

# Rumours and Gossip

**Recommended Age: 12+**

## Goals

- To address the multitude of reasons why people would start and spread gossip.
- To unpack the word 'slut' and the result of using the word.

## Instructions

- Ask for six volunteers (if it's a smaller group, they can all play) and get them to line up in a straight line.
- Explain the group will play a game called 'Telephone.' I will whisper something into the first person's ear, and they will pass it on to the next person and on and on until (co-facilitator's name, at the end of the line) gets the message. They will say what they hear out loud to everybody. **There is one rule: no repeating the message. You can only whisper it to the other person once, and then they must pass on whatever they heard.**
- You will start the message. Have a co-facilitator, teacher, or other staff stand at the other end of the line and act as the person who says the final message out loud, in case the message has been construed into something offensive.
- Some examples of messages to use are, "Masturbation can be part of a normal and healthy sexuality," "Good communication is part of what makes a healthy relationship work," and "Consent means that both partners are into what's happening."

## Debrief

- **What is the telephone game an example of?** Rumours and gossip. **What would have been the best way for me to communicate with (name of co-facilitator)?** Tell them directly.
- **What kind of gossip goes around school?** Who's sleeping with whom, who's pregnant, who got drunk/stoned, who's dealing drugs, name-calling, etc. **Are rumours always accurate?** No.

- **What is the result of spreading rumours?** Puts people at risk by targeting them, can damage self-esteem, and damages relationships (friendships, partnerships).
- **Some rumours tend to go around more about girls and women than they do about boys and men. These are rumours around sex and may include words/labels like slut. This slur is an example of sexism and is violence against women.** It puts all women and girls at risk because it sends the message that it is okay to harm or put girls or women down.
- **When someone is sexually active, whose business is it?** Theirs and their partner's. Often, words like slut are harsh labels put on people, regardless of if they are having sex or not. Either way though, this is no one's business but their own.
- **How men and women get treated differently when they are rumored to be having sex also shows inequality and a double standard.** It also harms boys and men because it puts pressure on them to act hypersexual when, as individuals, they might not be that interested in sex at all. "Is it okay if a guy is not interested in sex?" Yes, of course.
- **One thing we can do to help end violence against women is not call someone hurtful names and educate others who are still using these harmful and untrue terms.**