



Will Bowen



Will Bowen

#1 International Bestselling Author
World Authority on Complaining

Welcome!

Thousands of teachers have seen their classrooms transform right before their eyes using my *Complaint Free Schools* curriculum.

Complaining is rampant in our society and children are masters at using complaints to get their social needs met.

This program will help you and your students understand complaining and develop new skills for relating with people in a more positive manner.



Before You Begin

1. Read my #1 International Bestselling book *A Complaint Free World*.
2. Watch a Live Training I presented to over 500 top school principals:

www.WillBowenLive.com

3. We offer a “**Teacher’s Package**,” which includes a copy of *A Complaint Free World* book, DVD of *A Complaint Free Revolution* movie, Complaint Free tote bag, bumper sticker and 50 purple Complaint Free Bracelets at a greatly reduced price. This package is for teachers only.

www.ComplaintFreeSchools.com

4. While you’re there, download the FREE **Complaint Free Zone** poster and print off a bunch of copies. Put them all over your room so that each child is constantly reminded that your classroom is a **Complaint Free Zone!**



About the Complaint Free Phenomenon



The Complaint Free World program began in July of 2006 when Will Bowen handed out approximately 250 purple bracelets to people to encourage them to think more positively.

The idea was simple: put a purple bracelet on either wrist and, when you catch yourself complaining, switch the bracelet to the other wrist.

Scientists estimate that it takes 21 consecutive days of doing the same thing for it to become a habit. By switching the bracelet from wrist to wrist with each complaint until you have gone 21 consecutive days, you will free of the habit of complaining.

To date, **more than 11 million Complaint Free purple bracelets have been distributed in over 106 countries.**

A Complaint Free World has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show, NBC's Today Show, ABC World News Tonight, CBS Sunday Morning, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and in People, Newsweek and myriad magazines, newspapers and broadcasts worldwide.

Thousands of schools, businesses and other organizations have used the purple bracelets to positively transform attitudes and life experiences.

Thousands of schools worldwide have used the purple bracelets to transform the lives of students, teachers, sports teams and entire schools. Some of their stories are shared herein.

For more information, go to ***www.WillBowen.com***, or send us an email ***Customer Service@WillBowen.com***.

Contents

Welcome	2
Before You Begin	2
About the Complaint Free Phenomenon	3
Contents	4
Guidelines for Success	5
Lesson 1: What is Complaining?	6
Lesson 2: Criticism and Gossip	7
Lesson 3: What's Wrong with Complaining?	8
Lesson 4: Why do People Complain	9
G.R.I.P.E. – The 5 Reasons People Complain	10 - 13
Lesson 5: The Frog Buffet	14
Lesson 6: The Attitude of Gratitude Part 1	15
Lesson 7: The Attitude of Gratitude Part 2	16
Lesson 8: Silver Linings	17
Lesson 9: What You See is What You Get	18
Lesson 10: Commencement	19

Guidelines for Success

1. Have enough bracelets for each student and extras in case they are broken or lost (www.AComplaintFreeWorld.org).
2. Use the bracelets for their intended purpose. When someone complains, simply take the bracelet off and move it to the other wrist. Don't encourage the kids to snap them on their wrists.
3. Don't be a bracelet cop. Let the kids learn to catch themselves complaining.
4. Remind the kids that this is not a competition. Approach this as a game and see who will win the Complaint Free contest first!
5. No put-downs, only put-ups! During these Complaint Free lessons set ground rules with the kids that there will be no teasing or putting each another down.
6. Lead by example. Move your bracelet when you complain and let them share your Complaint Free journey with you.
7. Each lesson begins with a “**Journal Prompt**” to get the students thinking and writing. If your school does not use journaling as a teaching tool, make sure the kids have paper so they can do this exercise.
8. Each lesson is designed to run 20-45 minutes depending on the size of the class and the age of the students. You may want to present this daily for two weeks or weekly for ten weeks.
9. Begin lessons 2-10 with a recap of the previous lesson and by celebrating those who are doing well. **Ask questions like:**
 - “What day are you on?”
 - “Who made it a whole day without moving their bracelet?”
 - “What sorts of feelings are coming up for you as you participate in this program?” “
 - What are you noticing as you do this?”
10. And, most importantly, **Have fun!**

How This Works

Scientists estimate it takes 21 days to form a new habit and complaining is habitual for most of us.

