

Are you a Complainer?

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Recently a part time student at a prominent university was speaking to the course coordinator about the end of term assessment filled out by each student concerning their teacher and the way she taught the course. She learned that of all the students enrolled in that class that she was the only

one who had lodged any complaints about the instructor.

Interestingly throughout the entire semester each of the students in this small class would spend each lunch break sitting in the cafeteria complaining about various aspects of this teacher including not being prepared to teach most weeks, arriving late to class and not following through on commitments. Then throughout the week there would be emails flying back and forth between the students further complaining about the quality of instruction.

When asked how come she was the only one to write how she truly felt, the other students claimed that they didn't see any benefit to complaining; after all, 'no one cares how we feel'. This is a very unfortunate sentiment! How can the university

make positive changes when they don't know the reactions of their students? Or is it because we have been conditioned to think that complaining often doesn't get us anywhere except possibly being labeled a complainer!

How many of us sit by passively either apathetic to lodging a complaint or afraid of what our complaint will unleash.

Yes we often know someone who is a chronic complainer who seems to be unhappy with many different things. Sometimes we know that person rather personally. But I am not referring to this type of situation. I am referring to individuals who have a legitimate concern.

Perhaps you are someone in authority who has had a staff member approach you with a complaint but you have either given no weight to it or have dismissed this person in some way. Have you ever considered what that does to the person and the repercussion that might ensue? For example if a subordinate reports that a staff member is surfing the internet for pornography and you do not take action, what is the message you are sending to that staff member, other staff and the person surfing. If there is a report of theft and you take no action, what else are you allowing to happen? Keeping your head in the sand only makes things worse. Maybe these examples seem very extreme but even a smaller complaint lodged still bears consideration and time.

Morale becomes a much bigger issue when someone's concerns are dismissed. Loyalty, work ethic and trust also go down the shute.

Maybe you are the person whose complaint has been dismissed. So what do you do? Well the first thing is to acknowledge that you feel that you have done the right

thing. Often the hardest part is standing up and being heard. Even if your words have gone unheeded know that you have had your say and spoken up. Is it possible or necessary to take your complaint to a higher authority? In certain circumstances it does take courage to lodge a complaint but what is the bigger cost to you to say nothing. \$



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