

Should I gossip?

DID you hear what happened at the town council meeting?; Did you know what happened to our neighbour the other day?; You'll never guess what I heard most recently; Make sure to keep this a secret!; You won't believe it..... such is the gossip of everyday interaction.

Gossip is generally understood as talking 'behind the back' of the person being discussed, or talking about others that is 'none of your business.' Therefore, gossip was understood as mean, ugly and vicious. But recent research findings indicate that gossiping can be exhilarating, educational and entertaining.

Such contradictory views on gossip's impact need more clarity. Therefore, we classify it into two categories:

1. Malicious gossip: It is a form of bullying, isolating and ostracizing. It provides momentary satisfaction and amusement. It is an immoral form of idle talk based on the frivolous and trivial personal experiences. It damages the reputation and trustworthiness of individuals and communities discussed.

2. Serious gossip: It is meaningful and interactive, takes place in a private, intimate, and trusting environment. It can be witty, daring and charming. It is based on good-natured, friendly and sociable exchanges of



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information or news. It serves as a tool for social bonding between friends and strangers. Recent research findings strongly recommend serious gossip for better mental health outcomes and assert it as a pro-social necessity.

These days we find some parts of mass media mixing up the above two categories: gossip ready-made and mass marketed. They describe and evaluate the world for us with a macro level gossip leaving us less chance to escape the story.

It has become more complex with the use of leisure networking spaces such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, emails, texting and many more applications. These influence to a great extent how we should think and talk.

We have lot to gossip (seriously) about now since the referendum campaign is in full swing.

'Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear' —
Ephesians 4:29