1. Begin to wear the bracelet, on either wrist.

2. When you catch yourself complaining, (it's ok, everyone does) move the bracelet to the other arm and start your 21 days over again at day one.

3. Remember, *“THERE'S NO SHAME IN DAY 1!”* Anyone who succeeds at becoming Complaint Free spends a LOT of time on Day 1!

4. Stay with it. The average person takes 4-8 months to go 21 consecutive days Complaint Free

Lesson 1: What is Complaining?

Complain:(verb) to express grief, pain, or discontent

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Complaining is not to be confused with informing someone of a mistake or deficiency so that it can be put right.

And to refrain from complaining doesn't necessarily mean putting up with bad quality or behavior.

"There is no ego in telling the waiter your soup is cold and needs to be heated up—if you stick to the facts, which are always neutral. 'How dare you serve me cold soup...?' That's complaining.

—Eckhart Tolle,
A New Earth



Materials Needed: A Complaint Free bracelet for each student.



Journal Prompt: “You can complain because roses have thorns; or you can rejoice because thorns have roses.” —Ziggy



Activity 1: There are complaints and then there are statements of fact. Facts are neutral, complaints are charged with negativity. Read each of the following and ask the kids to guess if you're stating facts or complaining.

- **FACT:** “It’s hot today.”
- **COMPLAINT:** “I am so tired of this hot weather; is it *ever* going to cool off?”
- **FACT:** “You didn’t bring in your homework.”
- **COMPLAINT:** “Over and over I ask you to bring your homework in on time and you still don’t listen to me.”
- **FACT:** “I feel tired.”
- **COMPLAINT:** “I’m so tired!!!!”
- **FACT:** “She’s wearing a green sweater and purple pants.”
- **COMPLAINT:** “I can’t believe she’d wear that ugly outfit to school.”
- **FACT:** “Our team has lost 7 games in a row this season.”
- **COMPLAINT:** “Our team stinks!”



Activity 2: Give each student a purple Complaint Free bracelet and have them walk around the room and approach one another. Have them complain about something and, when they do, switch their bracelets. Let this go on for 3 to 5 minutes.



Discussion:

- “What were some of the complaints you heard?”
- “How did it feel to listen to all this complaining?”
- “Are you ready to become a Complaint Free Person?”

Lesson 2: Criticism and Gossip



Materials Needed: A 5-pound (or larger) sack of potatoes, an empty sack, a tube of toothpaste and moist towelettes



Journal Prompt: “Complaining is like bad breath. You tend to notice it when it comes out of someone else’s mouth, but not when it comes out of your own.” —Will Bowen



Activity 1: Give one student an empty sack and invite them to walk around with the sack. Ask if the weight of the sack feels heavy (it doesn’t) and if it’s weighing them down (it isn’t). Then, let the other students, one by one, drop potatoes into the sack as they shout the word, “**CRITICISM.**” When they are done, again ask the student with the sack if it feels heavy (it should) and if it’s weighing them down (it is).



Discussion:

- “How does it feel when someone criticizes you?”
- “How does criticism make you feel weighed down?”
- “How does it feel when someone compliments you?”



Activity 2: Put a small dot of toothpaste on one student’s palm saying loudly the word, “**GOSSIP!**” Hand that student the tube and have them place a small dot in the next kid’s hand saying loudly the word, “**GOSSIP!**” Let each student do this in turn until all have a dot of toothpaste on their palm from the toothpaste tube. Now, tell them that you found out that the gossip you started wasn’t true so you want to take it back. Ask the last child to try and put the “gossip” (toothpaste) back in the toothpaste tube and then pass it to the previous child to do likewise. Obviously, it’s not possible to return the toothpaste to the tube. Clean up with the towelettes.



