**A Bucket of Sand**

Rumors and gossip can have damaging effects on the victim. But many times those who start a rumor don’t think about these effects and how quickly rumors can spread.

**Goal:** The following activity will help you think about how powerful a rumor can be and how hard it is to undo the damage rumors cause.

Think about a time you heard a rumor or you started one. Read the following parable.

*Once there was a girl who was jealous of another girl in her school. She decided to spread a mean rumor about her. The girl told the rumor to a few people who continued to spread the rumor. Soon the rumor had spread to the whole school. When the girl understood what she had done she went to see her teacher.*

*“How could I rectify what I’ve done?” she asked the teacher.*

*The teacher replied, “You must throw a bucketful of sand in the air and collect every single grain of sand back into the bucket.”*

*The girl did what the teacher had told, but collecting all of the sand back into the bucket was impossible.
The girl went back to the teacher.*

*“I cannot do as you advised. The grains have spread all over and I could not find them all even though I tried.”*

*The teacher nodded. “Now you understand. You cannot undo the damage you have caused. Each grain of sand represents a person who has heard the rumor you spread. Rumors are just like sand; once the grains have been spread, they are impossible to get back.”*

**Answer the following questions about the parable:**

1) What was the teacher trying to tell the girl who had spread the rumor?

2) This parable suggests that it is difficult to undo the damage a rumor can cause. Give specific reasons why a rumor is so hard to stop and why it is almost impossible to undo the damage.

**Thinking about what you have learned from *Girls Guide to End Bullying*, answer the following questions about rumors.**

There are 3 different people who take part in spreading rumors, who are they?

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Why do people start rumors and spread them?

What can each of these people do to stop the rumor?

**Below are real answers given by students who completed this activity**

1. **What was the teacher trying to tell the girl who had spread the rumor?**

“That it’s wrong and you can’t take it back.”

**Answers given by students who completed this activity.**

“Once a rumor spreads, it is impossible to stop the damage.”

“Her actions reached much further than she could take back.”

**2) This parable suggests that it is difficult to undo the damage a rumor can cause. Give specific reasons why a rumor is so hard to stop and why it is almost impossible to undo the damage.**

“You don't know who knows about it and don’t know whether they believe it or not.”

“Once a rumor starts, it doesn’t stop.”

“Once someone hears a rumor, they will always remember it.”

“Everyone changes the rumor or hears it wrong and it will change and keep going.”

“Bad news spreads faster than any nice/apology that you could try to solve it with.”

“You don't know who knows, so you can't tell everyone single person who knows to stop spreading the rumor.”

“It is almost impossible to undo the damage because it hurts the victim emotionally.”

**Thinking about what you have learned from *Girls Guide to End Bullying*, answer the following questions about rumors.**

**There are 3 different people who take part in spreading rumors, who are they?**

1.The person who starts it

2.Those who pass it along

3. Those who ignore it and don’t do anything

**Why do people start rumors and spread them?**

“They feel it makes them better than everyone.”

“Jealousy or feeling hurt, could have low self-confidence and have to start a rumor or pass it on to feel better.”

“To make other people look bad and themselves better.”

**What can each of these people do to stop the rumor?**

“Starter – don’t start it in the first place, messenger - let the rumor stop with you, believe - gather more direct info before you believe rumors.”

“Stop talking, move on and stand up to the bully.”

“They can chose to ignore the rumor, the bully can stop spreading the rumor, let the bully know what they are doing is wrong.”

“You can tell others it is not true.”

“They could not pass it on and try to look at the rational side of the rumor and that it is probably false.”

“Tell other people it isn't funny or is not true. Tell them it isn't any of their business.”

“Not start it, not spread it, don't believe it.”