

There must be an invisible sign floating over my head that reads “No Whining.” People who know me are well aware that I have little tolerance for complaining. Of course my children all went through different stages of whimpering but eventually learned that these displays were falling on deaf ears. Colleagues at work were quick to grasp the fact that I am impatient with “woe is me” personalities.

Before you label me unsympathetic to people’s plights, consider that I am always willing to assist someone with a dilemma-that is, as long as that person is willing to work toward the same Winning Outcome. Complainers wear me down. They seem to be able to zap my energy with even just one long-winded gripe session.

My response to venting? Don’t complain to me. If you want to bring me a problem, along with it bring some suggestions for making things better. Otherwise we just waste our time in a vicious cycle of the unfairness of life.

Uh-oh. I just realized something. I’ve been complaining. I hate that.

If I were to tape my conversations for a day or two, you would notice that I am guilty of the same offense that, when demonstrated by others, I would condemn. Why are we so quick to list our physical shortcomings but not to pick up on the signs when our own personalities or psychological imperfections come to light?

I’m not a big complainer, mind you. But in retrospect, even my little offenses must be annoying to those listening. I complain when it’s cold. I complain when the alarm clock goes off before it should. I complain when my French fries aren’t piping hot. I complain when my adult children don’t call home to let me know they’re alive. I complain about the sad fact that I had to be the sibling who always had to be challenged by weight. I complain when my husband buys cheap toilet tissue.

These are just a few of the complaints that I can think off the top of my head. Since there can be learning in every situation. Here are some thoughts:

When we are shaking our heads at others’ behaviors, we need to take a moment to reflect on our own imperfections. Recognize these situations as opportunities to raise our awareness toward improving our attitude and idiosyncrasies so as not to annoy those around us.

Make a commitment to bite our tongues the minute we feel complaining words rushing to escape from our mouths. Replace them with more positive statements, and eventually this will become the norm.

I’m up to the challenge. Are you? Let’s see how many people we can shock with our positive attitude. (Thank heavens I’ve already purchased the correct toilet tissue supply!)

Italian Beef and Lentil Slow-Cooker Stew

5 PointsPlus per serving

Ingredients

1 small uncooked onion(s), chopped

1 clove(s) (medium) garlic clove(s), minced

1 large uncooked zucchini, diced

16 oz uncooked lean beef round, cut into 1-inch chunks, or 1 pound

1/2 tsp dried oregano, crushed

14 1/2 oz canned diced tomatoes, undrained

1 Tbsp canned tomato paste

3/4 cup(s) dry lentils

4 cup(s) canned beef broth

1 tsp table salt

1/4 tsp black pepper

1/4 cup(s) basil, fresh, slivered

Instructions

Place all ingredients, except basil, in a 5-quart or larger slow cooker; stir well. Cook on LOW setting for 6 to 7 hours.

Remove cover; stir in basil. Cover and cook on LOW setting for 5 minutes more.

Yields about 1 & 1/2 cups per serving.