Discussion:

- “Why do people gossip?”
- “What can you do if someone else gossips to you?”
- “How would you feel if you knew others were gossiping about you?”

This program has totally changed our school.

The kids are more upbeat and positive.

Parents approach me in the grocery store to thank me for bringing the Complaint Free concept to our community.

Robin Faulk
Signal Mountain
Middle
Signal Mountain, TN

Lesson 3: What's Wrong with Complaining?

Comments from Rebecca Stallings' 8th Graders

Homewood Middle
Homewood, AL

I think my life has gotten better because of the purple bracelet. My mom and dad seem happier.

- Christien Pham

It has worked and my parents can tell a difference in my attitude.

- Liza Spencer

Before my teacher gave out the bracelets, we had a discussion about those people who don't have all the things we have. So now anytime I am faced with an unpleasant situation, I remember the bracelet and say...It could be worse.

- Paige Williams

Once you start acting happier by not complaining, you get used to it. You are always happier.

- Rebecca Atkinson



Materials Needed: (Older students only – no materials for younger kids) Monty Python's "The 4 Yorkshiremen" available on YouTube. Or, download the script at <http://www.davidpbrown.co.uk/jokes/monty-python-four-yorkshiremen.html>



Journal Prompt: "Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain." —Lilly Tomlin



Activities:

- Older students: Either play the Monty Python sketch or hand it out to 4 students to act the scene out. Discuss.

- All students: If the weather is nice and you can go outside, tell everyone you're going on a nature hike. If not, pretend to take a nature hike in the classroom. Have everyone line up behind the teacher and start to walk. The teacher will begin with a complaint about the hike and each student, in turn, will complain as well. **Don't worry about moving your bracelets during this exercise.**

Examples: "This heat is killing me," "My feet hurt," "The bugs are biting," "I'm sweating like a pig," "This is messing up my hair," "Are we there yet?," "My allergies are acting up," "The sun hurts my eyes," "I just know I'm going to get a sunburn."

Stop! Now, tell the class you've decided to go on a different nature hike. One you're all going to enjoy. Again, the teacher leads off but says something positive about the hike. Then, each student, in turn, says something positive.

Examples: "Aren't the trees beautiful?" "The birds sound great," "The breeze feels nice," "The sun feels good on my skin," "I love going for walks with my friends," "It's so peaceful out here," "Look at all the different colors," "Smell the fresh air,"



Discussion:

- "Which hike would you enjoy more?"
- "What could you have done to make the first hike more enjoyable?"
- "Can you see how your life is like a hike and you choose your experience by what you say?"

Lesson 4: Why do People Complain?



Materials Needed: (1) Copy of G.R.I.P.E. — 5 Reasons People Complain (Page 13) for every 4 - 6 students



Journal Prompt: “Do not anticipate trouble, or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight.”
—Benjamin Franklin



Activity: Explain to the kids the 5 reasons people complain. Then, have them sit in circles of 4 - 6. Place the G.R.I.P.E. list in the middle of each group and read each of the following complaints one at a time asking the kids to slap or point at the reason they feel represents the nature of the complaint and. Let the kids come up with their own complaints for everyone to categorize.

- **“I hate what I have for lunch today.”** [Get attention --“Notice me.”], [INSPIRE ENVY --“This food doesn’t measure up to my tastes.”], [POWER--“I want your lunch”]
- **“School starts too early.”** [Get attention --“Notice me.”], [Remove responsibility --“I didn’t get enough sleep, I probably won’t do well on the test today.”]
- **“This book is too big; I’ll never finish it.”** [Get attention--“Notice me.”], [Remove responsibility--“This book is too big so I won’t read it.”]
- **“Everyone in my family is slow”** [Remove responsibility--“I’m late because I was born with this trait.”]
- **“That TV show is stupid.”** [Inspire envy--“My standards are higher than this.”], [Power --“I want to change the channel and watch something else.”]
- **“I can’t do this”** [Get attention --“Notice me.”] [Remove responsibility--“I can’t so I wont.”], [POWER--“Maybe I can convince you or someone else to do it for me.]
- **“Nobody ever says thank you for anything I do.”** [Get attention--“Notice me.”], [Inspire envy--“Look at all the things I do. I do more than anyone.”]

