

## *Maintaining Esteem Takes Teamwork*

*By Donna Rawady*

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When we're part of a team at work, whether we're in a partnership with one individual or part of a larger group, the integrity of our work relationships is strengthened by our ability to maintain the esteem of others when talking directly with them—or talking about them.

Of course, the most effective way to resolve a conflict, or address performance issues, is to have a respectful conversation directly with the person we're challenged by. Yet, at times, we may be faced with circumstances that prompt a discussion with others about a teammate. For example, we may be approached by someone who wants to commiserate about a team member's behavior.

When you do address a concern directly with someone, or you're talking about them, checking your motive is extremely important in upholding the esteem of the person and your team. Are you thoughtful about demonstrating trust among your team regardless of whom you're talking with? Are you genuinely looking for a better way to collaborate or communicate with a challenging team member? Do you have your team member's success and the success of your team in mind when you're talking with others? Having these motives — vs. a negative or blaming intent — will raise the odds for maintaining the esteem of your co-workers and your team.

Recently, I was talking with my teenage granddaughter about her volleyball team's discouraging losing streak. She told me that she didn't think that she and her teammates were bad players, but she did think the drama and talking behind each other's backs have caused a tough season. I offer you the gem she gave me: with her final, wise assessment: "I think we're not winning because we're not really a team."

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