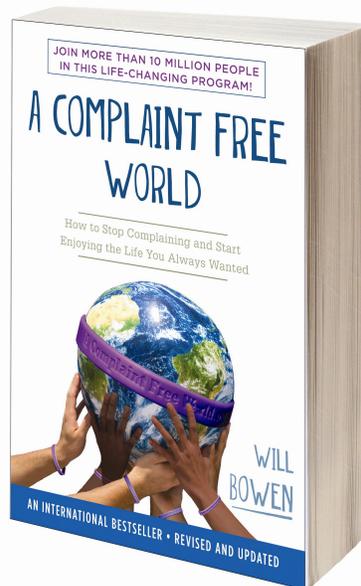


Complaint Free® Businesses

Workbook



A Program for Positive Transformation Based on



“If you don’t like something, change it; if you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.”

Maya Angelou

©2009 – Present / Lamplighter, Inc.
5559 NW Barry Rd. #234
Kansas City, MO 64154

“Complaint Free” and Silicone Bracelets with “Complaint Free” are trademarks of lamplighter, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Getting Started	1
How this Works	1
For Facilitators	2
Background	3

PART 1: WHAT IS COMPLAINING?

Complaint vs. Fact Exercise	4
Journal and Share	5

PART 2: WHY IS COMPLAINING DESTRUCTIVE?

Writing Exercise	6
Journal and Share	7

PART 3: WHY DO PEOPLE COMPLAIN?

Examples of Complaints	8
Journal and Share	9

PART 4: HOW DO I BECOME COMPLAINT FREE?

Writing Exercise	10
Journal and Share	11

CONCLUSION

Commit to A Complaint Free Life	12
Exercise	13
Success Stories	14 - 15
Complaint Free Zone	18
G.R.I.P.E. Poster	19
Answer Key	20

Introduction

Introduction: A Complaint Free® World

“Complaining is like bad breath. You notice it when it comes out of someone else’s mouth, but not when it comes out of your own.” – Will Bowen

Getting Started

We highly recommend you read “A Complaint Free World – How to Stop Complaining and Start enjoying the Life You Always Wanted,” by Will Bowen. This inspiring and easy-to-read book gives you a better grasp of the concepts and provides in-depth understanding of how to help yourself and others quit complaining—for good.

This

ICON KEY

 Exercises

 MOVIE

workbook is designed to be used in conjunction with the *Complaint Free Revolution* MOVIE which is available for purchase at www.AComplaintFreeWorld.org.

How this works:

Scientists believe it takes 21 days to form a new habit and complaining is a habit.

1. Put the bracelet on either wrist.
2. When you catch yourself complaining, criticizing or gossiping (it’s ok, everyone does) move the bracelet to the other wrist and start your 21 days over again at Day 1. Remember, “There’s no shame in Day 1!”
4. Stay with it. The average person takes 4-8 months to go 21 consecutive days without complaining.

For Facilitators

Preparation

- View the MOVIE, “A Complaint Free Revolution.” In addition, we highly recommend you read the book, “A Complaint Free World—How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life You Always Wanted” by Will Bowen for additional context and information.
- Review this workbook to familiarize yourself with the questions, exercises and discussion points. The fill-in-the-blank answers can be found at the end.
- Have enough Complaint Free purple bracelets and workbooks to distribute to all participants. Order Complaint Free bracelets and download free workbooks at www.AComplaintFreeWorld.org.
- Set aside about two and a half hours for your group to watch the MOVIE and engage in the activities. If necessary, you can break the program into three 30-minute and one final 45-minute session. If you do so, for optimal results we recommend you schedule the sessions as closely together as possible (ideally all within the same week).

Guidelines for Success

- “There’s no shame in Day 1!” Remember this and repeat it to yourself and others—often. To become Complaint Free, you’re going to be on Day 1 dozens if not hundreds of times. Just smile, switch your bracelet and stay with it!
- Keep extra Complaint Free bracelets on hand to replace lost or broken ones. (It commonly takes several months for people to successfully achieve 21 days of not complaining.)
- Don’t be a bracelet cop. Don’t point out someone’s complaints and discourage your participants from doing so. The objective of the program is to help individuals learn to catch them selves complaining.
- Celebrate success however small. Even 5 minutes not complaining is a big achievement for some people. Remind everyone this is not a competition; it’s an individual journey.
- Keep it positive. During group discussions, set ground rules that there be no teasing or putting one another down in any way.
- Lead by example. If you complain while you’re facilitating the session, move your bracelet and allow the others to share your journey.
- To increase the level of engagement and success of your group members, schedule follow-up meetings or provide a means to encourage one another and share successes.

