

Have you ever heard someone say something cringe-worthy? Or what about when another's actions or choices hurt another individual's feelings or thoughts? What about the same situation but only to harm their reputation? I have seen many times examples of these behaviours, especially, currently employed as a strata manager assistant in property services. But those stories are for another day, let's focus on how these questions are best answered from our modules or research.

"I'm just kidding!", "Why do you take things so personally?", "You are being ridiculous!"<sup>1</sup> all have something in common. They all are examples of clauses that easily could hurt someone else's feelings. While these may seem innocuous, or even naïve, these comments do hurt others. A specific group of people, in particular, feel these comments are especially hurtful. These people are known as highly sensitive people; "someone who tends to feel things more deeply and for longer than the average person."<sup>2</sup> Simply put, they feel all feelings other feels and are highly intuitive to others' emotions with empathy.

While feeling everyone's emotions may seem like a burden, Meenadchi in their powerful book, *Decolonizing Non-Violent Communication*, describes empathy powerfully and uniquely, much the same as being highly sensitive. "We cannot provide empathetic care to others if we are not attuned to our own experience...",<sup>3</sup> which means using the power of empathy means tuning in, observing, listening and being fully present with the feelings involved. This is even harder when someone states something like the above, things become muffled, defeated and deafened.



Similarly, but different, comments that hurt someone's reputation are considered libel. Libel, as the definition states in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "a written or oral defamatory statement or representation that conveys an unjustly unfavorable impression" <sup>5</sup>. Some awful examples of these are all too common, especially with the advent of some social media campaigns. Do this, but not that. Do that, but not with them. Or on some extreme occasions, a rival company claiming the competition is sending them death threats, posting a statement against a polarizing (i.e., abortion, gay rights, marriage, etc.) topic involving someone well-known. Or even when an actor/actress has been caught doing an inappropriate or inaccurate misrepresented action and the tabloids publish it incessantly. Specifically, in the article *Real-World, Public Figure Defamation Examples*, Sarah Palin and David Schwimmer both have had their lives misrepresented by libel <sup>6</sup>, and had to go to court to set the record straight. Also this will damage someone's creditability, reputation, and livelihood.

One has to wonder how these ideas come to fruition or better yet, why people seem to think they won't be caught. Petty at best, these situations do lead to inaccurate publicity. Rarely, do perpetrators and their actions fall out of favour. Fear not, there are some solutions when comments that hurt someone's reputation come up. First, do research, and check things out. See if there is any truth to what comments are being said. Most publications will hire a team of fact-checkers, who simply check the facts to make sure no one commits libel, slander or false information. No one wants to be taken to court, but there is a process when the process is due. Plus, in the case where a rival competition is acting inappropriately, find out if the competition is

truly the competition. Simply put, if a toothbrush company is stating the competition toothbrush company is now selling tazer guns and shooting lambs, this simply isn't consistent with the company's vision and must be investigated. Plus, focusing on the current company and their campaigns is more effective and lets the consumer decide. Lastly, know the truth will prevail every time. Where there is honesty, people see integrity and reputation as all about each of these aspects.

In conclusion, emotions and reputations, like humans, are complex. What one highly sensitive person feels is too much, another might find hilarious. Plus, when these actions start becoming extreme, we are forced to consider if/when this is hurting someone's reputation. I feel, as a writer/editor, it is important to make sure facts are based on truth. And to be mindful if a source is considered offensive or inflammatory. While my first writing teacher used to encourage us to consider our audiences before publishing or submitting anything, I feel it is beyond that now. We must consider our actions as helping or hindering our audiences, and our feelings and reputations matter. Without these in perspective, we are committing libel and it will not be the highly sensitive persons who feel it. Everyone will.

## Sources/Bibliography:

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- 6: Your Dictionary, *Real World Public Figures Defamation Examples*, Mary Gormandy White, Unknown published date, Accessed on September 29, 2022, <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-slander.html>