

Hello, everyone. We are going to start by doing a sound check. If you can hear me, type a little note for us. You have your panel on the right-hand side and at the bottom, there is a place where you can type and send a reply. Please let us know if you can hear. We are checking the sound.

It looks like we are way to begin. Thank you so much for joining us. Today's session is on reducing workplace negativity. It looks like it is a pretty popular title because we seem to be getting a fairly large class for this one so hang in there and we will see if we can help with your various issues. This class is presented by the solutions group, your employee assistance program. I'm Anna Watkins and I will be your facilitator for this webinar. Our technical assistant is Mari Lyford. We have two technical assistance, we have Jennifer and Mari and they will help you in using the chat and question features on your screen and looks like you can hear me just fine.

I hope you have had the time to take those handouts and print them or save them in a file so you can work along with us today. You also probably want to take some of your own notes. This webinar is being recorded for future access to a link on the solutions group website.

Let's see what we are up to today. Here are the objectives. Learn top causes of negativity. Get strategies for dealing with negative coworkers. Acquire positive words to replace negative language. Learn ways to reduce negativity in general at work. Chances are, most of you are in the class because you are aware of some negativity in your workplace and this is what we plan to accomplish. This will be a brief webinar but we hope you get some good tips to use right away.

Here are the top five causes of employee negativity. Excessive workload, concerns about management's ability to lead towards success, anxiety about the future, lack of challenge in the work and insufficient recognition and pay. Let's see if these top five causes sound familiar to you.

Number one says excessive workload. This seems like a reason for people to be negative. When people are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work they are expected to do, frustration, anger and even depression could lead them to act out in negative ways. The second point, the data management can lead toward success could stem from many other causes. Is the manager new? Is there evidence management has not been successful in the past? Is that experience in your past in another situation that makes you unsure? It looks like we're going to have a poll question. Let's look at the options which are similar to what you have got on the screen. I want to say something about the lack of challenge in the work and I can imagine somebody muttering some complaints. Something like, this is so boring. A fifth grader could do this. Lastly, insufficient recognition and paid. Many of us probably thought that should have been listed first but this seems to be a universal issue. On this particular poll you may choose more than one

answer. It looks like poll is open and that's filling the options there.

What causes it negativity concern you? You may choose more than one. It looks like we have had most of you chime in. We are closing the poll now. We have a little time delay here. It looks like we are having some difficulties seeing your answers through the poll. Sorry for that. Thank you for sending in your answers. I hope it gave you the chance to think about the things that concern you. And it might give you a better opportunity once you have identified one or more of those to know what it is you can work about.

It looks like we may be able to get some answers. Like I said there is a bit of the delay. Excessive workload. Concerns about management's ability to lead toward success. Anxiety about the future. Lack of challenge in the work. Insufficient recognition and pay. Here is the top vote getter, insufficient recognition and pay. A whopping 71% indicated that one. Next is excessive workload. It looks like 61%. Anxiety in general, half of you. Concerns about management's ability to lead, a little bit under half at 43%. Only 25% were saying lack of challenge. You have identified the things that concern you. Thank you for that.

We are talking about negativity as if it is a bad thing. Here is the person we call Debbie Downer. She is making her point. Negativity can be a bad thing when it does the things listed on your screen. It acts as a barrier to positive change. Blocks productivity. Kills Morrell. Negative thoughts are self-fulfilling. People will be afraid to try anything new and innovative when they are met with responses like we tried that before and it didn't work or there might be some of the negative comments like that will never work or that sounds like the same or crazy or whatever reaction. If you are the kind of person that loves to bring in new ideas and tries to make things better, that is certainly a negative problem for you and when people are being negative and complaining frequently, it certainly kills morale. Remember this quote from Henry Ford, let's jot this down, whether you think you can or you think you can't, you are right. Let's write that down again. Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you are right. That is your self-fulfilling prophecy. Your expectations set the tone for your environment and that includes your working environment.

