

5. Understanding the blame cycle

The following The Indian Model School tips will help staffs to understand the 'blame cycle' and focus on problems and how to solve them.

The blame cycle

Being under extreme pressure can make a person angry, judgemental, fearful, self-righteous or revengeful. They might find themselves believing that other people are badly intended or lack ability, and wanting to blame (and punish) anyone and everything. They might also try to cover their actual or perceived mistakes because they don't want to take the risk of being seen as performing inadequately. In the circumstances, things can quickly become personalised and blame and ill feeling develop into a self-perpetuating cycle.

Blaming might appeal as a quick fix but it creates bad feelings, undermines everyone's willingness to work together and can perpetuate difficulties rather than address them.

What you can do

- Appreciate and remind yourself that others are acting rationally, as they see it.
- Remember: Most people act with the best intentions and their actions are reflective of the pressures they are under and the experience and the information they have.
- Realise that your behaviour may be influencing the complainant's behaviour and having unintended effects. It may be that in justifying your own actions you are discounting the action of others.
- Ask yourself questions rather than make judgements. You might ask yourself:
 - What information am I missing that would help me understand this person's behaviour?
 - How might this behaviour make sense?
 - What pressures are they under?
 - What structures or systems might be influencing their behaviour?
- Reflect on any anger you might feel and try and turn these destructive thoughts and feelings into constructive things. You might ask yourself:
 - What am I learning about myself in this situation?
 - What do my feelings remind me of?
 - What new behaviours or thoughts does this situation require that might be difficult for me?

How a coach could help

- Enlist the support of a coach (such as a trusted friend or peer) who can help you to clarify your concerns by discussing with you questions such as:
 - What results do you want from the situation?
 - What is another way of explaining the complainant's actions?
 - How might the complainant describe the situation?
 - What was your role in creating the situation?
 - What requests or concerns do you need to bring to the complainant?
 - How will you state them to get the result you want?
 - What do you think you are learning as you work through this situation?
- Let your coach know what happened as a result of the coaching and work through what worked and what didn't.
- Don't make negative comments or gossip about the complainant. Your coach is the only person you should confide in.