



“Squashing the Rumor Mill” Support Resources

Overview

Volunteers can have a positive role in helping youth handle rumors with confidence. These strategies help volunteers address concerns constructively and foster a respectful, supportive environment where positive communication thrives.

Do's and Don'ts When Youth Shares Concerns

Do's

- › Listen without judgment
- › Help youth focus on facts
- › Encourage direct but respectful communication
- › Reinforce positive behaviors publicly

Don'ts

- › Repeat rumors
- › Shame youth for reacting emotionally
- › Overreact or take sides

Three Steps to Respond

Provide youth with the following three step process to help them handle rumors that are shared with them:

- › Pause and avoid responding impulsively:
 - Take a deep breath. You don't have to respond right away. Try to stay calm.
- › Check the facts by asking yourself:
 - Is this true?
 - Who told you and why might they say it?
- › Respond or move on:
 - Speak up or decide if it is not worth the energy to respond.
 - If it is important to respond, speak up respectfully. If not, let it go and stay focused on your goals.

Sample “I” Statements

To help youth build confidence in responding to rumors help them practice different “I” statements and share sample statements they can use such as:

- › “I heard something that isn't true, and it's been bothering me.”
- › “I worked really hard on my project, and I'd like people to ask me directly if they have questions.”
- › “I know the truth, and I'm going to keep doing my best.”

To contact an expert in your area, visit extension.msu.edu/experts or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464)

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