

# GENERAL GUIDELINES ABOUT לשון הרע

## IN THE WORKPLACE OR IN A SCHOOL

**(Section 1)**

**FORBIDDEN SPEECH:**

1. A negative or degrading comment about another person is לשון הרע .
2. Any comment which can cause another person pain, damage, or embarrassment (צער, חזק, בושה) is לשון הרע .
3. A comment which can cause strife or anger at another person (כעס, מחלוקת) is רכילות .

**(Section 2)**

**WHEN IS THIS PERMITTED:**

**IF THERE IS A CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSE (תועלת) THE ABOVE MAY BE PERMITTED**

1. You must be sure it is true.
2. It can't be personal. If it will be said out of anger or personal resentment, it may not be said (even for תועלת).
3. If the תועלת can be achieved through other means, (without resorting to לשון הרע) it may not be said.
4. The consequences to the other person can not be more severe than warranted by הלכה . (A שאלה may have to<sup>be</sup> asked)
5. Sometimes the need to vent is considered a valid תועלת , (Again, if this can be accomplished by talking to another person without using names, it should be done that way.)

**(Section 3)**

**DISCUSSING THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF CO-WORKERS:**

1. If this is part of your job responsibilities, it is permitted, provided the rules in section 2 are followed. Any company or school has the right to know whether employees are competent, or fulfilling their job requirements. They may also discuss how to improve the co-workers job performance or how to avoid or minimize problems. Obviously, this may be done only when necessary.
2. If you are not in a position where your in-put is needed about the job performance of others, you may not discuss it unless there is gross negligence or danger to others.

3. You certainly may not discuss any other negative issues about your co-workers (or about anyone else).

(Section 4)

#### **DISCUSSING BOSS OR SUPERIOR**

See "need to vent" above.

(Section 5)

#### **TEACHERS OR OTHER ADULTS DISCUSSING STUDENTS**

As long as the focus is on the benefit to the student (תועלת) it is permitted.

(Make sure that no harm will come to the student as a result.)

(Section 6)

#### **CHILDREN DISCUSSING TEACHERS WITH OTHER ADULTS**

They should be encouraged to try to work out any issues with the Teacher directly. If not possible, try to guide the student to the best possible solution. Remind them (gently) that כבוד for an adult is required by the תורה, and the תורה does not say "only when the adult is absolutely correct". Most likely, the adult is correct, but even if they possibly are not, the חיוב of כבוד still applies.

(Section 7)

#### **LISTENING TO לשון הרע**

Although we may not listen to לשון הרע, at times, it is a מצוה to listen. For example, to save someone from loss or danger, or to help someone vent. Remember the following guidelines.

1. Do not be מקבל (accept as absolutely true) anything you hear about another person. There may be other facts you are not aware of.
2. Put yourself in the subject's position. How would you want someone to react if a person would speak about you. That is the way you should react when you hear anyone speak about others. This is truly ואהבת לרעך כמוך.

In the רפואות - זוכה to - זוכה of שמירת הלשון and אהבת ישראל we should all be נחמות - and ישועות.

אמן