Should we get rid of negativity? Yes, if it merely forecasts doom and gloom and does nothing to help you avoid it or get rid of it. Absolutely, let's get rid of negativity. Here is a surprise. No. If it helps you to see potential problems or new ideas and gives you the chance to use negative analysis to identify problems and find solutions. Surprise. There are some upsides to negativity. I will add the caveat this should be in small doses. We do need to be able to consider ideas other than our own. Sometimes that pesky naysayer actually has some good points to consider. Some of you may be familiar with the six hats method of making decisions by looking at the problem or solution from all six perspectives or hats. I'm going to put a plug-in on our webinar on decision-making because we do introduce the six hats method. I think it is fun and a thorough way for you to take a

look at whatever the problem is or the possibility of the opportunity you are confronting. Here is something you need to know. One of the essential hats that must be included is the bad news hat for generating ideas about what could go wrong. Black is the hat of caution. The black cat is for being careful. It stops us from doing things that are illegal, dangerous, unprofitable, polluting, etc.. That black cat or the negative voice keeps us from doing things that are illegal, dangerous, unprofitable and polluting, and you may think of other ideas, too. It is also the hat of survival. We need to be cautious and know what to avoid. Just thinking about an experience I had yesterday, I was in an area where it was a nature preserve and I was looking at the plants and there was assigned that said to beware of venomous snakes. You do need to be aware of that a missed snakes no matter what format might take. The black hat is the basis of critical thinking and that can help us avoid serious mistakes. If we insist everyone agree and no one makes waves, we could be in danger of group think. Maybe something you ever heard of before. It is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people in which the desire for conformity or harmony in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome. This is what happens when you have a whole group of yes people. Everybody is saying yes and the group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without having a critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints. They may actively suppress.

Here is an example of that. If you think of the situation, and anonymous software company that wants to release the next version of a particular application. They have determined it needs to be on a certain date and they had even announced to the public that on November 1st we will be releasing this new version of our product. On their way to that release date they have a meeting of their decision-makers and there are other voices at the table saying we can't release it because we tested it and we have found problems. If those people are quieted and nobody wants to take their opinions into consideration, that is an example of group think and the group think in this case is causing them to make a bad decision that they are going to release that product to market. Who was going to pay for it? The consumers. It is a good idea to listen to the naysayers when they can help us avoid problems like that.

There are ways to express a dissenting opinion. If you look you will see different ways to frame the conversation. On this slide you can see the contrast. On the right-hand side we see absolute black or white v erbiage. The last column that offers words that keep the conversation open and flowing along more likely to achieve a resolution through thoughtful and thorough consideration. Notice the open statement in the left column invites the continuation of the problem whereas the closed statement gives the impression case closed, I don't want to talk about it. If somebody says that will never work or we have never done that before or they say we have always done it that way, the counter in order to get the conversation going positively would be to say sometimes we can try something different or we can try a different way. Let's see if we can learn from the mistakes made in the past. If you frame the conversation by saying this is the problem, immediately that

is negative. We say this is an opportunity. That flips it on its head. If everyone went around saying this is a problem, we would probably leave all the problems out there on the table and nothing would get done. This is an opportunity. This won't work. This is the closed statement. Instead of somebody introducing it that way, they could say consider this potential flaw. Just like the release of the software product. Instead of saying this won't work, get specific and say here is the potential flaw in figure out how we can address it or another way would be to rephrase it and say, how can we make this work? Instead of saying you are wrong which will shut down the conversation, here are my thoughts and leaves it open so you can have some back-and-forth. Instead of saying this is what went wrong and slamming the door shut and say let's not do that again, say this is what we learned. I am aware of a particular company in New Mexico that does include in their meetings what we learned and what we learned in that case has to do with the mistakes that were made and how we can do better next time. You can use negativity or negative comments to have a positive result to just be careful how you do it.

