

Rumors May be Fun But They Harm Innocent People

Recent events and experiences cause me to ponder rumors and their impact. No matter if you are a 13-year-old in junior high, a 55-year-old lawyer, a 30-something housewife or member of the Greatest Generation, we all have to deal with rumors. Don't people love to talk?

Rumors seem to fly around about rehab, someone's marriage or who is fooling around with whom. This type of talk has an impact on a lot of my clients in the domestic relations law area. Their worst fears include what people are saying. Not knowing what friends and family are thinking is very tough. I tell them not to think about such things. However, I have learned that no matter how silly or ridiculous something is, it can get into your head a little at the very least.

There are several types of rumor spreaders. None of them are good.

-The caring rumor spreader doesn't start the rumor. They take delight in learning news and unwittingly keep the wheel spinning by asking someone else about it. Often, they really care about the person who is the subject of the rumor. They don't realize their mistake until it's too late.

-The rumor starter might be considered the worst. They are extremely elusive. They often camouflage themselves behind a statement that they are "just checking on something they heard." They are a vicious specimen of human being.

-Competing with the rumor starter is the rumor savorer. They are telling anyone and everyone that will listen. They take great glee in another's misfortune. They have a desire to take someone down. They really hope the rumor is truth.

It is pointless to get angry about a rumor. First, no one knows who started the rumor. It's impossible to find out. Second, everyone who passes the rumor professes innocence because, of course, they were "simply trying to find out the truth."

The important thing to remember is that innocent people are often hurt. The subject of the rumor is hurt, but people who love that person and are connected to them are hurt too. Imagine what happens if a rumor is sophisticated enough to cause the people who love the subject to wonder if it is true. It's a painful and helpless situation to be in.

Somewhere down the rumor line, a trusted friend will let the subject of the rumor know what is being said. God Bless these people! We should all try to be one. They have courage. I hope this conduct will spread as fast as the rumors seem to.

Mark Chinn and his wife Cathy recently celebrated their 30th anniversary in New York City. They have four daughters; Courtney, 24, Casey, 17, Carly, 13, and Conley, 9. He operates the family law practice Chinn & Associates. Chinn has authored or co-authored

four American Bar Association books and numerous law and business related articles. Mark also enjoys writing short stories about his family and life in the south. For more information see www.chinnandassociates.com or contact Mark directly at mark@chinnandassociates.com.