

Alpine County Choose Civility Campaign

(An initiative of the Child Abuse Prevention Council and County Superintendent of Schools)



June Focus:

Don't Speak Ill

One of my grandmother's wise lessons was, "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all." This month our Choose Civility principle is "don't speak ill." Let's focus this to "don't speak ill of others" to get right to a serious problem that often plagues those of us who live in small towns. Rumors and vicious gossip tear apart families and end friendships. I've helped children avoid gossip by teaching them to ask themselves if gossip hurts or helps. If what is to be said might hurt someone, the best thing to do is adjust the conversation and avoid speaking ill.

There are so many reasons why we shouldn't speak ill of others by gossiping or spreading rumors.

- We can hurt people with our words, even seriously damaging their reputations.
- It is simply cowardly to attack someone who is not present.
- When we threaten someone else's reputation by gossiping, we put our own reputations at risk as well.
- We can make other people uncomfortable or angry by gossiping because gossip is offensive to many of us.
- Unkind or disparaging words about someone might cause retaliation leading to a vicious cycle of unkind words and behaviors that sometimes lasts for years.
- Gossip wastes precious time and cuts down on workplace productivity.

It can be difficult to be in the presence of someone speaking ill of others. Depending on the situation, you might:

- Leave,
- Remain silent,
- Say something positive about the person or change the subject, or
- Openly tell the person you are uncomfortable with the conversation, such as "I am uncomfortable discussing this", "I prefer not to speculate about his personal life", or "It isn't fair to talk this way in her absence".