

Rising above a bad boss



Whether they're a screamer, a blamer, a nit-picking perfectionist, an over- or under-delegator, or just a plain old bully, bad bosses are as common as the jobs they supervise. Manager/employee conflict can be complicated and hard to address. A few tips:

- 1. Own your power to choose.** If your boss is a problem, remember that you still have choices. You might opt for the simplest solutions: accepting the tension as temporary, and/or minimizing your contact with him or her. Or you might choose to simply quit if a bad manager is causing you too much distress.
- 2. Don't be a victim.** If leaving your job is out of the question, realize it will be up to you to adapt to the challenges presented by the relationship. Adapting to a bad boss—or any difficult person—means finding a way to remove yourself from being a victim of his behavior, combined with changing your attitude toward him. Examples might include setting firmer boundaries about work hours and time off, communicating honestly about what you can realistically accomplish given the task and time available, or discussing with your boss directly, or with his or her superiors, the things you find unacceptable (e.g., using disrespectful language, raising his voice, etc.).
- 3. Don't take it personally.** Practice detaching from the other person's negative behavior. How people treat others reflects their own internal state, which, unfortunately, may be affected by fears, low self-esteem, you-name-it. Compassion will help you as well as them.

Make sure you're taking responsibility for your part in any dispute. If your boss is criticizing you for something, don't justify your resentful reaction while failing to objectively evaluate the validity of his complaint. Often it's easier to be upset with others who point out our weaknesses than to face up to and maturely address the issues raised.

Honesty is always the best policy. Keep in mind, however, that if being truthful and accountable at your job winds up backfiring politically and gets you terminated, consider this a blessing and a sign that something better—and less dysfunctional—awaits!