

looking for input on

- overall: what parts are interesting? what parts are less interesting? do you want to see more/less written for any sections? does it feel like a good length of zine?
- flow -- should i connect sections more? change order of anything? does it read smoothly enough?
- phrasing -- does anything feel too wordy and can be cut down? is anything unclear what i'm getting at? would any sections benefit from better titles?
- layout -- this is pretty rough right now. ii probably want to add more pictures for visual interest? i'm thinking i could do a thing where i cut and paste stuff from here onto a paper and add some doodles with sharpie (foreground and background) i want to keep it black and white to be cheaper to print. seeking any ideas to make things more visually interesting or visually pleasing
- also need to pick a font, this was just the default one

i'm imagining a bright cardstock cover similar to the anxiety zine (not orange, idk what color, also probably not print to bleed because it was so much more expensive)

HOT GOSS

is it okay to talk about people
when they're not around?

when? why?

@thought_clippings

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more zines: <https://thoughtclippings.com>

I gossip all the time. I love thinking about people, talking about people, entertaining, connecting over shared experiences...

And I can feel guilty for gossiping. Is it bad? Does it hurt people? Does it make me look bad? Should I stop completely?

I got obsessed with this topic and talked about it with many friends over several months. This zine is the result of those conversations and reflections.

gossip takes many forms

which of these are okay to say and which aren't?

I FINALLY BROUGHT UP
SOME CONCERNS WITH
MY MANAGER AND HE
TOTALLY LOST IT...

i kissed that girl from craft
night last night! The way
she kisses is so weird...

My best friend had similar
challenges coming out to
their parents. They...

She talks too much, I don't think
you'll enjoy hanging out with her

My ex sent me some bullshit
texts, check out these
screenshots!

Your girlfriend is ugly and
annoying, why are you
dating her?

My coworker got punched in the
nose while walking around the
Caltrain station a few months
ago! Be careful out there!

You're not the only one
who feels uncomfortable
around him. [REDACTED] was
really upset after he did
[REDACTED] last week.

My best friend had the worst
first date yesterday, listen to
this trainwreck...

I TOLD MY PARTNER WHAT YOU
SAID LAST WEEK AND THEY SAID
YOU WERE BEING AN ASSHOLE

gossip in community

I live in community with a dozen other people, and there is so much gossip here. Communal living is a complicated project, and people constantly have opinions and get annoyed. I can probably name at least ten pairs of people who have some tension between them and tell their specific history that's built beef. It both fascinates me and hella stresses me out.

The other day, Mia* was telling me about why she had been avoiding Daniel* around the house. I ravenously asked questions, connected things she was saying to grumbles I had heard others share about Daniel, and became overcome with emotions.

I felt annoyed with Daniel when I saw him around, noticing some of the things Mia had mentioned, and even brooding over things I hadn't personally witnessed. I became more cold with him. I was also scared of conflict escalating. I wanted to give him feedback, but didn't want to breach Mia's trust. I got annoyed with her for not talking to him about it, and eventually she did. (It helped a bit, but didn't resolve everything.)

**names anonymized, but you could honestly substitute several names here*

is it my story to share?

Sometimes I gossip about my own experiences that also involve another person, like a date I went on, but sometimes I share stories about friends that don't involve me at all! Sometimes I share to be helpful, but sometimes it just feels relevant and entertaining.

When do I have the right to share someone else's story as conversational fodder? My intuition is it's more okay when the story also involves me. But there's a lot of other things to consider too.

What's the content? (e.g. sharing about sex I had with a partner might feel too personal to them to share)

What's the relationship between me and the people I'm talking about? Are there power/privilege dynamics at play?

What are the pros and cons of sharing this?

the bad shit

gossip gets a bad rap for good reason...

violating privacy/boundaries

People often expect that some things they say will stay private. I don't want to violate people's boundaries (even if they don't know, and they might find out), and I especially don't want to harm a relationship that's meaningful to me.

changing what people think of someone

When I share stories about someone, I'm likely shaping my audience's view of that person. Even if I mean well, I can paint a picture of someone in a way that they don't want to be seen.

group think

Sometimes when multiple people gossip about a person it can reinforce a collective image of that person. I've noticed I can have trouble individually connecting with people once I've heard several people bad-mouthing them.

making me look bad

I want people to like me and continue sharing stories with me, and spreading gossip can make me seem untrustworthy. Beyond that, gossiping in some people's eyes is a deeper moral failing that would reflect negatively on me.

the good shit

...but there's also much to gain

connection

It's an opportunity to connect with friends and know what's going on in each other's lives.

emotional support

It's a great outlet to process feelings, feel listened to or validated, and get advice. Sharing stories about others can also be great tools to provide perspective for others.

empowerment and solidarity

e.g. workplace gossip can help people who feel frustrated to find empowerment together and fight against bad situations. This feels especially useful with very uneven power dynamics, but in general finding others with shared experiences can validate and empower people.

learning about the human experience

I understand more of the nuances of how people act and interact with each other because of how much I gossip. This helps me in work, relationships, therapy, happiness, and more!

minimizing harm

Sometimes it's definitely okay to share or definitely not, but mostly there's a massive grey zone. There are no easy answers, only ways to minimize harm while still getting the benefits of gossip.

for violating privacy

How much does the the person I'm talking about value privacy?

