

DTD Episode 40 Show Notes

Defeat *YOUR* Drama: My Co-Worker is Constantly Complaining

Catarina from Scotland, U.K.

If you'd like me to share customized strategies for your drama situation go to my website <http://podcast.defeatthedrama.com/defeat-your-drama/>. You can type or record your message. Use your real name or an alias for anonymity. Note that recorded or written messages may be used on the podcast.

Catarina:

Now, my question is, how do you reach out to someone at work who thinks they are doing "all these tasks" to the point that certain tasks that they are supposed to be doing aren't done as much as they should? What should be added is that this person has complained high and wide about other people not doing some of their tasks. She also seems to have plenty of time for gossip with others and sitting about just looking at what everyone is doing. She doesn't really seem to have that concept that there are people who work even harder than herself. It seems to be all "score-keeping" on her part and she doesn't seem to get that there might be a valid reason for people's actions sometime. All too frequently, she "reports" to me with all this information, even though we are in the same position (I have a couple of years more experience than her), so its not like I can't fix any problems any more than she can. My impression of her is that nobody is "safe" from her scrutiny and hence, I wouldn't trust her with any important information, if I can help it. Thankfully, because I have had my job for longer than she has I am more knowledgeable and experienced than her. That means that I am not worried in regards to any problems that she might create, but I just find her very tiresome and annoying. I want to find a constructive way, to make her realize what she is doing

Catarina, so sorry to hear about your struggles. Let's get you some customized solutions.

As always, In the Defeat Your Drama segments, I will provide solutions based on the information provided. I will obviously not have full details so will provide customized strategies based on what you share. Always consider your own specific circumstances before taking any action. These are suggestions not guarantees.

#1 Set a Boundary

Acknowledge that you understand that she is frustrated. You could say something like, “It sounds like you are still feeling frustrated.” Then let her know you understand but it’s difficult because there is nothing you can do to help her. You want to do a good job and feel that you don’t have time to be the ear for her frustration when, between the two of you, there is really no solution. It doesn’t feel like an effective use of either of your time and you are both so busy.

Emphasize that you try to focus on just doing your best and don’t really pay attention to what others are doing. Share that you’ve found that to be the best strategy to assure that you are productive and that that is your main goal; to be as productive as possible yourself.

Request that she not take you away from your work to discuss things out of your control so that you can focus getting your own job done to the best of your ability.

Chances are you will need to remind her of your request more than once. Keep at it. It won’t be fun to complain to you if you don’t acknowledge her or respond with sympathy. She’ll give up after a while.

#2 Focus on the Positive

Complaining of any sort is annoying when it is on going. You also might want to communicate a request or boundary around your desire to stay positive at work. Share that you like to bring positive energy and feel positive at work. While there are frustrations most days you choose to focus on what is working well and on feeling good at work. Let her know that using

you as her complaint sounding board is bringing you down and that you prefer that she find another outlet.

Depending on the relationship you have with her you might go on to suggest that she try to focus on the positive as well. Perhaps you can point out that you feel team members work hard and pitch in to get things done. Share a few examples with her and then move on.

#3 More Globally Can You Use Check Lists?

You don't say anything about the work that you do but it seems that there are a repeating set of tasks that need to be completed daily or weekly. Sometimes implementing a checklist system is helpful. I know that you aren't the leader but perhaps you can make a recommendation and offer to work on the project. Where there are repeating daily or weekly tasks you can have checklists used by the team. Each person can have their own checklist, thus, documenting the division of work, or the team can share one checklist per cycle. As tasks are completed each person could check off the item they've done along with initials. That way the amount of work each person is doing can be tracked. And the added bonus, you can be sure that everything gets done. You won't be relying on everyone remembering the list.

#4 Talk to Your Boss

I would treat this option as a last resort. Hopefully the other steps will work. If, however, the situation is unmanageable, you feel that productivity is suffering significantly or other team member's jobs might be in jeopardy from her false accusations you might need to bring in leaders. If you must utilize this strategy I would start by sharing the steps you've already taken to try to improve the situation on your own. Emphasize that you are not trying to be a tattletale but that you are concerned about productivity and team morale.