Here are some strategies for you. When someone expresses an idea that doesn't coincide with our thinking or if they disagreed with something we've said, we are most often tempted to argue back and defend our view, right? When they say this will never work, instead of arguing back, ask for more information and here is a possible way you could phrase it. You could see what is the potential pitfall? If you do the arguing back instead of doing it this way, more likely than not the other person will argue back even more strongly and neither of you will really listen. If we instead approach of positively and look for more information, that will help. We suggest asking questions to understand the other person's intent and perspective. This should help you glean the information you need to respond. You may need to get more information and get back to them later once you understand what they want. Think about that for a moment. If you ask a question so you can find out there intent or perspective, you may not be ready to respond right away but at least you are now armed with more information and you can say I will get back to you on that. The other thing is your questions might also cause the other person to examine what they have just expressed more deeply. Examine what they have come up with and take a closer look. Ideally you can turn the conversation into a joint problem-solving venture. For example, if they say something like this would work better if we had better planning. The positive and let them know an example and some things are out of our control and what might help you. You can think of other phrasing depending on your situation, what might help you? Try to get the better planning that way.

We wanted to see if we could give you some tips on dealing with negative coworkers so it looks like perhaps you have some. Number one looks pretty obvious. Avoid spending time with negative coworkers if you can. If you have to do with them every day, that is a problem that avoid spending time if you can. The second item, set limits, for situations inside and outside of work. The easiest way to express a limit is to make it a time limit. I only have 10 minutes or I need to leave for an appointment at 3:00. You might also limit the topic of

conversation because sometimes that negative person was to do what we call take out the garbage where they are bringing all kinds of other issues in and what you want to say in that instance is let's limit this to this particular topic and that should help you as well. You can also come right out and state you don't want to hear anything negative and you can do that in a number of ways. You can just say I don't want to listen to anything negative. Let's see if we can work on positive approaches to this problem. Let's work on a solution. Ask the person how they might look at the situation more positively. Believe it or not some people are not aware they are being negative. A reminder may be just what they need. You sound kind of negative. I have had people turned their behavior around when they realized they were in the habit of negativity. No one wants to get that reputation, or I would think at least, to be viewed as negative. If someone points out you are sounding negative it may be the thing to help you turn it a round. Notice we are suggesting you tell the person they may want to seek some assistance if they are being so negative it is becoming a habit, they can talk to your supervisor. They can find someone in HR to help them or call EAP. We are always here for you. You may also want to talk to your own supervisor or HR staff about this other person's negativity.

What did negativity mongers need? They needed new job may be. A new company, a new career, a new Outlook, counseling. They don't need you and if it's going to be a situation where it's going to bring it down. Some people may view this list as funny so that may help lighten your mood. If we look closely we can see this person's negativity may stem from a bad fit with there current job and we have certainly seen those cases many times. A person is in the wrong job. They are in the wrong d epartment. It is just a bad fit for them. This is a good time for that individual or maybe you if you were thinking you were the negative individual to take stock of your work situation. If your skills and personal characteristics are not a good match for what you were doing every day at work, you have options and that is a message you can share with that person who is being negative and do it in a way that shows you were doing it out of caring. It sounds like you are not happy. It sounds like you are depressed and expressing all this negativity about your job. Perhaps you need to look and see if it is a good match or you because there are other options for you. See if you can tell the person to seek advice on finding a more appropriate job and take some action. Have the courage to make the change. This is advice for you or that negative person. There are options.

Just saying to the person it sounds like you are not happy, thanks for whoever typed that i n. It sounds like you are not h appy, that is something we should all be going for, to be happy where we spend so much of our day.

