



# Transforming Your Challenging Conversations

**UNDERSTANDING & TRANSFORMING COMPLAINTS  
WEBINAR #7**

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**SAVI® - SYSTEM FOR ANALYZING VERBAL INTERACTION**

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## Complaint Spotting Awareness Exercise

Is it a Complaint? Not a Complaint? A different behavior?

#	Sentence	Behavior
1	It's impossible to get this software to function properly.	
2	Nobody ever asks us how we think the work should get done.	
3	You never give me any credit for my contributions.	
4	All these decisions are so unfair!	
5	I haven't slept well lately because it's too cold in my bedroom.	
6	The buttons on this device don't match what's shown on the package.	
7	It's rained every day this week.	
8	Both of my roommates are lazy slob.	
9	The movie shown during class was boring.	
10	Why do I always get stuck doing the grunt work around here?	

## Complaint Strategy Practice: Shifting from Passivity to Action

**Goal:** We are often more aware of what we don't want than what we do want, expressed in Complaints. This practice gets underneath complaints to discover what we actually want.

Some of the most important conversations we have concern aspects of our work or personal life that aren't working as well as we'd like. All too often, these discussions are dominated by complaints. In complaining our attention is directed outward, rather than on the choices we're making or on what we really want. In this exercise, your partner will ask you a series of questions to help you mine the information encoded in your complaint, potentially enabling you to act on your own behalf.

### The Trouble with Complaints

- We fail to take productive action
- We feel increasingly frustrated, hopeless, or resigned
- Other people have difficulty responding effectively

### Complaint Strategy

- Take time to ask yourself what you really want and how you might move toward that
- Repeat those questions several times, going a little bit deeper each time
- Have a partner guide you in your reflection

### Step One

Person A, think of something in your personal or professional life that is frustrating to you. Complain to your partner for no more than one minute. (Partner, time this.) You may be surprised at how long a minute can be!

### Step Two

Person B, ask the following series of questions. (Feel free to rephrase them in your own words if you prefer. The focus is not on your questions, but on giving the other person time to reflect and find their answers.)

"Go underneath your complaint and ask yourself, 'What do I want in this situation?'"

*Wait for the person to answer.*

Then ask: "What proposal could you make to help get that to happen?"

*Wait for the person to answer.*

*(Repeat this sequence twice more.)*

"Would you ask yourself again what you really want in this situation?"

"What Proposal could you make to help make that happen?"

"Would you take another moment and ask yourself one last time what you want?"

"What Proposal you could make to help make that happen?"

*Switch roles and repeat.*

## Complaint Topics

*(Choose any of these or make up one of your own)*

### Money & Time

- Not having enough money
- The state of the economy
- The high cost of living
- The high cost of doing business
- Having to do too much in too little time
- Waiting in line
- Getting put on hold
- Not having enough time to relax

### People issues at work

- Your coworker's annoying habits
- Your client's bad attitude
- Your boss's poor communication skills
- People who are insensitive
- People who are too confrontational
- People who are too passive aggressive or conflict-avoidant

### People issues at home

- Your spouse's or partner's annoying habits
- Your family's lack of appreciation for all you do
- Your children's lack of respect
- Your neighbors
- Your neighbors' pets
- Your in-laws

### Weather

- How hot the weather is where you live
- How cold the weather is where you live
- How unpredictable the weather is where you live
- Global climate change

### Health

- Health problems you have to deal with
- Other people's health problems you have to deal with
- Problems within the medical profession
- Problems with HMOs

### Travel

- The hassles of traffic and commuting
- The hassles of airline travel
- The cost of gasoline

### Government & Politics

- What's wrong with your local government
- What's wrong with the national government
- The disconnect between government and the people
- Lies and misrepresentation in politics
- The state of the world

### Technology

- Problems with PCs (or with Apple products)
- Lousy computer programs
- Confusing technology
- Equipment that doesn't work properly

### General

- How long it takes for situations to improve
- How unfair life can be
- How much better things were in the past than they are now
- How much other people complain

## Webinar Series Developers

Anita Simon, Amy Yeager, Cunera Van Hal, and Ben Benjamin developed this webinar series. Anita Simon is the co-creator of SAVI along with Yvonne Agazarian. Ben and Amy are certified SAVI trainers in the United States and worked together for 10 years. Cunera is a certified SAVI Trainer and teaches SAVI in the Netherlands.

### Your presenter today is Ben Benjamin and Rowena Davis

Ben Benjamin PhD has been teaching and training communications skills since 1982. He had his first SAVI experience in 1998. With his enthusiasm, he went on to help develop the SAVI Training Program and certification track with Anita Simon, Claudia Byram and Fran Carter. He became the first Certified SAVI Trainer in 2002. He co-authored *Conversation Transformations* with Anita Simon and Amy Yeager in 2012. Ben is now a Senior Certified SAVI Trainer. He has developed, implemented, and taught SAVI trainings across health care, corporate, educational, and non-profit organizational settings both nationally and internationally and uses SAVI in his executive coaching practice.

Rowena Davis's areas of expertise are coaching individuals and teams, action learning, and working with the planned and unplanned sides of organizational life and change. She focuses on improving communication and implementing practical solutions people can work with. She is a Certified SAVI trainer and has run trainings in the United Kingdom, Europe and on Zoom. She is a member of the Core SAVI Communications group.

## How to Continue Your Learning About Complaints

- Complaint awareness quiz:  
[CTSAVI.com/Cquiz](https://CTSAVI.com/Cquiz)
- SAVI Coding Challenge:  
[CTSAVI.com/coding](https://CTSAVI.com/coding)
- Attend a live or online SAVI® training  
[CTSAVI.com/open](https://CTSAVI.com/open)
- Practice the Strategy
- Conversation Transformation (Chapter 7)
- Online exercises  
[CTSAVI.com/Cexercises](https://CTSAVI.com/Cexercises)