

I hate gossip. I find it boring and destructive. Yet, so much in the media, in publications, and on the Web is based on gossip. A lot of people have become so heavily conditioned to it that they fail to recognize it as gossip. They regard it as news; information for public consumption. I met an older friend that I had not seen for some time. She proceeded to tell me all the "news" about people I knew, and people that I had never heard of. None of it was harmful on its own but it was infinitely boring and awkward. I honestly felt I was wasting my time and hers for no obvious reason. I also became very reluctant to share any of my "news" because I felt that it would very likely become public property. At some point, she realized that I was not engaged in the conversation and attributed my attitude to my obsession with work. So, she started lecturing me on the negative effects of not having some normal time off. She then told me about someone else who carried on like me—someone I knew—and how sick she had gotten through overwork that she had to be hospitalized for about four months. I started feeling physically sick. What right does anyone have to upset someone to such an extent that they become sick? Why is it, that disaster draws so much attention? Why doesn't anyone tell stories or spread rumors about good days, successful endeavors, and happy people? Imminent calamity seems to sell a lot better than a happy development.

The trend has established itself quite well. Most news items are about threats, criminal behavior, destruction, bankruptcy, war... etc. The more dismal the news is, the larger the audience, the higher the ratings, and the more successful the program is. "Mind your own business" is considered rude and aggressive. If you dare utter these words, you are summarily dismissed as a selfish, insensitive, and ungrateful. Somehow making others' business our own has become the norm rather than the exception.

But I would still say it and take the risk in order to preserve some peace of mind and do my duty in a small way: reminding those who care to be reminded that we all have a right to privacy without being considered peculiar