Managing and negative employee. This is for managers on the call, and I know some of you are managers, but this could be anybody. Let's look at what we have on the list. Inform individual of that negative impact of his or her behavior. Some people are unaware of the impact there behavior has on other persons. I will recommend at this point, we had another webinar you could consult and go to the webinar on emotional

intelligence. Emotional intelligence contains within it an awareness of how we are feeling and awareness of the feelings of others. Informing an individual about negative impact is important. Number two says avoid becoming defensive and don't take their attitude personally. Ask if something negative is happening outside of work and ask what is causing negativity at work. Let's take a stroll through these individually. The first tip may seem obvious to some, but people who are negative are often not aware of how their words and actions are perceived. It is possible they have just become accustomed to a certain way and behaving and it seems natural to them. This could have a lot to do with their home environment. Perhaps their upbringing. This is how people around them always act so they are imitating the same behavior and view it as normal. It is letting them know the impact could be helpful. They might even appreciate knowing someone else's view so they can remedy the problem. If you don't know what the problem is or how people are responding to you, you can't fix it so letting them know is actually a favor you can do for them. People who are frequently negative are usually not focusing their negativity on you. Chances are they are equal opportunity spreaders of negativity. Don't take it personally. You are not responsible for their behavior. If you respond by being defensive, that will fan the flames of their negativity. Please take that one to heart. Number three, ask if something negative is happening as sensitively as you can. Express your care about them and their situation and if they are having a problem, they must just need someone to listen. If the problem requires counseling, refer them to an appropriate resource. The EAP is a good possibility to provide help for them. When you are doing this kind of advice, consider the nature of your relationship. Sometimes we are closer to certain people than others so keep in mind the nature of your relationship and how much you can do in the offering of advice, but at least do make that attempt.

To pull someone out of a negative mindset, appeal to that person's positive sense of self. Their talents and good qualities. Involve them in solving problems by asking questions something light, what do you think might make the situation better? What other ideas do you have? How do you think we might approach this? What a wonderful thing to be asking them for their opinions and advice. Try to get them involved. Focus on the positive aspects because it sounds like they have been in negative land a little too long and try to complement them to get the feel of what it sounds like when things are positive.

The recommendations on your screen are primarily for managers however, other employees can benefit from this advice, too. Let me read this to you briefly. Speak and act with consistency. Don't live in your office. Share your vision. Involve employees in decision-making. Acknowledge employees have lives outside of work. Those lives outside of work may certainly have a negative impact on work sometimes if they are preoccupied. Lastly, this what I hope is something you're all aware of, always criticize privately, not in a group of other people. Be respectful. When we look at the general direction of all this advice, we can see it is about creating a welcoming and positive environment for all your staff. Giving everyone a sense of belonging and acceptance should keep them in a more positive frame of mind. When you

involve your employees in decision-making, you're showing respect, and essential agreement for a successful, high functioning team.

I have some tools to share with you and I hope we are able to jump in and do some activity with this. This is from a book called the no complaining rule. Positive ways to do with negativity at work by Jon Gordon. You have got the title and the author's name so I hope you will possibly see if your public library has it or if someone would like to purchase a book you can share at work. Let's try one of these tools. This is called the but, the positive technique. It's easy to come up with a list of things we don't like from heavy traffic to tedious work tasks to difficult conversations with coworkers or customers. Let's take a look at this first one. I don't like driving to work and heavy traffic but, I'm thankful I can drive and that I have a job. We could go on from there. I own a car. Many things, I know how to drive, whatever all goes with that. Perhaps you can say things like the weather is decent and I don't have to slip and slide on the snow or whatever. When you express a negative idea like I don't like driving to work in heavy traffic, how does that make you feel? Think of some other I don't like statements. Some of the things you can come up with, if you were expressing I don't like, does it make you feel more productive? Does it help you get along better? I hate how I feel. Let's consider how this situation was reframed. I don't like driving to work in heavy traffic but, I'm thankful I can drive and I have a job. I'm going to offer another example. I don't like having to do with demanding customers. Some of you may take that seriously. But, what might follow in the reframed? It helps me improve my customer service skills. It helps me be better prepared for the next customer. It helps me appreciate the pleasant easy-going people in my world. What suggestions can we get of I don't like? Type in an example of something you don't like.

