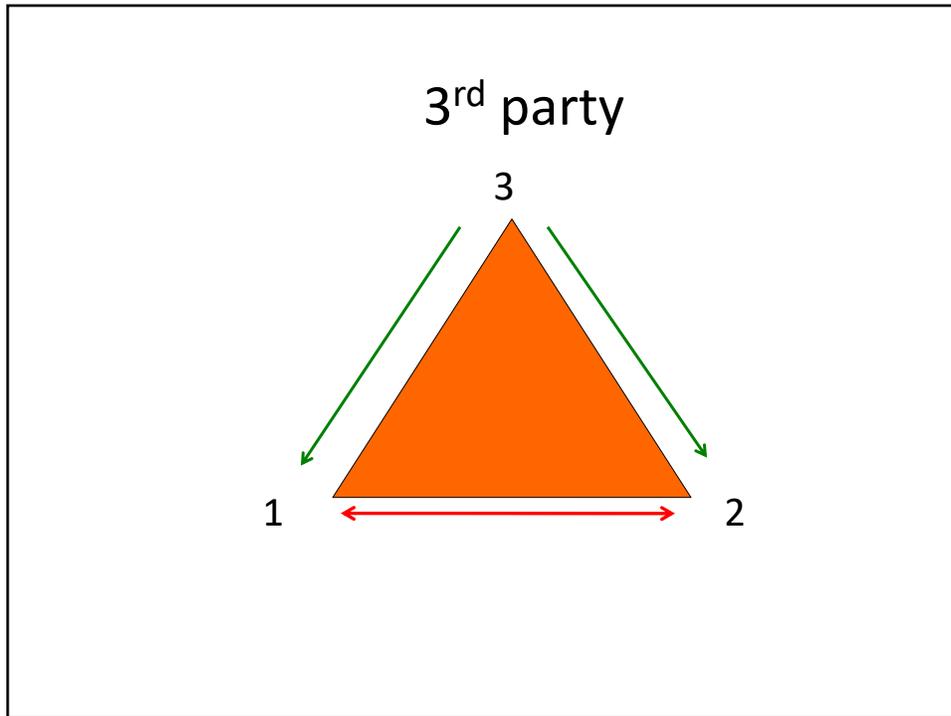
- Don't take the bait
- Coach complainer to address the situation
- Diplomatically voice objection,
- Shift the conversation
- Changing the subject
- Disengage the topic
- Disengage the conversation (walk away)
- Inform the Source that you will report it to the Target and expect them to address it

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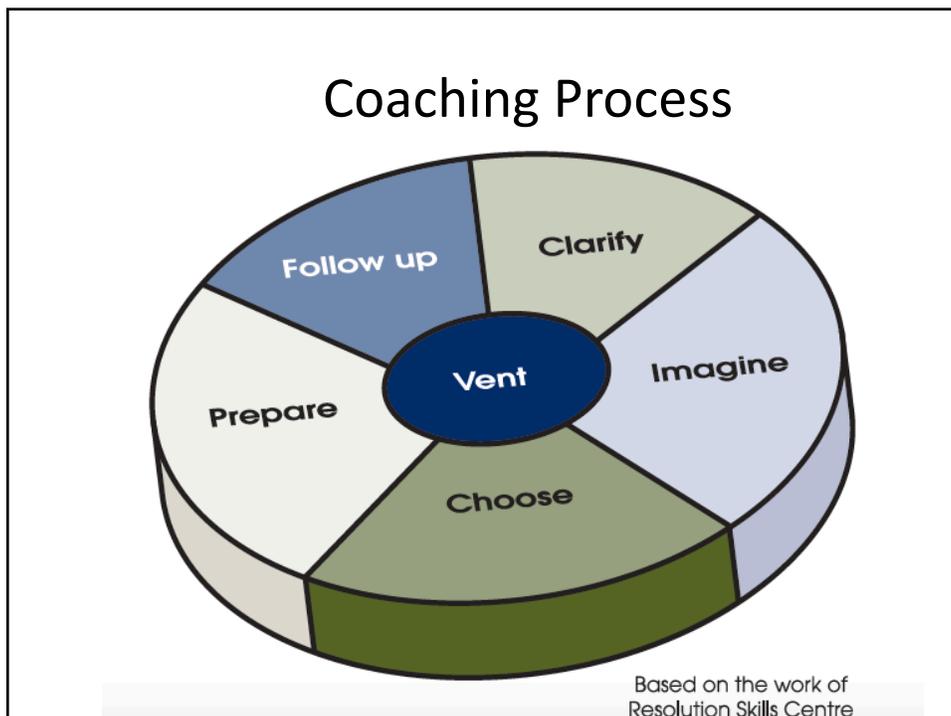
Being a 3rd party



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Ways to Shift the Conversation

- "I feel uncomfortable talking about X when she is not in the room. Let's wait until she can be with us to continue this discussion."
- "I don't think it is appropriate to discuss Y in this way. He isn't here to give us his side of the story and it isn't our place to be making up a story for him."
- "To be honest, I dislike hearing about another person in this way"
- "Would you be talking like this if Z were here?"