Background

A Complaint Free World® began in July of 2006 when Will Bowen handed out purple bracelets to people in Kansas City, Missouri. His objective was to encourage them to think more positively. The idea was simple: put a purple, rubber bracelet on either wrist and, when you catch yourself complaining, switch the bracelet to the other wrist.

Scientists believe that it takes 21 consecutive days of a new behavior for it to become habitual. So, by switching the bracelet from wrist to wrist with each complaint until one has gone 21 consecutive days without complaining, a person can establish the habit of being Complaint Free.

Inspired with their experience and results, the first participants began describing it to their friends, families and co-workers. A reporter at the *Kansas City Star* wrote about a story about the phenomenon. The news spread and Bowen began getting calls and doing interviews around the world. In 2007, he wrote, “A Complaint Free World -- How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life you Always Wanted,” which has become a #1 international best-seller.

A Complaint Free World has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show, NBC's Today Show, ABC Evening News, CBS Sunday Morning, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and in People, Newsweek and a myriad of worldwide, magazines, newspapers and broadcasts. Thousands of schools, businesses and other organizations have used the purple bracelets to positively transform attitudes and life experiences.

More than 11 million Complaint Free bracelets have been distributed to people in 106 countries.

For more information visit www.AComplaintFreeWorld.org or send us an email at CustomerService@WillBowen.com.

Part 1: What is Complaining?



MOVIE

Fill in the blanks below as you watch the MOVIE. At the conclusion of part 1, turn off the MOVIE and complete the exercises that follow. If needed, you can find the answers on p. 16 of this workbook.

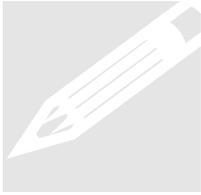
1. The dictionary defines complaining as to express _____, _____ or _____.
2. The average person complains _____ times per day.
3. Becoming Complaint Free is not about "shutting up and sucking up" what life brings. It is about developing _____ communication skills. It encourages you to speak _____ and _____ to the person who can _____ the change you seek.
4. Our _____ create our _____ and our _____ indicate what we are _____.
5. Complaining is like _____. We notice complaints when they come from someone else's mouth, but not our own.



Exercise:

There are complaints and then there are statements of fact. Facts are neutral, complaints are charged with negative energy. Which do you think the following statements represent?

	Complaint	Fact
I feel cold.		
Why is this room <u>always</u> so cold?		
He's wearing jeans and boots to the office today.		
Check out Mr. "Business Casual" in his faded jeans and scruffy boots.		
Our revenues and profits are at historic lows.		
Business stinks.		
I feel tired.		
I'm <u>so</u> tired.		
This client is a basket case. You'll never make him happy.		
This client has a reputation of being difficult to please.		



Journal and Share

What person or situation do you tend to complain about most frequently?

Who might you speak to directly and only to resolve the situation rather than complaining? What might you say?

Who the most positive and optimistic person you know? How does it feel to be around this person?

“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 of behavior. There is no ego in telling the waiter your soup is cold and needs to be heat up – if you stick to the facts, which are always neutral. ‘How dare you serve me cold soup?’ . . . That’s complaining.”

– Eckhart Tolle

Part 2: Why is Complaining Destructive?



MOVIE

Fill in the blanks below as you watch the MOVIE. At the conclusion of part 2, turn off the MOVIE and complete the exercises that follow. If needed, you can find the answers on p. 17 of this workbook.

1. Complaining causes us to focus on the _____, rather than potential _____.
2. If you focus on what is _____, that is what _____.
3. Complaining damages both our _____ and _____ health.
4. Doctors estimate they spend as much as _____ of their time dealing with health problems that are sourced or made worse by a person's _____.
5. People who complain about their _____ tend to have poor health.
6. According to a recent University study, teenage girls whose relationships center on complaining had higher rates of _____ and _____.
7. A common thread in unsatisfying relationships is _____.
8. Morale filters down from the _____. A good rule of management is "No _____ in our _____."

"It is a waste of time to be angry about my disability. One has to get on with life and I haven't done badly. People won't have time for you if you are always angry or complaining."

—Stephen Hawking



Journal and Share:

Think of a time when you made a decision to focus on what was going well for you rather than complain. What was the experience like? How did you feel as a result of doing this?