Discussion:



- “Why do YOU complain most often (G.R.I.P.E)?”
- “What positive statements might you make when you’re tempted to complain?”
- “Name some complaints and why people express them?”

As a school nurse, I deal as much with hurting emotions as with hurting bodies.

I began to give the purple bracelets out to kids who were having challenges and came to see me.

I’ve watched the bracelets make a huge difference in the lives of some very troubled kids.

I gave a purple bracelet to a student who was having some really big issues. It got her on the road to thinking about how she could change her thinking and change her life.

I’ve also noticed that the teachers in our school are complaining a lot less and the purple bracelets have helped me, personally, to learn to live in the moment.

Patricia Land
Notre Dame Catholic
High School
Fairfield, CT

People Complain for one of five reasons as remembered by the acronym

G.R.I.P.E.

Get Attention

Connecting to other people is a basic human need. A person may complain to a stranger about the weather or a local sports team as a means of just starting a conversation.

“Man, that’s four darn days in a row when the temperature’s been over 95 degrees!”

TRANSLATION: *Hello, Please talk to me.*

“The traffic was lousy this morning.”

TRANSLATION: *Now, please complain to me about your commute so we’ll have something to talk about.*

Silence the Complaints: When someone complains to **Get attention**, ask them, “What’s going well with (whatever they’re complaining about). For example, if they’re griping about their job, keep asking, “What’s going well with your job?” Or, “What do you like about where you work?”

Remove Responsibility

When given a task, people complain about the conditions surrounding the task as a way not being responsible for completing the job satisfactorily.

“I don’t think I can fit that into my calendar. I’m so busy with all this extra work the boss keeps dumping on me. I’m overwhelmed as it is. It’s not fair.”

TRANSLATION: *I’m not going to do what you’re asking. And, I’m using my boss as an excuse.*

“Mom, Ashley just texted me. She says that our teacher Mr. Jones said the project has to be on yellow poster board and not blue! Mr. Jones is always changing his mind and he’s never clear. It’s not my fault—it’s his!”

TRANSLATION: *Mom, I wasn’t paying attention when the teacher gave out instructions for my project. Don’t expect me to receive a good grade on this school project.*

Silence the Complaints: When someone complains to **Remove Responsibility** they are building a case to prove that what is being asked of them is impossible—so they don’t have to do it; or, do it well. They are complaining to be let off the hook. Ask, “If it were possible, how might you do it? With every complaint about the assigned task, keep asking, “If it were possible, how might you do it?”

Inspire Envy [Brag]

People complain about people who are not like them as a way of making themselves look superior by comparison. And, they complain about things and events as a way of impressing people with their high standards.

“Yeah, Cheryl’s team did a good job on the project—well, more of an okay job—actually. They were two weeks behind on delivery and I can’t believe they let that computer bug slip through!”

TRANSLATION: *My team would have done things on time and better. Why? Because I’m a better manager than Cheryl.*

“You thought that was a good movie? Seriously? You’ve got to be kidding. The acting was stiff, the story was weak and the music did nothing to move the plot along.”

TRANSLATION: *I know a lot about movies. You should admire me and let me tell you more.*

Silence the Complaints: Someone complaining to Inspire Envy is actually wanting to be complimented and reassured. Therefore, compliment them for their underlying need. In the two examples, above, you might say, “You’re a great leader and your team produces what they promise on time, every time.” And, “You seem to know a lot about movies, what’s the coolest trend you’ve seen in films recently?”

Power

There is strength in numbers. People complain to build alliances with others to increase power.

“Jim is a good guy but he’s just not supervisor material. Half the time he’s late and I really don’t think he’s that smart.”

TRANSLATION: *I want that supervisor job! So, help me spread negativity about Jim because he’s my competition.*

“Dad, Scott and Megan are playing and they won’t let me play. And, they’re using your hammer and you told us not to play with your tools.”

