

Rude comments from the boss

Question: My boss often acts in a way and makes comments that hurt my feelings and those of others in my office. For example, today she said that I made too much money. I asked her "Don't I deserve it?" She didn't answer. That really bothered me and once again hurt my feelings.

Because all these situations are building up and are really starting to bother me, I decided to let her know how I felt. In a very professional way, I expressed to her that her comment really hurt me and told her why. To make a long story short, she was very defensive about it all and I'm sure she will go to the higher boss with the matter. I truly don't think anything is going to change.

Any suggestions on how to deal with this matter and others similar? -- *Anonymous*

Comments

You have taken the first step by bringing it to your supervisors attention. Make a record for your own personal records of dates, times and feedback you received. If it continues to happen, make record of each time..what was said, and how it made you feel. If it's happening to the entire staff..they should do the same. If they aren't ready to move forward with this problem as you are, keep your records and notes specific to how "you" feel, and how "you" were addressed. It will not help your case when you say "the entire office" feels this way, but are not doing anything for themselves.

As far as your supervisor "going to the higher boss", do not be concerned. If you were tactful, took good notes of the meeting, you will be able to answer to anything that higher up may bring to your attention. If your "higher up" is the same way, you may be fighting a lost cause. I've learned over the years, and from many seminars on "dealing with difficult people" that when you hold the mirror to the person, and they see how they act..and how that makes you feel, if it is completely out of line and they are true professionals, the behaviour should taper off. So long as you are not part of the problem as it doesn't seem you are in this situation. As a boss, they must be sensitive to other personalities..even if this is just a character trait they may have. They have to be able to adapt and supervise deal with their subordinates in a way sensitive to others.

There may come a point that you need to take the issue to the higher ups. This of course after you've done everything at the lowest level to resolve it with this person directly. By keeping records of your attempts, as well as the results..both good and bad, hopefully upper management will respect your attempts, and see through any of the bologna they may have already been fed by the "meanie" as far as "problems" they are having with you.

Good luck

Posted by: Andrew Pruett | July 29, 2005 at 01:42 PM

I will never understand people who feel the need to demean others, then get upset when they are called for it! I

admire your "chutzpa" for confronting her. My only suggestion is to drop the word "hurt" which to me sounds like a personal problem and find words and descriptions that are more "business related."

I second Andrew! After your discussion with her, she will probably hope that YOU don't go to the higher ups! This is way too close to harassment.

Posted by: El | July 29, 2005 at 01:53 PM

I agree that "hurt" is a personal word and you should choose something with a more professional connotation. You may want to just say, as soon as she makes these comments (especially in front of others), "You know that's not true," in a kind of laughing way, then move away, or change the subject or start discussing a work problem. As for higherups, if there's someone available, you may want to discuss the situation with them, posing your discussion as a request for advice. Just explain the kind of comments you are getting, and ask, "How do you suggest I deal with this?" That puts it in the lap of the HR person and also makes you look like a problem-solver, not a whiner who can't handle office relations.

Posted by: Anita C. | July 29, 2005 at 02:16 PM

I certainly feel that you have done the correct thing by confronting the person who made the statement to you. But by all means, keep good notes on the conversation with date and time of meeting. Also, keep any follow up notes as necessary.

I find this so disheartening, that some people in high positions do not have the professionalism to conduct themselves appropriately. If you have a H.R. Director, I would certainly advise her/him of the current situation.

Posted by: June | July 29, 2005 at 02:40 PM

I had a similar situation, unfortunately, it was the owner of the business I work for. His comment was that "he is not responsible for how I feel. I am. No one can make me feel bad, but me". Whenever he or anyone else says or does something hurtful, I try to repeat those words to myself. I can't control their behavior, but I can control how I react to it.

Posted by: | July 29, 2005 at 03:36 PM

I think you did the right thing in going to your boss with the problem. I also agree that you should document each situation. I think that whenever your boss says something unprofessional then you should speak to her about it. Its one thing to sit and complain but when you address the issue you are looking for solutions and that's a positive move. I think you should welcome a third opinion to this matter. If your boss does go to a superior then it may work to your advantage. In the meantime, keep doing what you are doing. Also, I agree with the anonymous comment that you can't control other people's behavior but you can control how you react to it. I know its easier said than done but you are already on the right track.

Posted by: Tee | August 01, 2005 at 11:43 AM

I agree with many of the above statements. It is always good to document encounters. It helps keep you organized, especially in discussions about the events. However, I disagree with the statement that you should make comments in a laughing way and try to change the subject. In my opinion, people should not be treated rudely in any workplace (or anywhere else). You should not have to change the subject, because your boss should not be speaking to you in that manner in the first place. I agree with the others that you should attempt to speak to your boss about it in a calm, firm way. If the response merits, I would move on to H.R. and others as necessary.

Posted by: Jaime | August 01, 2005 at 01:52 PM

Hi,

She's not going to go to anyone else. She doesn't want them to point out that they've seen or even been a victim of her behavior. I worked with a woman who is very similar in her attitude. She never acknowledges her behavior even when it is pointed out. She ignores the situation. I just chalk her lack of learning to be her defence mechanism. Who knows what makes her tick. Your comments are safe with her, she'll never tell a living soul.

Posted by: Jodi | August 05, 2005 at 10:31 AM

I agree with most of the previous comments. Act professional at all times and document, document, document. (For future use, especially in dealing with HR or the "higher-ups" you should also document any instances where you see or hear the boss being rude to other people in the office). The higher-ups may already know about it and have chosen to do nothing because she may be more valuable to the business than you are. However, do not allow yourself to be treated rudely. When the boss makes an inappropriate remark, look at her and with a pleasant tone of voice say "Excuse me?" and then continue your conversation. You should also check with your state's labor department, your HR people and/or your employee handbook (if you have one) to see if there is anything that deals with harassment. What you consider to be just "rude" behavior may actually be "harassment" and may be illegal as well, especially if there is a continuing pattern of rude behavior. If you do talk to HR and/or higher-ups, do not talk about "hurt" feelings. If you have documented instances of rudeness to others as well as yourself, then you can talk to them about how her actions have a negative effect on office morale and productivity and then maybe you can get somewhere.

Posted by: Anonymous | August 09, 2005 at 07:31 PM