Where do you find yourself complaining most often? How might your experience in this situation change if you refrained from complaining? What might you do or say to keep from Complaining?

FOR FUN AND EXTRA CREDIT:

Watch the Monty Python sketch, "The Four Yorkshiremen"
<http://pythonline.com/node/241106>. It's a funny and telling demonstration of how people treat complaining as a competitive sport.

Part 3: Why do People Complain?



MOVIE

Fill in the blanks below as you watch the MOVIE. At the conclusion of part 3, turn off the MOVIE and complete the exercises that follow. If needed, you can find the answers on p. 17 of this workbook.

There are five basic reasons people complain remembered by the acronym G.R.I.P.E.:

1. **Get** _____.
2. **Remove** _____.
3. **Inspire** _____.
4. **P** _____.
5. **Excuse P** _____ P _____.

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

“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.”

<p>not being responsible for completing the job satisfactorily.</p>	<p>TRANSLATION: <i>I'm not going to do what you're asking. And, I'm using my boss as an excuse.</i></p> <p>“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!”</p> <p>TRANSLATION: <i>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.</i></p>
---	---

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?”

<p>Inspire Envy [Brag]</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>“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!”</p> <p>TRANSLATION: <i>My team would have done things on time and better. Why? Because I'm a better manager than Cheryl.</i></p> <p>“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.”</p> <p>TRANSLATION: <i>I know a lot about movies. You should admire me and let me tell you more.</i></p>
--	--

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?”

<p>Power</p> <p>There is strength in numbers. People complain to build alliances with others to increase power.</p>	<p>“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.”</p> <p>TRANSLATION: <i>I want that supervisor job! So, help me spread negativity about Jim because he's my competition.</i></p> <p>“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.”</p>
--	---

	TRANSLATION: <i>Dad, I feel left out. You're bigger than all of us. Make my brother and sister play with me.</i>
--	--

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 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.



Journal and Share:

What are three complaints you've either said or heard in the past week? Refer back to page 7 and decide which of the five basic reasons would you attribute to those complaints? (Note: many complaints fall under multiple categories.)

Complaint: _____

Reason: _____

Consider the complaints you listed, above. How could they have been expressed, and to whom should they have been addressed in a positive, productive manner, for optimal effectiveness?

“Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain.”
– Lilly Tomlin

Part 4: How Do I Become Complaint Free?



MOVIE

Fill in the blanks below as you watch the MOVIE. At the conclusion of part 4, turn off the MOVIE and complete the exercises that follow. If needed, you can find the answers on p. 18 of this workbook.

1. The average person takes _____ to become Complaint Free.
2. Scientists believe it takes _____ consecutive days to form a new habit.
3. The most common experience of people who become Complaint Free is increased _____.
4. Focus on what is _____ in your life to draw more good to you.
5. The goal of Complaint Free World is to distribute _____ bracelets around the world. That's _____ percent of the world's population, and can transform the _____ of the world.

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”

–William James



Journal and Share:

The opposite of complaining is gratitude. What are some of the things for which are you grateful?

How does it make you feel when you focus on things and people you appreciate?

Sometimes what we'd call stumbling blocks are actually stepping stones to greater fulfillment. Can you think of something that happened to you that you thought, at the time, was a problem which turned out to be a fortunate occurrence?

What is a problem you are facing right now? How might it actually be a "blessing in disguise?"

Conclusion

Commit to A Complaint Free World

-  Complaining is habitual for most of us. Scientists believe it takes 21 days to form a new habit. So the goal is to go 21 consecutive days without complaining.
-  Begin to wear the bracelet on either wrist.
-  When you catch yourself complaining (it's okay, everyone does) move the bracelet to the opposite wrist and start your 21-day count over again.
-  If you hear someone else complain, you can remind him or her to switch their bracelet. But you may only do so after you've moved your own bracelet first because you're complaining about their complaining. Remember, the goal is to increase your own level of self-awareness and transformation.
-  Stay with it. The average person takes four to eight months to go 21 consecutive days Complaint Free.
-  When you reach your 21st Complaint Free Day please share your experiences with us
CustomerService@WillBowen.com



Exercise

Turn to someone and complain, then switch your bracelet. Turn to someone else and complain about something else, (just for fun; use a “whiny” voice) then switch your bracelet again. How do you feel when you complain? Refer to your gratitude list on page 13, how does this experience of complaining compare with your making a list of things about which you are grateful?

