

# Concern, Care or Gossip

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There was an occasion when a friend called me to ask how "Betty," a mutual friend, was doing. "She's not looking so well, lately." Immediately after hanging up the phone I called another friend in our circle. I heard myself saying "She's not looking so well. What's going on?" This friend was right on clear communication target. She said "You need to call "Betty" yourself and express your concern and questions." My phone call seemed innocently caring but what did I really want--more juicy details to excite my empty day?

*"There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."* Oscar Wilde

Indeed, it's better to have caring friends than none. However, rather than loop their concerns, true friends deliver their words directly. A useful guideline for passing on (or not) chit-chat is, "Do not repeat anything you will not sign your name to or would not say in the presence of the object of discussion."

Since that "Betty" occasion I have developed a communication habit I call Positive Gossip. I return to people the celebrative comments I've heard about them. "Betty, last week I heard about the significant contributions you made to the board of directors. Thank you for your commitment." This habit does jazz up my life, is fun and creates positive results. Do we not all want to be seen, heard and acknowledged—as directly as possible?

Patricia Morgan is a certified counsellor, speaker and author of  
*Love Her As She Is* and *She Said: A Tapestry of Women's Quotes*  
She can be reached at 403-242-7796  
or [patricia@lightheartedconcepts.com](mailto:patricia@lightheartedconcepts.com) or [www.lightheartedconcepts.com](http://www.lightheartedconcepts.com)