Have You Heard? How to Stop Office Gossip

If you've been the victim of office gossip, you know it can be both cruel and destructive. Such malicious gossip has shattered many people's lives and careers.

What is gossip?
Gossip is anything negative you say about someone to someone else - whether the information is true or false. Some people, however, believe it's OK to talk about others if what they say is true. While it's legal to spread truthful information about someone, it is gossip, and unethical.

Gossip ruins lives
Obviously, gossip causes damage because it can ruin a person's reputation. Spreading rumors about someone else's personal life can lead to the breakup of a marriage and family. Talking negatively about someone's job performance can be devastating to that employee's career.

Why people gossip
Spreading secret information, especially something negative, makes people feel important. It also adds a bit of intrigue to the same old boring workday.

"For most of us, exchanging critical evaluations about others is far more interesting and enjoyable than exchanging good news," explains Rabbi Telushkin, author of Words That Hurt, Words That Heal.

Complaining
This type of gossip happens all the time at work. One employee gets mad at another employee, so the disgruntled person complains to a third party to vent his or her feelings.

This type of office triangle damages companies for the following reasons: Nothing gets resolved between the two angry employees. A third person becomes involved and must take sides. Pretty soon the entire office gets caught up in an undercurrent of damaging gossip, with everyone choosing sides. The resulting tension lowers office morale and affects employee productivity.

What you can do about office gossip
If you're the target of gossip, or if office gossip is a general problem, ask your supervisor to create an office policy on it. Management
April is Physical Wellness Month

A healthy lifestyle cuts risk of serious diseases. A big study of people ages 35 to 65 shows that having just four healthy habits reduces your risk of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer by almost 80 percent.

The research by the Centers for Disease Control and colleagues shows the association with four lifestyle factors: Not smoking; eating a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and low in meat consumption; getting a half-hour daily of moderate exercise; and avoiding obesity.

Diabetes risk was most sharply reduced by a healthy lifestyle, while cancer was affected the least. Avoiding obesity was most effective in reducing risks, followed by not smoking.

The potential for avoiding society’s biggest killers through healthy living is "enormous," say the researchers.