

Why do we gossip? Why do we even listen to gossip? Why do we enjoy negativity? Why do we do many things that result in our consciousness being veiled or our hearts becoming corroded? Perhaps it's because we haven't experienced the alternative fully enough. Perhaps we can't bear to live at a higher vibrational level, preferring the habitual, the commonplace negativities that pass for normal everyday life.

In Sufism, we try to remember the advice of the Prophet Muhammad who said that gossip is worse even than adultery! "But what if what we're saying is true?" someone asked. "That's what I mean by gossip!" he said, "If it's not true then it's slander. Gossip is saying anything about anyone which, if they were to hear you say it, they would be hurt and you would be ashamed."

Imagine a community of people who would be fastidious about this, people you could trust not to criticize you behind your back (They're still free, of course, to process problems or criticisms face to face). It's a very high standard to live up to. When you speak negatively of someone and they learn about it, you become detestable in their sight. Remember the Bob Dylan line, "I wish that for just one time you could stand inside my shoes...you'd know what a drag it is to see you."

Talking negatively about others is like leaving garbage inside and outside your own house. Thinking and speaking kind and positive thoughts, as much as possible, is like planting beautiful gardens around your house. Our spiritual work is to transcend the petty ego and assume the Divine perspective. Wise as serpents, innocent as doves, we discern the good from the bad, but we don't indulge in blame or assume we have the right to judge the souls of others. Let the Cosmos and Karma handle that. Let's be a comfort to each other.

Shaikh Kabir Helminski

Kabir Helminski is Shaikh of the Mevlevi Order, Co-director of The Threshold Society (sufism.org).

It is my hope that by understanding how evil speech damages us – not the person being spoken about – we will all be a little more mindful of the words we choose to speak so that we can experience greater joy and fulfillment in our everyday lives.

Michael Berg

Michael Berg is co-director of the Kabbalah Centre.

Amazing insights on the power of our thoughts and words!

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