

## Gossip? Just Zip It!

John Wesley was a great English preacher of the 1700s and founder – along with his brother, Charles, and fellow cleric George Whitefield – of Methodism.

John Wesley was considered a rather spiffy dresser. One Sunday morning, he wore a bow tie that had long ribbons that hung downward.

After the sermon ended, a woman walked up to him and said, “Brother Wesley, are you open to some criticism?”

Wesley said, “I guess so. What would you like to criticize?”

She responded, “The ribbons on your tie are entirely too long and inappropriate for a man of God.”

And she took out a pair of scissors and cut off those ribbons.

A hush fell over the people standing there as Wesley calmly asked, “Now may I borrow your scissors for a moment?”

As she handed them to him, he said, “Ma’am, are you open to some criticism?”

“Well,” she answered, “I suppose I am.”

He said, “All right then, please stick out your tongue.”

Of course, Wesley was not going to cut off her tongue. But idle criticism does damage great causes.

Without question, gossip is harmful. *Wikipedia* defines it as “idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others.”

Peter Vajda – seminar leader and speaker and founding partner of *True North Partners*, an Atlanta company that supports conscious living through coaching, counseling and facilitating – identifies gossip as a form of workplace violence, noting that it is essentially a form of attack. “Gossip is thought by many to empower one person while disempowering another.”

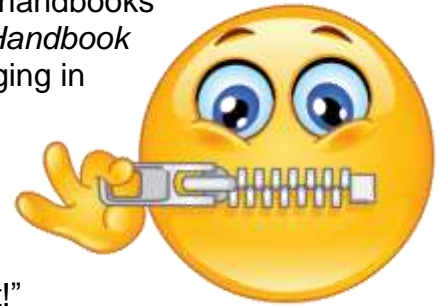


Some negative consequences of workplace gossip may include:

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- Lost productivity and wasted time.
- Erosion of trust and morale.
- Increased anxiety among associates as rumors circulate without any clear information as to what is fact and what isn't.
- Growing divisiveness among associates as people "take sides."
- Hurt feelings and reputations.
- Jeopardized chances for the gossipers' advancement as they are perceived as unprofessional.
- Attrition as good associates leave the company due to the unhealthy work atmosphere.

Many companies have formal policies in their employee handbooks against gossip. That includes Life Care. Our *Associate Handbook* states that "using obscene or abusive language or engaging in malicious gossip or the spreading of rumors" constitutes conduct that is "grounds for corrective action up to and including discharge."



Obviously, it's best that we refrain from gossip. Or as that renowned philosopher Barney Fife would say: "Zip it!"

The Bible also offers a caution: *A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much* (Proverbs 20:19 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter