

## Gossip

Gossip is a particular (and popular) form of withholding. Gossip occurs when we talk about someone else rather than talking to the person directly. It serves the function of temporarily reducing anxiety, or creating false intimacy, but it is destructive to the overall health of an organization. It creates divisiveness, erodes trust and ensures that conflict will recycle rather than resolve.

### What is Gossip?

*We define gossip as saying something about others that you wouldn't say directly to them in the same exact manner.*

Leaders can create or restore health to an organization by making a commitment to stop gossiping themselves and inviting the team or organization to do the same.

Since gossip takes hold as a strong social contract in many organizations, it takes courage to make the commitment. Our clients say it's extremely helpful to have language prepared to say to others in the face of gossip.

Below are some examples of what you might say.

### What to say/do in the face of gossip

- "I encourage you to speak to that person directly. I will go with you if needed."
- "I'm having the thought this is gossip, and I'm going to stop participating."
- "Looks like you have a withhold with that person that you might want to clear up."
- "I'm not interested in gossip."
- "I notice my energy is dropping, and I want to change the conversation."
- "I notice I'm getting adrenalized by this conversation, and I want to change it."
- "I have a commitment to not talk about others when they are not present."
- "I do enjoy talking with you, but I don't want to talk about other people. Are you willing to talk about something else?"
- "I'd prefer to talk about something else. Would you be open to changing the conversation?"

**The goal is to end the conversation. Don't continue listening, as listening is a form of gossip.**