



American Expression E1504 Go behind someone's back

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The expression "go behind someone's back" is a colloquial phrase that signifies engaging in secretive or deceptive actions without the knowledge or consent of another person who is directly involved or affected by those actions. This phrase is often used in situations where trust, transparency, or open communication is expected, and it typically conveys a sense of betrayal or dishonesty.

Imagine a scenario in a workplace where two colleagues, Alice and Bob, are working on a project together. They have agreed upon a plan and delegated responsibilities. However, if Alice were to secretly alter the project plan or make significant decisions without informing Bob, she would be said to be going behind Bob's back. In this context, her actions undermine the trust and collaboration that are crucial for effective teamwork.

The phrase can also be applied to personal relationships. For example, if a friend were to make plans with someone else for a social gathering without informing you, they would be going behind your back. This type of behavior can lead to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and damage to the trust that underlies healthy friendships.

In some cases, going behind someone's back may involve deceitful or underhanded actions, such as spreading false information or rumors. If someone intentionally spreads rumors about a colleague at work without their knowledge, they are engaging in harmful behavior that can harm both the individual's reputation and the overall work environment.

There are situations where going behind someone's back might be justified or deemed necessary, but they are relatively rare and often linked to specific circumstances. For instance, in cases of safety or ethical concerns, an employee might feel compelled to report a coworker's misconduct to a supervisor without initially informing the coworker. In such cases, the motivation is to protect the well-being of individuals or the organization.

However, even in situations where there may be legitimate reasons to keep information confidential initially, it is essential to eventually communicate openly and honestly with the affected party. Failure to do so can lead to a breakdown of trust and relationships.

In summary, "going behind someone's back" describes actions taken in secrecy or without the knowledge and consent of another person who has a vested interest in the matter. It is often associated with feelings of betrayal, dishonesty, or breach of trust. While there may be rare instances where such actions are deemed necessary for safety or ethical reasons, open and transparent communication is generally vital for maintaining healthy relationships and fostering trust in both personal and professional settings.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you share an example from your personal or professional life where you felt that someone had gone behind your back? How did it affect your relationship with that person, and how did you address the situation?
 2. In what circumstances do you think it may be justifiable or necessary for someone to go behind another person's back without their knowledge or consent? Are there specific ethical or safety considerations that come into play in such situations?
 3. How can individuals and organizations strike a balance between maintaining transparency and privacy when it comes to sensitive information or actions that might involve going behind someone's back?
 4. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to make a difficult choice between going behind someone's back or confronting them directly with your concerns? How did you make that decision, and what were the outcomes?
 5. What strategies or communication techniques do you think are effective in rebuilding trust and resolving conflicts when someone feels that they've been a victim of someone else going behind their back?
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