



Episode 90: What to Do About Bitching and Backbiting

with Dr Edward Pooley

In this episode, we are joined by Dr Edward Pooley, a general practitioner and authority in workplace management. He specialises in communication and time management to create a better, happier and more productive workplace. With him, we discuss what we can do when faced with the tricky situation of hearing inappropriate comments about other people.

Edward shares with us how we can stop these uncomfortable situations and create positive changes. We can do so by learning how to challenge others and speak up the right way. Learn the importance of using our own words to make it known that a comment is not okay. Together, let's build a culture of a comfortable and open workplace with healthy communication.

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Quote to remember:

'It is hard to speak up about things but the thing that makes it easier is practise. Because if you do it, someone else will do it... and it then becomes part of the culture.'

What You Will Learn

It can be distressing to hear negative words be spoken about other people, be it judgements about their character, work ethic, or inadequacies. Sometimes you might even think that other people are also talking about you in the same way. These comments divide people and contribute to the negativity and burnout we feel. Ultimately, they become detrimental to your work, relationships, and health.

This workbook recalls and applies Dr Edward Pooley's advice for dealing with these kinds of situations. By learning how to use your own words to speak up and challenge this negativity, you can help foster a better work environment. Identify your own biases and negative thoughts, and learn what you can do to encourage an enjoyable work life for yourself and your co-workers.



Activity: It's Okay to Say It's Not Okay

Q1 Ed gives three categories that drive people to talk about others negatively. Think of some personal experiences you've had that showcase these categories.

An actual problem raised in a wrong way:

A way to connect with co-workers:

A genuine issue that may have serious consequences:

Q2 Many comments can go over the line. Some may inappropriately target gender, race, or ethnicity. Ed advises us to practise caution when challenging these kinds of comments. He gives a four-step process to do exactly this. What should you say in each step?

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:



Step 4:

Q3 There are also times when these comments may not be about a protected characteristic. When we have a bad day or experience burnout, we're more likely to make negative comments. The next time you or a co-worker utter unhelpful words, try these questions out, so you can reflect on each other's perspective.

Why do you think this is happening?

How can you make this feel better?

How might you feel if you were being talked about in the same way?

Q4 Some people may just generally have a negative view of the world. They may also simply have a different way of thinking from yours. So, it's important to find out how to engage them. A simple way to start is by getting to know them, their drive, and their reasons. See if there's something you can do to help them enjoy in the workplace.



Their name	
Their motivations	
How you can help	

Q5 Learn to look at things from a different perspective. Do you have a viewpoint you'd like to challenge? Approach other people who may have different perspectives and ask for their views on it. Note down what they say and see what you can learn.

Person	Their Perspective

Q6 Ed's four-step process gives us examples of what we can say in each step. However, he emphasises that these words must be your own. Imagine a situation in



which you are with your co-workers who are speaking badly about someone else.
What would *you* say?

Remember not to use judgmental words and phrases to avoid triggering feelings of shame and defensiveness.

Make your presence known:

Ask for clarification:

Increase your assertiveness to show that it's not okay:

Another technique that you can use is the “I feel...” statements. Give three ways you can show your discomfort and disagreement using this method.

I feel...

I feel...

I feel...



Practice these statements. Say them to a mirror, in your mind, and most importantly in the situations where you need to speak up. Build a culture of

CPD time claimed:

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