

ARE you in a situation where you are stressed considerably because you can't stand your boss? Do you hate your job because of him/her? Have you been in a situation where you would just like to "give your boss a piece of your mind" and walk out of your job? If all the above is true, then I suppose you are part of the many employees who work for this group of people who are called "bad bosses" i.e. bosses who are strict, unappreciative, hot-tempered, rude and nasty. In the course of my work as a training consultant, this is definitely the number one problem my participants bring up to me to get advice.

Bad bosses have always been part of the work landscape. Today, however, we are seeing more of them as a result of the greater pressures and stress that come with any managerial position. Managers in general are over-extended in terms of work as a result of "leaner" structures in organisations. They have to do more with less. As they may not be able to cope, they take it out on their subordinates, consciously or unconsciously. This subsequently makes the situation even worse as subordinates who are subject to "unnecessary stress" by their bosses are de-motivated and usually retaliate with lower quantity and quality of work, which serves to continue the vicious circle.

Some possible ways to manage a "bad boss" are as follows:

1. Do a reality check on yourself. The first solution is an honest analysis of your actions and behaviour. Are you a good subordinate? Have you been handling yourself and your job well? If you aren't, then perhaps it is not your boss who is the problem but you.

2. Get to know them intimately. What is meant here is that the more thoroughly you know your boss, the easier it will be to manage him. Some questions to ask are, what motivates him, what are his likes and dislikes, what are his work habits, what are his work expectations, etc. Try to put yourself in his shoes and see the workplace, as he might. It may make you look at him differently.

6. Ask for a transfer or resign. If none of the above strategies work, then you have two choices. If you really love your job because you are learning a lot and you like the people you're working with, then you will just have to accept your boss and the situation. Otherwise, ask for a transfer or simply hand in your resignation letter. If you don't feel respected and motivated then just move on. The worst thing is to simply do nothing and hope the problems will get resolved. No job, boss, or company is worth losing your health, sanity, or self-esteem.

3. Adapt to the requirements of the boss. Remember that all bosses have their own ways to do work and like it or not, it is the subordinates who will have to adapt to their ways. They will be reluctant to adapt to yours.

4. Communicate with the boss. Sometimes bosses may not be aware of their behaviour or conduct and the aim of the communication process is to let him see your side of the work equation. In the communication process, make sure that you talk of the specific behaviour in question and tell him how it makes you feel. Leave your emotions at the door. Formal communication may not necessarily solve the problem totally, but at least you will be sure your boss is aware of your feelings and frustrations.

5. Ganging up. This might seem to be an unorthodox solution, but it has its strengths. If several people from the same department voice similar views or frustrations, then there is a chance that the head of department might take heed. This voicing of opinions can take place individually or else at a meeting where everyone is present. It has to be handled sensitively, as you do not want to create the impression that there is a mutiny in the department.

Managing "bad" bosses is a very difficult and sensitive exercise. Always remember that finding a perfect boss/employee match is almost impossible. There will always be grounds for conflict in any working relationship. The onus is on you, as the subordinate, to adapt to your boss's style of management. If you can't find a way to resolve these issues and your boss will not change his behaviour, then you should immediately start looking for a new job, within or outside the organisation.



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Dealing with BAD BOSSES