We have got a great one coming in, I bet we can help each other on this one. I think a lot of you can resonate with this one. I don't like being overworked and understaffed. Let's use this one and I will look for your replies. I don't like being overworked and understaffed, but I'm thankful it is not worse. I don't like management not taking responsibility for mistakes but, I think we have to get a but on that. Let's do the second part. Let me see some responses. I like the first one. I think a lot of us can sympathize with that. I don't like being overworked and understaffed. What I want to see you come back with is but ... let's work on that one first and get some feedback on that one. I do what the but part of this. Overworked and understaffed, but what is the good part? It could go back to but I have a job. Thankful it's not worse. We have got a good reframe coming in, but I'm happy to have a job. That fits a lot of these. But I'm learning new skills, great one. But I'm happy that I'm able to work. I'm happy to have a job that can challenge me. I am thankful to be busy because it makes my day go faster. I am seeing a lot of thankful to have a job and have staff to work alongside with the issues. This is a great situation where you can think of being grateful for your coworkers. Very nice.

This one is kind of related. This is a get to instead of have to and this has to do with your attitude. We go from I have to do this project to I get to do this new project that will be a learning experience for me and will help other people. When I look at the kinds of work you people do, you do wonderful things. Some of you actually do life-saving work for other people. If you consider the first wording of I have to do this, you can even hear the whining and complaining tone that goes with it and it's not too motivating but look at the second choice, I get to do this. What a difference. Can you remember what it was like when you first started your job? Most of us are excited about the possibilities we have to learn and contribute in a new setting. We are also ready to prove that we can respond to challenges that come our way. When you adopt a beginner mind, it can help you in many ways. Right down that phrase, beginner mind. We were all beginners once. When you consider that, you can be kinder to your self and to others as you go about your day. Even though we may be doing the same or similar things day after day, every new situation has something different about it. Possibly some new players involved in the situation. We can always learn something new. I like to think that helps us stay young.

Let's try an exercise with these phrases. I will give you an example to start. I have to do these expense reports. How could we change that to, I get to do these expense reports and I get to do these -- and will watch on your ideas on how to speak to that situation.

Here is a great one. I get to provide customer service and practice my accounting skills. You can always be practicing your skills. I get to do the expense reports and it's great to see people staying on budget. Isn't it wonderful to see how this affects other people when you do the expense reports. I think of things like maybe that expense reports has something to do with somebody else getting reimbursed so you may that person happy. If you learn and grow by the experience, who knows what that may set you up for in the future.

Another person has said I get to do the expense report and review them so we are all on the same page. That is a great way to ensure that you have got good teamwork. I know not everyone on the call does expense reports, that you may be able to use this for whatever it is you do as part of your job. I have to do this project, whatever that project may be and turn it around and turn it into I get to do this project and put in the positive things that will stem from that.

Here is the magic you can do. Those of you on the call, we are going to turn that negative workplace into a positive one. You have probably heard this advice before. Many managers do convey this to their employees. If you find a problem to report, come up with a solution before you present that to your boss or anyone else that may be able to help. If you can identify what is wrong, surely you can formulate some ideas on how to change the situation. Before you present your ideas, try some what if scenarios with your plan. Use the power of your own expertise, knowledge and character to present your proposed solution.

It is up to you if you want to have a positive work environment, be the one that makes it happen. Your attitude sets the tone for your day and that of the others around you to play up the lightbulb in the picture remember, there are people who can light up a room, some by entering it and others by leaving. Which one do you want to be?

Thank you for participating in today's class. We appreciate your interest and attention and hope you can apply what you have learnt to improve your work performance and your life. A recording of today's session will soon be available at the solutions group website. Watch your e-mail that confirms your attendance in this class. Who was in the PowerPoint file and a certificate of completion you can personalize and save. You also receive a link to the website so you can access the recording and sign up for future classes. We encourage you to join us again. Thank you and have a great positive day.

[Event Concluded]