



Backbiting – Socrates and the triple filter test

Socrates was an ancient Greek philosopher who was widely known for his wisdom.

One day he bumped into a friend of his who told him he'd just heard something about a friend of theirs.

Socrates said, 'Before you tell me anything, I'd like to know whether it would pass the triple filter test'. The man looked puzzled. The first filter Socrates explained, is truth.

'Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to say is true?'

The man shook his head and said, 'No, like I said I've just heard about it.'

'Ok then well, is what you want to tell me something good or kind?'

Again, the man shook his head and said,

'No! Actually, it's just the opposite. You see ..."

Socrates lifted his hand to stop his friend from speaking.

'So you're not certain whether it's true, and it isn't good or kind. But there's one more filter.

Is what you want to say, useful or necessary?'

His friend replied, 'No, not really.'

Socrates said, 'If what you want to say isn't true, or good, or useful, please don't say anything.'