

Almost everyone has indulged in gossiping about other people at some time. Gossiping seems to be part of humannature. Gossip is spread in classrooms, in offices, at restaurants, in hallways, on the street, over the phone, and on theInternet. No one is immune to gossiping or being gossiped about. But just why is it that people gossip? There are many reasons people gossip. Some people gossip because it makes them feel like they are part of a group. The people spreading the gossip feel like they are in on a secret and that they are accepted by the people listening tothe gossip. By excluding the person they are gossiping about, the gossipers feel included. David Jardel has experienced this first hand. David recalls, "When I first graduated from college, I was hired along witha few other graduates to be an assistant at a news station. It was a really competitive job, and at first, it was difficult tomake friends. We worked long hours and weren't paid very much. We were all really struggling. Or at least that's what al thought. But one day I overheard one of the other assistants, Rick, on the phone with his father. He asked his father if ahe could send more money to cover his rent. He also asked him whether he could increase the limit on the credit cardhe had given him. I got the feeling from the conversation that his parents were basically supporting him. I ended upgossiping about it to the other assistants. I knew I was wrong to do it, but at the time, I couldn't resist. We all had a goodlaugh about it, and it helped us bond as a group. But there was a price to be paid for that, and Rick paid it. We used totease him quite a bit. For example, if we were ordering a pizza, we would say, "Oh Rick, wouldn't you prefer to havea nice meal at a restaurant and charge it to your daddy?" We meant it in good fun, but looking back, I can see how it amight have seemed malicious to Rick. He ended up quitting. I've always felt bad about the part I played in his decision toa leave" Other common causes of gossip are insecurity and a need to feel superior. When you spread rumors about someone.it reduces that person's status in other people's eyes. Judging other people negatively can make insecure people feelbetter about themselves, at least temporarily. Jim Lyle recalls having been guilty of this himself: "When I had been atmy first job for about a year, I was hoping for a promotion. Instead, they hired a new guy for the job that I had wanted.About six months later, a friend who worked in human resources told me that the new guy had been given a really badperformance review. My friend said that if his performance didn't improve, he would be in danger of being fired. I knewthat this was confidential information, but each time I was having a conversation with someone in the office, I somehow afound myself gossiping about it." Gossiping also made Jim feel powerful, important, and like the center of attention—atleast for the few minutes it took to divulge the gossip. However, Jim adds, "His performance improved, and he's veryngood at his job now. Also, I've gotten to know him, and he's really a nice person. Now I'm always worried someone willtell him that I used to gossip about him!" Interestingly though, the number one reason most young people gossip is notainsecurity or a need for attention or acceptance. According to polls, most youngpeople say they gossip out of boredom. Some people feel that when there isno conflict or drama in their social circle, life is too dull. For them, spreadingrumors shakes things up and makes life more interesting. In essence, formany people gossip is a form of entertainment. Cindy LaMott, a 19-yearold student at a community college admits to being a big gossipExplains Cindy, "The truth is too boring. Gossip is fun. Though, I don'tknow whether I'd feel that way if the gossip was about me!" 60