TRANSLATION: *Dad, I feel left out. You’re bigger than all of us. Make my brother and sister play with me.*

Silence the Complaints: There is an old saying, “When two gorillas are fighting, stay out of the jungle.” When someone complains to get you on their side to gain power over someone else, refuse to get involved. Keep telling the complainer, “It sounds like you and he (or she) have a lot to talk about.” You might even offer to set up a meeting between the two--this will clearly show them that you choose not to get involved with their complaining power struggle.

Excuse Poor Performance

Excuse Poor Performance is the past tense version of a complaint to **Remove Responsibility** (the R in GRIPE, above).

When someone complains to **Remove Responsibility** they are telling you in advance that they are going to fail at something they should do in the future and they want to convince you that it's not going to be their fault.

When someone complains to **Excuse Poor Performance**, they have already failed at something and are complaining because they, also, want you to believe that it's not their fault.

“I know I said I’d bring home salad stuff but I got caught up at work in some of Carla’s last minute nonsense and it just made me forget.” TRANSLATION: *I’m blaming my forgetfulness on something totally unrelated but if you buy it, I’m off the hook.*

“I tried to get the report in on time but I didn’t get the numbers from the accounting department soon enough.”
TRANSLATION: *I actually waited until the last minute to ask the people in accounting for what I need. But, technically they didn’t get it to me so it’s their fault not mine.*

Silence the Complaints: People complaining to **Excuse Poor Performance** have already fallen short on what they were assigned to do. To dig into a past mistake only invites them to complain more and create excuses. Instead, invite them to figure out what they will do differently in the future by asking, “How do you plan to make sure things go better next time?” Variations on, “What can you do to make sure this goes better in the future?” will get them focused on succeeding in the future.

THE 5 REASONS PEOPLE COMPLAIN



Get Attention

Remove Responsibility

Inspire Envy

Power

Excuse Poor Performance

A Complaint Free World™.org

Lesson 5: The Frog Buffet

I am the captain of the Rock Bridge High School Color Guard in Columbia Missouri.

We have not had a winning season in ten years and at the beginning of this season we were not being very productive because everyone was just being generally negative.

We got the purple bracelets for every member of the guard. We watched each other and encouraged the Complaint Free mindset. We all (10 of us) reached 21 consecutive Complaint Free days in a little over 2 months.

During the process, one of the girls was injured while practicing. She cried but refused to complain about her injuries because she didn't want to drag everyone down.

This mindset has led us to a very successful season...
>>Continued...



Materials Needed: Gummy frogs—enough for each student. You can get them at many bulk candy stores or by going to Amazon.com and doing a search of all of Amazon.com for “GUMMY FROGS.” Many other internet stores sell them as well.



Journal Prompt: *I would love to _____ (a goal or dream). But I have avoided doing, or been afraid to do _____.*



Activity: One of the most common reasons people complain is to Remove Responsibility and, thereby, avoid taking action. Before we try something new, especially if it seems like a big, almost impossible task, we may complain to avoid trying.

Have students share either in partners or aloud their Journal Prompt answer to the question, “I would love to _____; But I have avoided doing, or been afraid to do _____.”

Next, have them make a list of (5) five things they can do to move them toward a goal they desire. Invite them to share these steps with their partner or aloud.



Have each student write out the following:
“I deserve my goal. Before I go to bed tonight, I will _____.”

Get each student to write down and commit to one solid step they can reasonably take to get started on their goal that day. Share this old saying, “If you have to eat a frog, it’s best to eat it first thing in the morning and get it over with. If you have to eat two frogs, eat the biggest one first.”

Right now, taking action seems like a big frog you’ve got to eat.

Show them the gummy frogs and say, “**When you do what you have committed to do for your goal, THEN you get a gummy frog.**”

Lesson 6: Attitude of Gratitude Part 1



Materials Needed: Gummy frogs, a beach ball, balloon or other inflatable ball



Journal Prompt: *I deserve the goal I have set for myself. To get me to my goal, today I will*

_____.



Activity: Ask who took action toward their goal (“ate the frog”). Let them share what they did and give those who took action a gummy frog to eat.

