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### Quiz: Do You Complain Too Much?

By *Maryann Hammers*

We've all been there: Your boss hasn't brought up the raise YOU were promised, your hairstylist gave you a mullet, and the phone company overcharged you again. You have legitimate reasons to complain. But how you do it means the difference between solving sticky situations with grace and turning minor incidents into unproductive melodrama.

Enter constructive complaining, the ability to respectfully bring a problem to the person who's best equipped to right the wrong. "Smart complainers present solutions along with their gripe, which is often the best way to get results -- be it a decent haircut or a pay raise," explains Dan Neuharth, PhD, author of *Secrets You Keep from Yourself: How to Stop Sabotaging Your Happiness* (St. Martin's Press, 2004). Throwing a tantrum, however, will solve nothing. "Whining puts the focus on you rather than the problem, bogs everyone down in negativity, and eventually erodes your credibility," says Neuharth. Even bottling up your frustration is damaging, since you're choosing to stay mum about something important -- the raise you were promised -- while silently seething.

Take this quiz to identify your grousing style, then use the following tips to develop more constructive complaining techniques. Soon you'll acquire the assertiveness and problem-solving skills to help you handle even the toughest situations.

**Question 1 of 5**

**Your boss habitually dumps "rush projects" on your desk late in the day, forcing you to stay late. You:**

- a. Do the work as requested. You may not like it, but she's the boss and you need the job.
- b. Corner a coworker and vent to her about every way the boss has wronged you since the day you were hired.
- c. Schedule a time to talk to your boss and ask if she can pass some of the work to you earlier in the day.

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