



## Episode 164: How to stay calm through complaints (even when it's personal)

Complaints can make you upset, defensive, or self-critical despite your efforts. It can be difficult to stay calm and not be personally hurt, especially when you don't fully know the complaint's underlying cause. Learning to manage your emotions and react appropriately to complaints can make all the difference in your professional and personal life.

Complaints shouldn't affect us the way they usually do. Fortunately, changing how you feel and react to complaints can stop them. Whether constructive or irrational, you can learn to accept criticism.

How does one manage to do this? Don't worry, this workbook has the answers for you. It lets you break down the complaint and consider the outcome.

### Podcast links

[Dental Protection Australia](#)

[Frederik Imbo: How not to take things personally | TED Talk](#)

[Getting to Yes](#) by Roger Fisher and William Ury

Episode 78: Complaints and How to Survive Them [Ep1: Preparing to Fail Well with Drs Sarah Coope, Annalene Weston and Sheila Bloomer](#)

Episode 80: Complaints and How to Survive Them [Ep2: What to Do When You Make a Mistake with Drs Clare Devlin and Dr John Powell](#)

Episode 82: Complaints and How to Survive Them [Ep3: Surviving the Process with Drs Jessica Harland, Caroline Walker, and Heidi Mounsey](#)

[THRIVE Weekly Planner](#)

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## Guest links

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### Quote to remember:

*“Imagine a set of scales and all the people you've done awesome work for, all the people you've helped, and then the one complaint. Why does the one complaint have to weigh more?”*

## What You Will Learn

Yes, receiving a complaint about your work can be incredibly difficult, but what exactly is the reason for this? Through this activity, you will understand why it makes you feel the way it does.

But that's not all. The questions in this activity will help you to reflect on what it means to someone when they submit a complaint. You will learn that it does not always happen on a whim. Sometimes it isn't personal at all.

We'll help you to look to the people that matter most to you and weigh their opinion of you vs that one complainant. Sometimes, we forget that some people know us much better than others do.

By the end of this activity, you will be more confident in yourself in the face of complaints.



## Activity: The “Real” Power of A Complaint

**Q1. What is your greatest fear when you receive a complaint?**

**Q2. In your line of work, what are the complaints usually about? What was a complaint that you took personally?**

**Q3. In Annalene’s experience, practitioners will come at a complaint from two positions: being angry and defensive or being unkind to themselves. Which position did you take when you received this complaint?**

**Q4. Was the complaint about something within your control?**



**Q5. Looking at it from the other person's point of view? What would you see?  
How do you think they saw you when they made their complaint?**

**Q6. Let's take a look at your personal experiences in life. Have you ever made a complaint before? Did you find it an easy thing to do? If you have never made a complaint before, do you think you would be able to?**

**Q7. What could drive you to make a complaint? Would it involve any specific feelings toward the person you were complaining about? What would you expect to happen when you submit your complaint?**



Now that we've done some reflecting let's go back to the complaint you found to be personal.

**Q8. Is there anything you could you have said or done to prevent this person from complaining in the first place?**

**Q10. Complaints are to be expected in any kind of work. In your line of work, what is the worst that can come out of a complaint? Why would it lead to that? Do you think any actions you make that could lead to a complaint would warrant that scenario?**

**Q11. Think about the people who matter in your life and compare them to those who complain. Do you think they would think of you in the same way? If not, why not?**

**Q12. How would those same people treat whilst you were going through a complaint? Would you treat yourself in the same way?**



Q13. How could you be more compassionate and kind to yourself when you receive a complaint? Write down four concrete actions you could take:

**CPD time claimed:**

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