

DISSECTING THE RUMOUR MILL

How rumours affect our lives

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Back when I was in fourth grade, my friends and I heard (and believed) rumours that an old *zamindar* house, located just beside our school, harboured the evil spirit of a dead woman. On every new moon, a white saree-clad woman could be seen walking in and around the house and the sound of footsteps and howling winds could be heard. Sometimes when playing cricket, when the ball would end up in that *zamindar* house, no one would dare to go to that house to fetch it.

According to psychologists Difonzo & Bordia (2007), a rumour consists of four qualities – information, circulation, unverifiability, and instrumental relevance. The aforementioned incident is an ideal example of rumour, in which *information* was the presence of an evil spirit in the house. That information *circulated* among the students of our school. Whether there actually was a spirit of a woman was *unverifiable*, because none of us ever dared to seek the truth. It was *instrumentally relevant*, because it impacted our lives as sometimes our tennis balls would end up in that house.

How are rumours produced and how do rumours spread?

The major reason behind the forma-



tion of a rumour is uncertainty. When people are doubtful of a particular situation, they tend to speculate in an attempt to understand the situation and to predict future outcomes. That is when the transmission of information through a succession of individuals results in the formation of a complex phenomenon termed as rumours. Deliberate lying and culpable carelessness also contribute in producing rumours.

Rumours circulate via discussion between people, especially when the uncertainty breeds anxiety among them. The rumours which tend to affect the social status of people or which are personally relevant to them spread like wildfires as these can boost self-esteem or serve the egos of people.

So how do rumours affect our lives?

Rumours can be both positive and negative. Negative rumours, especially

the ones intended to harm or sully a person or an organisation's reputation can impact our attitudes and behaviours towards them. On the other hand, positive rumours about a person inadvertently encourage us to focus on their positive values, which results in better impressions and we are quick to put our trust in that person, often to our own detriment.

How should we deal with rumours?

Rumours are to be responded to swiftly, firmly, and with honesty. Instead of blindly believing in rumours, we should always try to verify information before consuming or circulating it. Most importantly, we have to stop contributing to the spread of rumours, especially in this era of widespread use of social media.

References

1. Difonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (2007). *Rumors influence: Toward a dynamic social impact theory of rumor.*
2. Hart, B. (1916). *The Psychology of Rumor.*
3. International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. (August 11, 2020). *Rumors.*

H. Rainak Khan Real wonders why his transmutation alchemy doesn't work. Will you send help at rainakkhanreal@gmail.com?

How to befriend an introvert

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Introverts are their own kind of people. Their aloofness, need for privacy, and lack of verbose attempts might be off-putting for some. However, the mystique and enigma with which they tread along gets them attention they might not want. It can often be difficult to pierce through the invisible veil. Here are some tips to help you figure out how to respectfully win the friendship of an introvert, assuming you aren't one yourself.

DON'T GENERALISE

It is easy to assume that all introverts are shy, standoffish nerds who awkwardly sit in the farthest corner of a room. Introversion itself is a spectrum and you can't expect all of them to have identical social frequencies. Keep in mind that the person you are trying to develop a bond with is more than the ruminating, quiet, distant image you have in your head.

CREATE A COMFORT ZONE

Comfort zone is the headspace in which one is relaxed and does not feel anxious even slightly. Introverts are their true selves and they *flourish* in comforting company. It is necessary that you smile at them (not creepily, just the appropriate amount). Have an open body language and keep your posture pointed toward them. Listen as they speak and do not



try to be subtle about it. Tell them things about yourself, since it may help them ease into similar conversations, and let them know it is also okay if they do not want to share things in return.

AVOID SITUATIONAL CONVERSATIONS
Of course, this will not perpetually destroy your chances of bonding with the

person, but it will also not make them remember you or seek out your company after that particular encounter. It may not be possible to always come up with intriguing topics, but you could merely ask for their suggestion on which movie to watch next, or make an unsolicited recommendation that you feel they might like.

SHOW CARE

If you have come along this far in this article to befriend an introvert, it is safe to assume you care about their well-being. Thus, if you hear they are sick or have gotten themselves in a pickle, voice your concern unabashedly. Some of them may be inept at expressing the heartfelt gratitude they feel, but will definitely make a mental note to keep you around.

EXPRESS GENUINE INTEREST

Most introverts appreciate active participation as they can have a hard time approaching and befriending people they want to be friends with themselves. Assuming you want to be their friend, there must be something that draws you to them. Be respectful of their boundaries and pay heed to aspects about them that made you go through this in the first place. Similar interests always establish a solid foundation.

Before you choose to fret yourself over this, do not forget that if a friendship is meant to happen, it will, irrespective of if you are following certain steps or not.

Aysha's brain unclogs at the sight of a crown of raven curls. Don't ask her what it is because that is all she will talk about at zaheenaysha10@gmail.com