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P. What you can do as the **PERSON** with Authority



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The PERSON with Authority can

PREVENTION

Clear consistent communication

Flood with Facts

Transparency (intent)

Clarify your values & expectations

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Make your values clear

Vision: Give a state of the union speech

Values: Reiterate your company's culture and values and be very clear about what will and won't be tolerated

Expectations: Establish clear “performance” and “behavioural” expectations

And most importantly, **LIVE IT!**

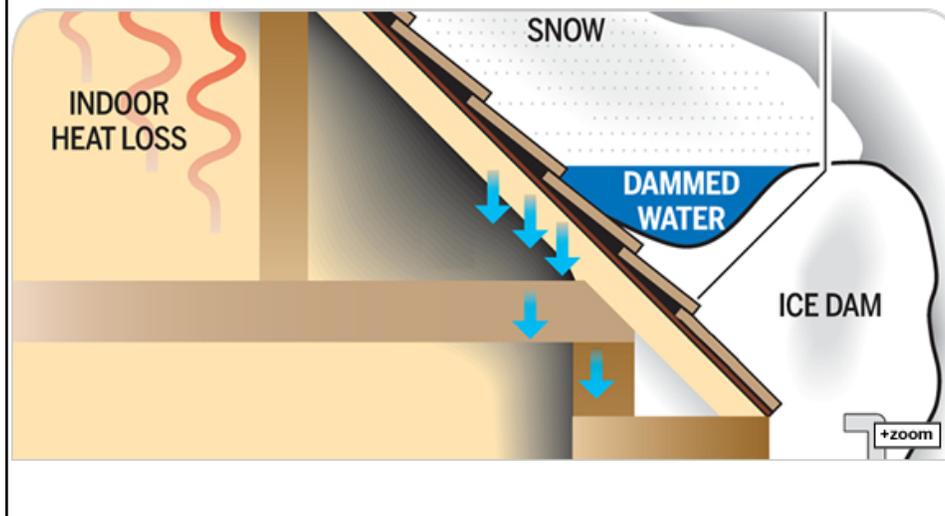
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Addressing the 4 Types of Gossip

- Filling in the missing info
 - Pipe Dream
 - Fear Fueled
- Conflict Avoidance
- In/out (Othering) “Reinforcing established stories/perceptions”
- Strategic/Manipulative (wedge)

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Problems with the Dammed Information Flow



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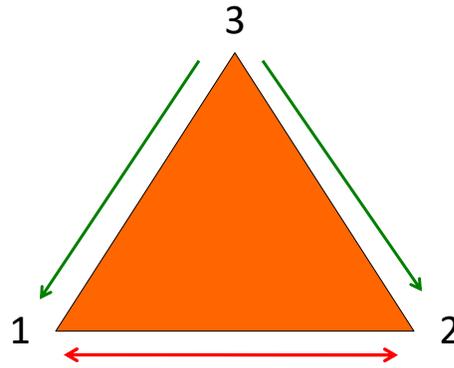
Filling in the Missing Information Gossip

- Flood the workplace with Facts
- Make transparency your friend
 - Avoid the all/nothing (share what you can when you can)
- Provide a venue for questions and concerns
 - Review quality of meeting content/structures
 - “Rumor of the week”
 - Q&A time / forum / box

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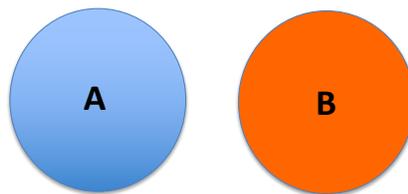
For Conflict Avoidant Gossip The PERSON with Authority can

- Check in Redirect
- Coach
- Facilitate
- Work on changing the team culture



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For In/Out Gossip The PERSON with Authority can



- Vision/Expectations
- Mix it up / Delegate
- Engage / Facilitate
- Unify – Refocus on common cause / goal

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Establish Team Dynamic Goals

In 6 months we would like our team dynamic to be...

Strengths to maintain...

More of...

Less of...

Why? How would working towards this goal benefit

- **You?**
- **Your Team?**
- **Your Company (services/clients)**

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Sam Chapman's No Gossip Zone Policy

- A formal agreement among staff to not participate in gossip
- An agreement to identify and stop gossip when it is heard
- An agreement to “follow up” with the person who was being gossiped about and share what was said
- An ongoing commitment to reveal one’s true feelings, thoughts and desires within the work environment

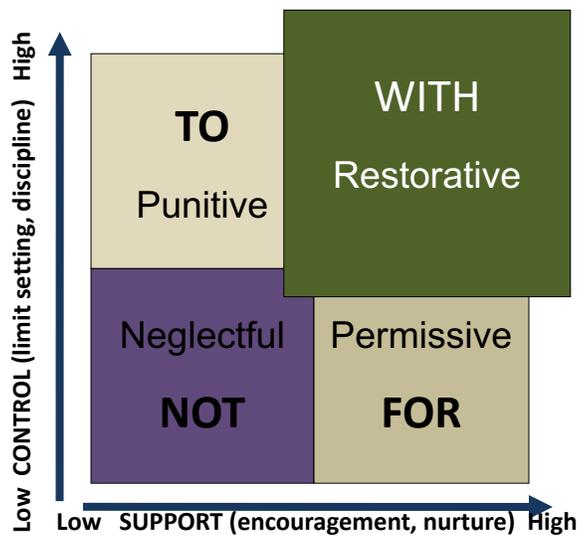
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For Strategic/Manipulative Gossip

- Set Expectations/Boundaries
- Offer Support
- Performance Manage Behaviour

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Social Discipline Window



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THANK YOU!

Please send your feedback on this session and your topic suggestions to **Sandy** at skh@workplaceconflict.ca

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Next Week May 15th 10:30 CDT

Crime and Punishment?
Reprimands, Reparations, Recovery and Reconciliation
At Work and Home

Resources from today's session will be posted on our website
www.workplaceconflict.ca

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