What do you feel will be your greatest challenge in becoming Complaint Free? How can you plan now to maintain your resolve in this situation?

Extra credit

Create a Complaint Free Zone (see page 18). Establish an area, it might be the break room at work, it might be your office, cubicle, or it might be a corner of your work area. If you are in this zone and someone complains while you are there, let them know that this is a Complaint Free Zone. Tell them, "It's ok if you want to complain, but let's step out of the Complaint Free Zone."

What has been your experience of using a Complaint Free Zone? Send us an email at CustomerService@WillBowen.com.

Success Story

We frequently receive feedback from participants of A Complaint Free World programs in schools and businesses throughout North America. Here's one example of a business success. Share your own experiences. Send us an email at [**CustomerService@WillBowen.com**](mailto:CustomerService@WillBowen.com).

AFLAC –

“The sales organization in Michigan was combining three sales organizations into one. Our sales were flat and morale was low. As the State Sales Coordinator, I needed to do something.

My wife read about the Complaint Free World program in a magazine and ordered 150 bracelets. At the meeting where I gave out the bracelets, we talked about the kind of leaders we wanted to be and the image that we wanted our organization to portray to the public.

The bracelets gave us an opportunity to talk about what was going on with one goal: a positive outcome. We would openly discuss the negative thoughts that were getting in the way of our success.

Coordinators would complain that the economy was bad, making it difficult to sell policies. Then, we realized that it was during tough economic times that people needed our product the most.

The team quickly realized that when you are focused on why you are not making sales, you are not focusing on the most important part of your business making sure that your customers are getting what they need.

The team held each other accountable for their thoughts. If someone made a negative comment at a meeting the group, in unison, the group would tell them to move the bracelet.

The power of positive thinking has helped turn the Michigan sales team around. We went from being a sales organization to being a family. State Sales Coordinators in other Aflac states have heard about our success and are calling me to find out how the bracelets can help them build their team and grow sales.”

Andy Glaub, AFLAC Michigan State Sales Coordinator

Success Story

Salon on Kirby, Houston, TX –

“I can pretty much guarantee that almost every salon across this planet is known for the employee break room, as the den of inequity. It is the spot where they gather and complain, complain, complain.

On New Years Eve 2007, I went up to the salon and painted the break room purple and stenciled "A Complaint Free World" on the wall. As each employee arrived on January 2nd I gave them a CD of your speech, a copy of your book and Complaint Free bracelet. I told them to listen, read what they could and showed them the chart I made with everyone's name on it and counting the 21 days. I then let them know there would be a reward for everyone that finished the 21 days.

The first week was fun for everyone. The second week I panicked! By Wednesday three people quit, saying. "If you are not going to confront the problems in the salon then we don't want to work here any more", I held the door open as I escorted them out. I spent some time in prayer and meditation that night, making sure I was doing the right thing. The 3 that quit were my 3 biggest complainers. The response from the rest of the staff was "Thank God their gone, they were always so negative".

I have since replaced the 3 that left. The interview process always begins in the break room, showing off the purple "Complaint Free World" wall and telling them this is a Complaint Free salon. **The 3 new replacements produce twice the income as the ones that left.**

The first one to the 21 days came about 4 months into it. As if things had not improved enough already and the feeling in the salon was great, when everyone found out that upon completing the 21 days, they would receive 100% of their commission for their total revenue of that week, they worked really hard. I believed so much in this transformation that the return more than outweighed the cost.

Well, it's been over a year now and everyone made it to the finish line. Every now and then I see a few people wearing their bracelets; they inform me they needed a reminder. I get pulled aside by customers all the time telling me how much they love the energy in the salon, that while it's a beautiful salon, it's the people that work here that make it really beautiful.

Your energy that has been put into this I know is spreading across the planet. I know its spreading across Houston. We service over 800 people a week that are recipients of your positive energy. I thank you from my heart for transforming my life, my salon, and all that we touch.”

—Alden Clark, Owner, SOK



THIS AREA IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AN OFFICIAL

COMPLAINT FREE ZONE

.....
If you wish to *complain, criticize or gossip* please step away.
.....

————— **A Complaint Free World.org** —————

THE 5 REASONS PEOPLE COMPLAIN



Get Attention

Remove Responsibility

Inspire Envy

Power

Excuse Poor Performance

A Complaint Free World.™
org

Answer Key

Part 1: What is Complaining?

