

Implementing The No Complaining Rule – phase 2

For many people complaining has become a habit. The “No Complaining Rule” is not intended to eliminate all complaining, just mindless, chronic complaining. An even greater aim is to turn justified complaints into positive solutions. In last week’s *Happy School* article, it was suggested to start with a personal “No Complaining Fast”. In phase 2 we look at strategies for changing bad habits.

Life is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you are going to get!

Forrest Gump

It is important to be aware of the difference between justified complaints and habitual complaining about things we have no control over. Mindless complaining focuses on problems whereas justified complaining focuses on solutions. Some teams find it useful to brainstorm current issues or complaints and then record them into columns. On the left side record examples of justified complaints and on the right side record mindless complaints. The best way to stop a bad habit is to replace it with a good habit. Try designating a week as “No Complaining Week”.

Five things to do instead of complain

- 1 Practice Gratitude – on the way to school each day identify three things you are grateful for. This can lead to a measurable boost in happiness and energy.
- 2 Praise Others - instead of complaining about what others are doing wrong, start focusing on what they are doing right.
- 3 Focus on Success - each night, write down one great thing about your day eg an accomplishment, a great conversation or making progress.
- 4 Let go - focus on the things that you have the power to change and let go of the things that are beyond your control.
- 5 Practice mindfulness - take a few minutes each day to calm your mind, steady your breathing and think peaceful thoughts. When you feel the urge to complain or are feeling stressed, stop, be still, take some deep breaths and calm your mind.

Author Jon Gordon suggests **three strategies or tools to help change your habits.**

1 The But → Positive Technique. This simple strategy helps you turn your complaints into positive thoughts and solutions. When you realise you are complaining, you simply add the word **but** and then add a positive thought or positive action. Example: I don’t like driving to work for an hour but I’m thankful I can drive and that I have a job.

2 Focus on “Get To” instead of “Have To”. Too often we focus on what we **have** to do. We say things like “I **have** to go to work.” Instead, shift your perspective and realise it’s not about **having** to do anything. You **get** to do things. You get to live this life. You get to go to work while some are unemployed. Focus on what you get to do. Focus on feeling blessed instead of stressed. Focus on gratitude.

3 Turn Complaints into Solutions. The intent is to eliminate the kind of mindless complaining that doesn’t serve a greater purpose and allow complaining that is justified and worthwhile. The opposite of mindless complaining is justified complaining. The former is negative and the latter is positive. The difference is intent. With mindless complaining, you are mindlessly focusing on problems; however, with justified complaining you identify a problem and the complaint moves you toward a solution. Every complaint represents an opportunity to turn a negative into a positive.

Based on Jon Gordon’s book *“The No Complaining Rule – Positive Ways to Deal with Negativity at Work”*

Key points

For many people complaining has become a habit

Try to eliminate mindless, habitual complaining

Phase 1 was a “No Complaining” fast to increase self-awareness.

Phase 2 is to designate a “No complaining week”

Implement the 5 Things To Do Instead of Complaining

Apply the THREE tools to help change your habits.

Steve Francis MScM, BEd, DipT

www.SteveFrancis.net.au

Steve is an expert in school leadership and work-life satisfaction. Steve was a Principal for 20 years and is the author of four books, ‘Time Management For Teachers’, ‘A Gr8 Life...Live it Now!’, ‘First Semester Can Make or Break You!’ and ‘Attitude is Everything’. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and family but works with school leaders and staff in schools across Australia and internationally.

