

Case 2: The Problem-Finder

The Situation

A teacher, **Morgan**, brings an idea to a staff meeting.

Morgan proposes holding a monthly evening family event where students can showcase their learning, families can visit classrooms, and staff can build stronger relationships with the community.

Several people respond enthusiastically.

Then **Taylor** speaks.

Taylor says:

"I think there are some problems we need to think about. Who is supervising students? Are staff expected to stay after hours? What happens with transportation? And if families don't come, are we going to put all this work into something that only a handful of people attend?"

The mood in the room changes.

Morgan looks disappointed.

Later, Morgan tells another colleague:

"Every time I bring an idea forward, Taylor finds a reason it won't work."

The colleague replies:

"Taylor is always negative. Some people just don't like change."

Small-Group Discussion

1. What do we actually know?

What did Taylor actually say?

Separate the words from the interpretation.

2. What interpretation did Morgan make?

What intention is Morgan assigning to Taylor?

3. What other intentions might explain Taylor's behaviour?

Could Taylor be:

- trying to protect staff workload?
- attempting to solve foreseeable problems early?
- drawing on experience from a similar initiative?
- worried about equity for families without transportation?
- genuinely supportive of the idea but concerned about implementation?
- someone who naturally tests ideas by looking for weaknesses?
- resistant to change?

Notice that more than one explanation could be true.

4. Does Taylor's impact matter even if the intention was good?

If Taylor intended to help but Morgan experienced the comments as discouraging, what responsibility does Taylor have?

What responsibility does Morgan have?

5. What would goodwill look like from both sides?

How could Taylor raise legitimate concerns without immediately shutting down possibility?

How could Morgan hear practical questions without automatically treating them as opposition?

Challenge

Rewrite Taylor's opening sentence so the same concerns are communicated with greater goodwill.

For example, begin with:

"I really like what this could accomplish. Can we think through a few things that might help it succeed?"

Now create your own version.

Key Question

Can someone's behaviour have a negative impact even when their intention is helpful?

And if so:

How do we respond without assuming the worst about them?