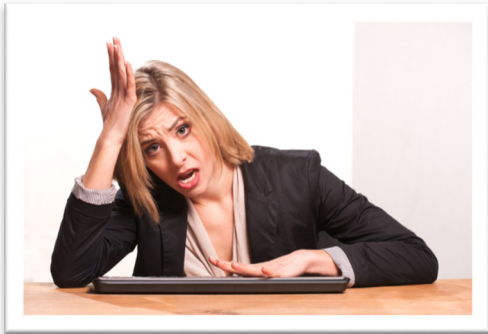


# Can you go 21 days without complaining?

*"I'm so tired." "I can't believe it's snowing again." "What is taking so long?!"*



Complaining can be defined as expressions of dissatisfaction, discontent, protest, resentment, or regret (Gove, 1981). However, complaining *may have nothing to do with dissatisfaction, but an attempt to try to get a particular reaction from others, such as sympathy, approval, attention, or being liked* (Kowalski, 1996).

## *The domino effects of complaining*

Complaining is contagious. Once you complain, chances are the person beside you will complain, resulting in a domino effect of complaining (Kowalski, 1996). The problem is, *we associate complaining with venting our emotions way more than with problem solving. We get things off our chest not to resolve problems or create change. This leaves us feeling helpless, hopeless, and frustrated, and over time, this can impact our mood, self-esteem, and even overall mental health* (Winch, 2012).



### "Good" Complaining

- Telling your friends and family when you're upset – not masking your unhappiness
- Instead of whining, taking positive action to solve problems and create change

### "Bad" Complaining

- Stuck in the "victim mode"
- Constantly talks but rarely listens (does not take advice from others)
- Spread negativity

(Scher, n.d.; Winch, 2012)

## ***THE NO COMPLAINT CHALLENGE!***

Back in the 50s, a plastic surgeon by the name of Maxwell Maltz said, "it required a *minimum of about 21 days* for an old mental image to dissolve and a new one to jell" (Maltz, 1989). **Can you create a life of positive intention for 21 days?**

### **Rules**

1. Wear a bracelet (or elastic band) on either wrist.
2. When you catch yourself complaining, gossiping or criticizing, move the bracelet to the other arm and begin again.
3. If you hear someone else who is wearing a bracelet complain, you can remind him/her to switch the bracelet to the other arm, BUT, you need to move your bracelet first!
4. Do this for 21 days and try to stay with it. It may take many months to break your habit of complaining, but commit to a minimum of 21 days.



Source:

Gove, P. B. (Ed.). (1981). *Webster's third new international dictionary*. Springfield: Merriam-Webster.

Kowalski, R. (1996). Complaints and complaining: Functions, antecedents, and consequences. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119, 179-196.

Maltz, M. (1989). *Psycho-cybernetics, a new way to get more living out of life*. Pocket Books.

Scher, H. Do you complain too much (or not enough)? In *Health and Balance*. Retrieved from <http://www.webmd.com/>

Winch, G. (2012). Does complaining damage our mental health? Retrieved from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/>