

WHINE TIME



Not all complaining is created equal. There's a right and wrong way to do it, writes TARNYA DAVIS.

WE ALL do it - it might be about the weather, a colleague or a long to-do list - complaining is part of being human. However, we know from a psychological perspective that ruminating on negative thoughts can affect our mood. By constantly complaining, we reinforce that path in the brain.

Tina Gilbertson, a psychotherapist and the author of *Constructive Wallowing*, says that one of the reasons we complain so much is because, in general, we're not very good at expressing our feelings. Complaining is our way to do this. It is normal and healthy to want to express negative feelings. In fact, psychological research into the concept of experiential avoidance tells us that trying not to feel bad leads to negative effects both physiologically and for our mood. Naming and acknowledging feelings can help reduce distress. However, research suggests there might be a right and wrong way to complain. One way to shift complaining to something that serves us better is to make it more solution-focused. Complaining then becomes a social tool that we can use to get feedback and gain perspective.

Another way to practice strategic complaining is by using this type of communication at the appropriate place and time. Pay attention to the number of times in a day you complain and who you do it with. To modify a behaviour, we need to be aware of it. Adding space between the trigger and the complaining, for example by taking a breath before texting a friend to complain, allows time to reflect on whether you need to act.

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