

Dealing with a bad boss

In your career, you'll work with many types of personalities. Some you'll get along with – others make you grit your teeth. But, when you run into a bad boss, you may find yourself in an untenable situation.

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Virtually every company has a bad or incompetent boss. With the recent downsizing epidemic in downsizing, many individuals in supervisory positions are overworked and undertrained. If you are dealing with a “bad boss,” there are steps you can take to help yourself and, perhaps, change your bad boss to a good one.

What's your part?

First, take a hard look at your part of the problem. Is your conduct always professional? Do you take the high road or have you, at times, participated in backstabbing, perpetuated gossip or slacking off? When struggling with a poor or abusive boss, morale is lowered and his bad behavior can encourage the same in others. Do your best to be responsible for your behavior and ignore the distractions caused by her disruptive behavior. Focus on your work and demonstrate a strong work ethic. Ally yourself with those showing a positive attitude and seek out sources of positive reinforcement. Do your job to the best of your abilities to avoid falling into a trap that could lead to unpleasant results.

Write it down

Keep a record of inappropriate behavior or poor decisions. But be very careful not to judge or react emotionally. Document only the facts and actions and note how these have affected your performance and that of your coworkers. . Having a written record can help you step back and take a critical look – it may give you ideas on actions you can take to mitigate any damage.

At some point, you might consider sharing your findings with a trusted colleague or other supervisor to help brainstorm on how to improve the situation. If you end up leaving the company for another a job, you may want to give the records to human resources prior to your departure.

Cultivate relationships

If you love your job, even though you hate your boss, identifying a mentor can provide you with coping techniques as well as help you in improving your skills or furthering your career. Developing a relationship with a mentor is a advantageous in any job, whether or not you are dealing with a bad situation. She can be a sounding board and, at times, the best thing you can have is a person with whom you can share your frustrations. Your mentor may know, or even be, a person with the influence to do something about your bad boss.

The List

It is possible that your boss is unaware of how his behavior affects you and others. Create a list of the things about your boss that drives you nuts. Let the list sit for a few days, even a week. After you've had time to reflect, take it out and add to it or delete items that aren't really relevant. Rank the items starting with the ones that have the most impact to the least. Look at the top two or three items and think of suggestions for how your boss could act differently in the situation.

Objectively edit your suggestions, remove sarcasm or anger, making them useful and practical. Though it may be hard, try to include any positive actions your boss has taken. Once done, consider discussing them with your boss. Schedule a meeting, preferably outside the office in a neutral environment. Leave your emotions out of it but be prepared – your boss may react emotionally.

You have a 50/50 chance of a positive outcome of the meeting. But, at the least, you have taken a positive step towards changing the situation that is affecting your, and others, performance.

Report Your Bad Boss

A last resort is reporting the bad actions/performance of your boss to his supervisor or, better, an Human Resources representative. While logic would hold that the company would not want a manager who is hurting performance or productivity, the reality is often that you become branded as a trouble-maker or whiner and your days at the company could quickly become numbered.

Take care of yourself

The worst thing you can do is – nothing. The stress of the situation can have negative effects on your mental and physical health, not just your work productivity. No job is worth it. If you can't find a resolution to the situation, you should immediately begin networking to find a new position – inside or outside of your current company.