

# Replacing Unhelpful Behaviours

Effectiveness

At times our own behaviours do not contribute to a positive school culture and working environment. Replacing behaviours that are adding to the problem with behaviours that are more conducive to a productive atmosphere is a powerful way that we can make a difference in our school. Here are some examples.

## Less Whinging...More Problem Solving

Whinging and complaining can become a habit in schools. Some people are quick to see (*and more than happy to highlight*) the things that are problematic in the school environment. Whether that is unacceptable student behaviour, a perceived lack of resources, an unreliable wifi network, poor internal communication or lackluster leadership, they are keen and eager to provide commentary to anyone who will listen. However, it is far more productive and helpful to replace whinging, with problem solving. Instead of investing valuable time and energy complaining to others about the issue (usually behind the scenes), it is far more effective to raise the issue directly with the party concerned. This needs to be done sensitively and calmly. Using "I" statements can help to avoid the approach being perceived as an attack. Instead of saying, "Communication in our school is terrible. Everything is last minute and we never know what is going on around here."

Try reframing your concern as an "I" statement starting with how you feel. "I feel frustrated when I don't know in advance about upcoming events at school. It would be far more helpful to have a few days notice."

**You are either part of the problem or you are part of the solution.**

**Eldridge Cleaver**

Ideally you should accompany your "I" statement with two or three practical suggestions on how the problem can be solved or the circumstances improved. "Could we have a staff newsletter or briefing at the beginning of the week outlining the events coming this week. An alternative might be to look at the school calendar for the next month at the staff meetings."

## Less Talking...More Listening

Listening twice as much as you speak is an effective ratio. It is often quoted that we have two ears and one mouth for a reason. They should be used in that proportion. This applies to teaching where we can be guilty of too much teacher talk and not enough student thinking. It also applies to being a team member. Listening more provides an opportunity to better connect with colleagues, value the contributions and learn from others. Stephen Covey says if you want to build trust with others, learn to be a great listener.

## Less Cynical...More Optimistic

It can be easy to fall into a 'Pity Pit' and be cynical, especially at the end of the year when we are exhausted. Look for the positive in any situation. Instead of focusing on the 'pain' caused by the problem, challenge or difficult situation, try to identify the opportunity that is presented. For example, when a student with challenging behaviours is very demanding of our time and patience it can be easy to be cynical and feel that their behaviour will never change. This perception isn't helpful. Instead try to look for small changes in their behaviour and to broaden and develop your own skill set and expertise in managing students with challenging behaviours. What other approaches could you try and add to your repertoire? Who has expertise in this area that you could learn from?

## Key points

Replace behaviours that are adding to the problem with more helpful behaviours

Replace whinging with problem solving by raising the issue directly with the person

Use "I" statements and come with suggested solutions

Listen twice as much as you speak

If you want to build trust, learn to be a great listener

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