



(U) Ask Zelda!: Rising from the Ashes of a Ruined Reputation

FROM: "Zelda," Dispenser of Advice on Workplace Issues

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(U) The below column is unclassified in its entirety.

Zelda,

It's amazing how gossip can generate so much harm -- and those that continue to gossip either have no clue how it impacts others...or they have no heart. I have a friend who experienced a hurtful event a few years ago and he deeply feels that the damage has destroyed his reputation beyond repair. He was a high performing employee who is now lost in the stairwells of NSA. What advice would you give him?

-Distressed

Dear Distressed,

That is so sad! What a shame that some wagging tongues have destroyed this employee's morale, and possibly his career. Here is what I would say to your friend.

Open letter to Stairwell Haunter

My dear fellow, I am very sorry to hear about the callous behavior that has distressed you so. It's clear that these gossipmongers have hurt you deeply. Now, however, you are hurting yourself. By hiding from your work life, you are perpetuating the damage done to you by others.

I understand that you may feel embarrassed, betrayed, and a host of other negative emotions; but the trigger event happened *years* ago. Your grieving time needs to end. While this hurtful event may still be fresh in your mind, let me assure you that others have moved on and forgotten about it. At the very least, it's a distant memory. By withdrawing, you're fostering a negative opinion of yourself among those who don't know about the original event. Instead of dwelling on the past, focus on the reputation you are building today. You can remake your image. Even publicly humiliated people--including former U.S. presidents--have picked themselves up and moved on after such events.

You are not alone. You have friends who care about you (such as *Distressed*) and want to be supportive.

I urge you to start by talking with **EAS**. It's free, confidential, and you can go during work time.

Get a fresh start. Switch jobs, if you feel like everyone in your current office knows your painful history. Try a tour outside of the building where nobody knows your name.

Focus on doing a good job and ignore any real or imagined whispering behind your back. Your stellar performance will speak for itself and people will begin to judge you on what they observe, not what is

said by others.

You were a high-performing employee once and can be again. We spend half our waking hours at work don't allow yourself to be miserable. Come out of the stairwell and rejoin the workforce; the Agency needs you.

Open Letter to Gossipers

This is a reminder for those who are tempted to indulge in gossip to consider the devastating effect it can have on the person being maligned. It may seem like a harmless pastime, but can have long-lasting and tragic effects.

-Edith