

You Are Not A Frog

Workbook, CPD & Reflection Log



Episode 82: Complaints and How to Survive Them

Episode 3: Surviving the Process with Drs Jessica Harland, Caroline Walker and Heidi Mounsey

Drs Jess Harland, Caroline Walker and Heidi Mounsey join Rachel in this episode to discuss how to look out for yourself when you're facing a work complaint.

Receiving a complaint can be a worrying and isolating experience. Emotions such as shame, anger, frustration, embarrassment and even grief can paralyse us and keep us from caring for ourselves. But we should understand that we are not alone in this experience — everyone makes a mistake or receives a complaint about their work at some point.

There are practical ways to overcome the stress that accompanies mistakes. We should allow ourselves to process our thoughts and emotions in the right way. No one is alone: reach out to others if we need a listening ear or helping hand.

Podcast links

- [Medical Protection](#)
- [Dental Protection](#)
- [NHS Practitioner Health](#)

COVID-19 Supporting Doctors Series

- [E27: On stress and anxiety](#)
- [E28: Dealing with our sadness, anger and grief](#)
- [E30: Moral injury hurts](#)
- [E33: Great expectations?](#)
- [E36: COVID fatigue](#)

Complaints and How to Survive Them Series:

- [E43: COVID boredom](#)
- [E63: Surviving tough times](#)
- [E78: Preparing to Fail Well](#)
- [E80: What to Do When You Make a Mistake](#)
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- Connect with Jess: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#)
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QUOTE TO REMEMBER:

'So I think it's just remembering those basic human needs — to feel that we're not a terrible person, this isn't the end of the world, and there are things that can be done to help us through it.'

What You Will Learn from the Activity

Dealing with a complaint can undoubtedly be stressful and time-consuming. While it's helpful to feel all the emotions that come with it, dwelling on the negative feelings won't benefit you.

Before responding, as much as possible, pause and assess if you're in the right headspace to respond. Ask for an objective lens on the matter from a colleague or another professional, and definitely get advice from your medical defense organisation. They can help you unpack the elements of the complaint and your response. Getting another opinion will help you see the issue from a fresh perspective. This enables you to avoid the extremes of lashing out on the person on the other end and yourself.

You need to give yourself enough time to process the experience of handling a complaint. If you feel stuck, reach out to someone to help you deal with the emotional impact. These aren't always easy conversations, but talking with someone about what you're going through may help ease some of the burden. You can then process and manage the complaint better.

Remember that receiving a complaint happens more commonly than you think. Hopefully, you will recognise the importance of looking out for yourself by reaching out to others and allowing yourself the time and space to cope.

Activity: Surviving the Process

What expectations do you have of yourself in the workplace? Are these realistic? Do you think you need to adjust any expectations?

Expectations for Myself	Can I make this more realistic?

When you receive a complaint, do you feel it's an attack on your professionalism? From where or from whom could you get an objective take on the matter?

What does it mean to internalise your problems? How would it benefit you to share what you're going through?

What boundaries will you set for yourself when you receive a complaint or make a mistake at work? (for example, blocking off enough time to deal with it, not taking on too much extra work, creating time to reflect on the complaint with your colleagues)

What thoughts (stories in your head) do you commonly have when you've made a mistake which aren't helpful to you? Write these down. Then write down a more helpful re-framed thought (what is actually true) e.g. Unhelpful thought: Why on earth did I make that mistake? I must be a dreadful doctor. Thought re-framed: Everyone makes mistakes, it's how we learn - what can I learn from this?

You may benefit from talking these through with a trusted colleague.

Thoughts that do not help	Thoughts re-framed

Are you practising enough self-care? Write a list of things you could do to stop you ruminating and look after yourself better.

Where can you comfortably and safely reach out to for support? This might be a community, a person or a group of people.

CPD time claimed:

For more episodes of You Are Not A Frog, check out our website www.youarenotafrog.co.uk follow Rachel on Twitter @DrRachelMorris and find out more about her online and face to face courses on surviving and thriving at work at www.shapestoolkit.com.