

INCOMPETENCE AND COMPLAINING, ARE THEY RELATED?

I consider myself to have a positive attitude and don't place myself in the same category as complainers, critics and gossips. One dictionary defines the verb complain: 1. to express grief, pain, or discontent. 2. to make a formal accusation or charge. When I express grief, pain and discontent, does that mean that I am a complainer? Oh, I hope not.

With little interest I began reading, *A Complaint Free World*, by Will Bowen. He says that people who constantly complain, criticize or gossip...also deny that they are complaining, just like I try to do. So now I will bravely admit that I complain and criticize—but I try to do it in a positive way!

My interest intensified as I read the title of stage one:

“Unconscious Incompetence.” Bowen claims that complaining comes as the result of being incompetent...incapable of stopping ourselves from complaining, criticizing or gossiping. Ouch! Does that mean that I am incapable, helpless or unwilling to control my words of complaint?

Worse yet, am I ignorant, (which is a lack of knowledge), or too stubborn to admit that I am a complainer? After only a casual historical inventory I admit that I definitely have an unconscious incompetence in the complaining department.

My admission and confession has moved me to Bowen's stage two, “Conscious Incompetence.” I am keenly aware that I complain and now I feel guilty. I feel embarrassed as if I had a placard hanging around my neck advertising my pitiful condition. The words you just read are a complaint! If you felt sorry for me, your sympathy is a reward for my complaint and it could encourage me to use that “weapon” again and again. I could become a professional complainer and grow fat on the sympathy from my victims.

Good news! Bowen provides two more stages that will help us to become capable of controlling our complaining tendencies. Stage three is called Conscious Competence and stage four is Unconscious Competence.

I have tried to humorously describe the first two stages. I admit that I complain and am miserably aware that I am a complainer. What good does this awareness do? It does no good unless I am willing to begin and complete the arduous task of becoming a non-complainer.

We are now ready to begin the next stage that Bowen calls the Conscious Competence. This stage is often an uncomfortable stage because you become hypersensitive. You become sensitive about everything you say. You will discover that you pause before saying something and weigh it more carefully to determine if it is a complaint, criticism or gossip.

You may also discover that you do not talk as much. Silence may become more comfortable. People who talk non-stop may not be comfortable with who they are and use the constant flow of words as a protective wall that keeps others from really knowing who they are.

Stage four of Bowen's book is Unconscious Competence. When a person reaches this stage they are no longer “an ouch looking for a hurt.”

Your thoughts are now on what you want, and not on what you don't like or don't want. You will also notice that you are happier, and the people around you seem happier. Positive and happy people attract that kind of people.

Now if we non-complainers can convince the complainers, critics and gossips to get a copy of Will Bowen's book, *A Complaint Free World*,

and learn to stop complaining, then, we will be more comfortable.

OOPS! Another complaint. Looks like I must go back to page one and start from scratch. Again.