If someone seems fairly private (e.g. they share things less, post less publicly on social media, share fewer details about their friends), then I'll bias towards sharing less about them.

What am I sharing? How private is it?

How private something is can vary a lot from person to person, but some things are generally more personal, like a fresh crush or a traumatic life event. Everyday things feel a lot less private. Context also matters -- stories from group settings feel more acceptable to share than private shares.

for affecting social perception

How well does the person I'm talking to know the person I'm talking about?

Do they interact much? How close are they? Are they strangers? Are they likely to ever meet?

Let's say I'm talking about a childhood friend to my housemate. They live in different countries and don't know each other at all. Some people told me if they were the childhood friend, they wouldn't care much what a stranger thought of them. But if they *knew* the housemate, they would care more about that person's perception of them.

What tone am I using? Am I being judgmental?

It's important to me to humanize the person being talked about. If I'm complaining about my housemate to my best friend, I like to also supply some of the reasoning of why my housemate might have acted this way. This helps me feel like I'm affecting the friend's perception of the housemate in a less extreme way.

This being said, venting about someone without having to consider their feelings can be very cathartic and helpful. I don't feel like I need to always be kind, but I try to be when I can.

and then he didn't respond to my texts for weeks. i know texting is hard for some people, but it felt so inconsiderate!!



how little can I share?

Sometimes I try to preserve privacy by sharing as little as possible while still getting what I want out of sharing. For example, I could ask for advice responding to a friend's message *without* sharing the name of that friend, how I know them, where they live or work, etc.

But extra context is often useful! Finding shared annoyances with someone (like a manager) is only possible by naming them. Getting advice on a fight with a close friend vs. a coworker would probably look different. And sometimes it just gets confusing to tell stories about people without sharing their name or how I know them.

gossip and consent???

A few people suggested I just ask people when I want to share something about them. Some said they'd prefer to know each thing that's been shared about them.

But this is impractical. I share probably-fine small things about people all the time and I don't want to ask about all of them. I try to ask before sharing bigger things, but "big" is different for different people.

Gossip is so common and accepted, but it's seemed like most people don't want to know what kinds of things others know about them. This leaves us in a strange situation where we often don't know if we're crossing boundaries, and don't know (and often don't want to know) what other people know about us. Is this okay? Maybe??

doodle of two people doing pillow-talk
with each other? :D

people you share everything with

People often have a partner or bestie they're down to share anything with. While I don't share everything (especially not when people explicitly ask me not to share), there are some people in my life I share most things with.

It's nice to have people in my life who know most of what I'm thinking about, to better support me and just to know me well.

I also do this because I trust my close friends and partners to keep others' secrets private, and to be open-minded and kind towards these people when they see them.

So I guess I should expect that if I share something fairly personal with someone, they could tell their partner or best friend about it, but I'm often not thinking about that. Is it okay that many of us do this? Is this something most people know is happening and are okay with?

another storytime??

i've gotten feedback on wanting more examples and emotional content.

a time i violated someone's trust? a time someone met someone i'd talked a lot of shit about? a time gossip helped solve a social problem?

i'm having trouble thinking of things. i will try to seek out some stories from people...

closing thoughts

I want to be a more deliberate and kind friend. I don't want to stop talking about people when they're not around, but I want to do it more consciously.

There are some ways of sharing that feel more 'right' than other ways, but there is definitely no "right way". I want to be attuned to my motivations, to a desire to connect, to my boundaries, the boundaries of the people I talk about, the boundaries of people I talk to.

Before engaging in gossip, I try to ask myself: **Why am I sharing this? Am I just sharing to be entertaining? Do the benefits of this feel like it's worth the possible harm?**

curiosities for conversations

Why do you talk about people when they're not around?
What benefits does it bring you?

What kinds of information about yourself are you more okay being shared? What kinds of things feel very private and personal?

Does a screenshot of a conversation we have generally feel more private than a summary of the same conversation (assuming similar levels of anonymity)?

Do you share everything with a partner or best friend? How do you feel about the idea that others do?

If I shared a very personal story about you with someone you were guaranteed to never meet, would this feel different than if I shared it with your friend? What if there was a small chance you'd eventually meet them? What if I shared the story but didn't mention your name?

How comfortable are you with thinking about the fact that people definitely talk about you when you're not around? Would you want to know what they knew about you?

What do you consider to be gossip? Is gossip okay?

share your thoughts!

this form links to a place to see (anonymized) submissions so you can all read the goss



<https://forms.gle/xVhRq84e6gNL9s218>