The opposite of complaining is gratitude. We should talk about things we are thankful for rather than things we are unhappy about. Our minds are like steering wheels; they take us in the direction we point them. If we focus on negative things, we will notice and attract more negative things in our life. If we focus on positive things, we will move in the direction of greater happiness and more success.

Today, we’re going to see how grateful we can be. If possible, have the students sit in a large circle. Tell them you’re going to say something you are grateful for and then tap the ball or balloon to another student who must say something they are grateful for and tap it to another student. The idea behind the exercise is to keep the ball or balloon moving and have each say something they are grateful for as they tap the ball to someone else. Ideally, this should continue from kid to kid, over and over for several minutes.

Discussion:



- “How did it feel to come up with things you are grateful for?”
- “What was it like to sit and listen to all the things other kids are grateful for?”
- “What would your days be like if you were always having grateful thoughts?”

... In our first competition we placed first in our division and first over all out of all the bands!

At our largest competition (Greater St. Louis Marching Festival) we placed 4th out of almost 75 bands. We then went on to win the University of Missouri competition.

So, for ten years we have had losing seasons and then, this year, we won nearly every competition we were involved in.

I credit our success to the purple bracelets and just want to thank you for not only giving us a winning season but bringing us all so much closer together.

My greatest thanks!

Tori Grothoff
Sophomore
Rock Bridge High School
Columbia, Missouri

Lesson 7: Attitude of Gratitude Part 2

FAQs

Isn't blowing off steam by complaining healthy?

No, studies have found that “blowing off steam” does nothing but upset the complainer as well as those unfortunate enough to sit through the complaints.

How can I get someone else to stop complaining?

Ben Franklin said, “The best sermon is a good example.” As you begin to improve your life by not complaining, you will inspire everyone around you to give up complaining, too.

If I think a complaint but don't speak it do I have to move my bracelet?

No, only if you speak a complaint aloud should you move your bracelet to the other wrist.



Materials Needed: Gummy frogs, Magazines, catalogs, brochures (optional), Markers and Paper



Journal Prompt: “If you ever stopped to truly count all your blessings, you’d discover that you have no time for complaining.” —Will Bowen



Activity: Ask who took action toward their goal (“ate the frog”). Let them share what they did and give those who took action a gummy frog. Invite them to share how they feel.

Often, we find that we do very well being Complaint Free except in certain circumstance or around certain people. It is during those times when we are tempted to gripe that we should remind ourselves of what we have to be grateful for.

Give each student paper and let them draw images and/or make lists of things for which they are grateful. If you choose to do so, let them cut out images from magazines or download them from the Internet.

Then, ask the student to post their completed page filled with images and words of gratitude in the place where they are most likely to complain. Tell them, when they are tempted to complain, to take a breath and look at the list of things for which they are grateful. Then, choose to say something positive and constructive rather than something negative and destructive.

Discussion:



- “Where are you most likely to complain?”
- “Who, when you’re around them, makes you feel like you want to complain?”
- “What might you do when you are with this person so as not to have to move your bracelet?”

Lesson 8: Silver Linings



Materials Needed: Magazines, catalogs, brochures (optional), Markers and paper



Journal Prompt: “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” —Sir Winston Churchill



Activity: Sometimes things you think are bad actually turn out be good. You might lose something and, while searching for the lost item, find something else you had lost before and given up hope of finding. Or, school might be closed due to inclement weather on the day you were to take a field trip you were really looking forward to taking. Then, you end up having a particularly wonderful day with your family or friends.

Share this quote by Will Bowen from *A Complaint Free World*:

“Think of a slingshot. What determines how far a stone from a slingshot will fly? The answer is: “how far back you’ve pulled the band on the slingshot.” If you study the lives of successful people, you will find that their success was not in spite of their life challenges but often because of them. They took what happened to them and used it to help them grow. They stopped telling everyone how much they were wronged and began to look for the blessings in their challenges. And looking, they found them. Their sling shot was pulled back far, but as a result, they soared even farther.”



Give each student paper and let them draw or write down things they think are bad. Then, invite them to journal or draw what might actually be the good behind what they perceived as bad. Or, what might be a positive outcome of the bad situation.

