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Be a good gossip

Sharing the inside scoop with a friend or coworker can help you feel closer, recent research shows. The next time you've got news, use these tips to dish dirt without anyone getting hurt.

By Brooke Showell Photograph by Bill Diodato

BE SELECTIVE Rather than broadcast news to all, divulge only to those who will benefit. (Tell your single pal—not your entire circle—your brother is back on the market.) “If you share indiscriminately, no one will tell you anything,” says Frank McAndrew, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois.

GOSSIP UNSELFISHLY Studies suggest that people are judged more harshly when others perceive them as blabbing only for their own profit. Don't simply grumble about a coworker who is slacking off—temper your venting with concern that she's creating more work for your entire department.

STICK TO THE FACTS “You slip into dangerous territory when you speculate or pass judgment on someone,” says Anna Post, spokeswoman for The Emily Post Institute in Burlington, Vermont. If you spill the beans about your boss getting fired, keep your scandalous theories about why she got canned to yourself.

BEWARE THE DOMINO EFFECT

Tales tend to get more sinister as they move along the grapevine, warns Sherri Ziff Lester, a life coach in Los Angeles. To avoid starting a nasty rumor, keep your phrasing upbeat. (“Sara has lost a lot of weight!” versus “I think Sara may have an eating disorder!”)

Pissat! Here's a juicy tip: Put a positive spin on gossip to prevent getting a bad rap.