1. The dictionary defines complaining as to express (grief), (pain) or (discontent).
2. The average person complains (15 to 30) times per day.
3. Becoming Complaint Free is not about "shutting up and sucking up" what life brings. It is about developing (healthy) communication skills. It encourages you to speak (directly) and (only) to the person who can (affect) the change you seek.
4. Our (thoughts) create our (lives) and our (words) indicate what we are (thinking).
5. Complaining is like (bad breath). We notice complaints when they come from someone else's mouth, but not our own.

	Complaint	Fact
I feel cold.		√
Why is this room <u>always</u> so cold?	√	
He's wearing jeans and boots to the office today.		√
Check out Mr. "Business Casual" in his faded jeans and scruffy boots.	√	
Our revenues and profits are at historic lows.		√
Business stinks.	√	
I feel tired.		√
I'm <u>so</u> tired.	√	
This client is a basket case. You'll never make him happy.	√	
This client has a reputation of being difficult to please.		√

Chapter 2: Why is Complaining Destructive? (p. 3)

1. Complaining causes us to focus on the (problem), rather than potential (solutions).
2. If you focus on what is (wrong), that is what (persists).
3. Complaining damages our (physical) and (emotional) health.
4. Doctors estimate they spend as much as (2/3) of their time dealing with health problems that are sourced or made worse by a person's (thinking).
5. People who complain about their (health) tend to have poor health.
6. According a recent University study, teenage girls whose relationships center on complaining had higher rates of (depression) and (suicide).
7. A common thread in unsatisfying relationships is (complaining).
8. Morale filters down from the (top). A good rule of management is "No (weeds) in our (garden)."

Chapter 3: Why do People Complain? (p.5)

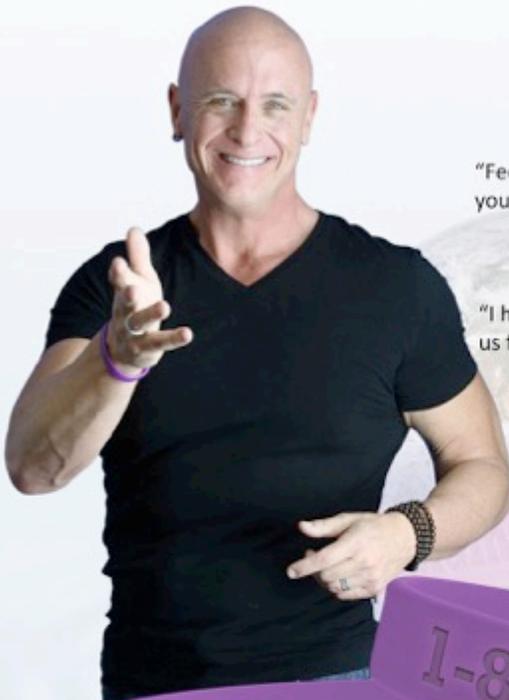
There are five basic reasons people complain remembered by the acronym G.R.I.P.E:

1. **Get Attention**
2. **Remove Responsibility**
3. **Inspire Envy**
4. **Power**
5. **Excuse Poor Performance**

Chapter 4: How do I Become Complaint Free? (p.9)

1. The average person takes (four to six months) to become Complaint Free.
2. Scientists believe it takes (21) consecutive days to form a new habit.
3. The most common experience of people who become Complaint Free is increased (happiness).
4. Focus on what is (good) in your life to draw more good to you.
5. The goal of Complaint Free World is to distribute (60 million) bracelets around the world. That's (1) percent of the world's population, and can transform the (consciousness) of the world.
6. A Russian Proverb reminds us that if we want to clean up the entire (world), we should start with our own (doorstep).
7. You can't complain your way to (health), (happiness) and (success).

“Will Bowen is a tidal wave of positive energy that surges through organizations!”



**Increase Positive Focus.
Turn Whiners into Winners.
Create a culture of Collaboration.**

“Feedback was extremely positive. On a 6 point scale they rated you a 5.6 with 75% giving you a “6”. Great job!”

—Phil Cabot, Volvo

“I heard very positive things about you! Many people commended us for bringing you to the conference - you were great PR for me!”

— Shreeshree Raja,
HRPA—Human Resource Professionals

“Will Bowen is now one of my favorite speakers.”

— Mary McColl, Horizon Bank



“You knocked it out of the park not only with your session content but also with your great presentation style.”

—Lonie Mezera, Iowa Department of Tourism