Discussion:



- “Who can you name whose had bad things happen to them but still had a great life?”
- “What things that might be called “bad” could actually help someone grow and succeed?”
- “What “bad” things have happened in your own life that turned out to be good?”

I teach ‘Schools-to-Career’ for seniors who, because of financial challenges, must work after school each day earning only minimum wage. 95% of our seniors are in this program. Feeling they are getting an unfair deal from the world they live in, many of these students are bitter and angry.

I gave out the Complaint Free bracelets to these young men and women and noticed it helped their attitudes. Even after they graduated, many continued wearing the bracelets and working to become Complaint Free because they realized it helped them focus on the good in their lives.

This has really helped our students. The world would be a better place if we’d all be given a purple bracelet when we are born.

Melissa Monte
Passaic Valley High
Little Falls, NJ

Lesson 9: What You See Is What You Get

Ours are young kids, K - 6, and I'm thrilled with the impact this is having in just a couple of weeks. The kids are coming up to me saying how positively it is affecting their lives. They seem very aware of their words and that has improved their behavior.

We're just two weeks into this program and are amazed by the results. Kids are sharing like never before and are feeling positive and dynamic. Some of the parents are owning up to the fact that they, themselves, complain and have asked their kids to bring the purple bracelets home.

I didn't realize how difficult it would be not to complain but I'm staying with it and my whole family has taken the challenge.

Julie Simms
Overton Elementary
Overton, TX



Materials Needed:

- Optical illusions - You can get a book from the library such as *The Ultimate book of Optical Illusions* or another similar book. Or do a Google search and print some off that are not copyrighted. Check out: <http://www.illusions.org>.
- Pictures and frames or pieces of cut poster board that can be used to simulate a frame.



Journal Prompt: “Problems are opportunities in work clothes.” — Ann Landers



Activity: Share some optical illusions with the students and have a discussion about the fact that they may see an optical illusion one way, but when it is pointed out to them or if they look hard enough, they can begin to see it another way.

Next, hand out photos, prints or images you've downloaded and printed or cut from magazines. Invite the kids to put frames around each using either real frames or laying pieces of poster board over the corners.



Discussion: “When you put the frame on the picture, do you notice it changes or do you see something more or less than without the frame?”



Next, have them change the frame. They can switch frames with another student or create a new frame using a different color piece of poster board.



Discussion:

- “Does the picture look different than it did before?”
- “How is it different?”
- “What things in your life might you “reframe” (look at differently) and see more positively?”

Lesson 10: Commencement



Materials Needed: Permanent Markers



Journal Prompt: “The biggest adventure you can ever take is to live the life of your dreams.” —Oprah Winfrey



Discussion: In this final lesson, we begin with discussion. Recap the lessons so far and ask kids to share their experiences using questions such as:

- What is complaining?
- Are complaints good or bad? Explain.
- How does it feel to be around someone who complains?
- What is gossip?
- What is criticism?
- What feelings have come up for you in these lessons?
- How long have you been able to go without complaining?
- How would your life improve if you stopped complaining?



Activity: Have each student think of one word that best captures their Complaint Free experience (examples might include, “happy,” “peaceful,” or “joy”).

Or, they may think of a word of commitment to becoming Complaint Free (examples might include “dedication,” “success,” or “promise”).

Then, have them turn their purple bracelet inside out and write the word on the inside. Allow the ink to dry and then turn the bracelet right side out and put it back on.



Discussion: Invite everyone to discuss additional feelings or questions.

I gave the bracelets out to 100 girls in our Girls' Leadership Program and I can't tell you enough how much it has improved their lives.

It has helped them academically and most importantly it has helped them to stop gossiping and being mean to each other. Students have matured, they are focused more in school, and they aren't talking about one another.

They are starting to understand the power of their minds. I can't thank you enough.

The girls in the leadership program are so excited about these bracelets that they want me to give some to their parents and other people they know.

I see these girls changing as a result of simply not complaining.

Edward R. Byrne
MS 101
Bronx, NY

