

43. Ideas for Coaches and Athletes to Contain Gossip

Team harmony can be improved when friendships develop within the team. The downside is cliques and gossip starting to increase. The line between casual communication and destructive gossip is thin. How can you stomp out gossip without discouraging bonding among team members? Gossip benefits no one. In fact, it's one of the most common team chemistry destroyers. *What can you and your players do to keep gossip at a minimum?*

3 Ideas for Coaches: 1) *Anticipate your team members' information needs.* Answer questions before they are asked.

2) *Confront rumors.* Call a meeting as soon as you get wind of a rumor. Let team members bring their questions and fears into the open.

3) *Realize the grapevine will always exist.* Be satisfied with knowing what's happening within it. Be prepared to take appropriate and swift action to counteract its effects.

4 Ideas for Athletes: 1) *Be aware.* As with any bad habit, team members must first be aware that gossip is a problem before they decide to do anything about it.

2) *Make a decision.* Despite the fact that gossip is something that is hard to stop "cold turkey", anyone can start with a step-by-step approach. First, *cut back 10 or 20 percent per day.* Don't gossip about anyone on the team. Then gradually cut back more and more.

3) *Change the subject.* If you sense a gossip conversation starting, change the subject. Don't embarrass the person who is talking. Simply change the direction of the conversation. If that fails, politely exit the conversation.

4) *Play the "reverse gossip" game.* When a teammate says something 'gossipy' about someone, respond by mentioning that player's good points.

47. Eight Steps to Manage Teammate Conflict

It's very common for conflicts to break out in practice between two teammates. Here are eight ideas to help teammates patch up their disagreements so that team chemistry is not harmed.

1. *Listen to both players to understand their feelings, assumptions.* You may wish to do this one on one or with both people together. In the former case, be sure that the antagonists know that nothing can be held in confidence from the other person.

2. *In a meeting with both players, get each to listen to the other.* Allow each person to speak only after paraphrasing what the other person has said to the other person's satisfaction. This technique effectively reduces anger.

3. *Point out where you believe they misunderstood one another.* Don't ascribe any blame to the misunderstanding. Just show it to them. You may tell them something like, "I don't think you both are disagreeing at all at this point. The problem appears to be using

different terms to mean the same thing. Let me show you what I mean..." Then give an example of how they may be talking past one another.

4. *Check your perceptions of the issues between them.* Ask questions. Move beyond assertions to the reasons behind the assertions.

5. *Ask them if either party can suggest a solution that all three of you can live with.* This is preferable to the solution coming from the top down, from you directly.

6. *Select a solution that does the best job of lowering the tensions and restoring performance.*

7. *Provide any necessary face saving should one of the ladies involved be perceived as a loser* of the argument or disagreement. This helps any solutions proceed more smoothly.

8. *Monitor the success (or lack thereof) of the chosen solution.* If it's not working, find out why and get the antagonists back together for more conversations until the two women hash out their differences.