Trouble holding a job? Here's what to do

Question: "I have been fired from almost every job I have ever had. My friend says I'm just unlucky, because I seem to wind up in impossible situations that I can't escape. I know that difficult people are everywhere, but I guess I haven't learned how to properly navigate around the worst ones. I've tried the fight-back approach and the just-deal-with-it approach, but neither seems to work. Last time, I made a pre-emptive strike by complaining to human resources, but I still wound up on the losing end of the stick. I have been fired from five jobs in seven years. What would you recommend for someone like me?" — *Nathan*

Marie's Answer: Getting fired five times in seven years is not bad luck. It's a self-destructive pattern. Consider these suggestions:

• Whenever you experience the same problem repeatedly, it's quite likely that you are the cause. Instead of continuing to blame "difficult" co-workers, you should take a long, hard look in the mirror.

• Apparently, you allow yourself to get emotionally "hooked" by certain types of people. When conflict results, management begins to view you as a liability. The solution lies in learning to control your reactions.

• To identify your problem behaviors, review the events that preceded each termination. How did your actions make the situation worse? How could you have responded differently?

• If answering these questions is difficult, ask for feedback from managers, co-workers, friends or relatives. Listen to their comments without arguing.

To salvage your career, you must become a stable, cooperative, undemanding employee. If you can't make this change single-handedly, then you should seek professional counseling.

For some clues about what really bothers bosses, see "[Six Signs that You May Be "Hard to Manage](#)".