

Self-Advocacy with "Bosses"

Working With the "Difficult" Boss

A Webinar Workshop for the Public Sector



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Bosses matter.
They pack a wallop.
They are the single biggest influence
of whether we choose
joy or despair at work

- Robert Sutton from Good Boss, Bad Boss

Self-Advocacy With "Bosses" Working with the "Difficult" Boss

Topic Outline

1. Who are the difficult bosses? What make them "difficult?"
2. Self- advocacy: What "not to do".
3. Categories of difficulty.
 - Me. (we see the boss through our own lens).
 - A combination of the boss and me.
 - The boss.
4. Tips for self-advocacy: What "to do".
5. Communicating with the difficult boss - a model to help you: Get results; Be assertive; Be professional; and Build "good will."
6. Knowing when to:
 - Give up
 - Toughen up
 - Wise up

*"Never waste a good opportunity
to learn from a bad boss."*

Self-Advocacy & The Difficult Boss

Workshop Discussion - List your thoughts below:

1. What makes the boss difficult to work with?

Is it attitude; work style; role perception/understanding; competence; work pressures; they hate their job; they work in difficult/stressful climate; control freak; indecisive; they work for a difficult boss; abusive/bully; narcissistic; micro-manager; works in an organization that rewards bosses who "over-manage & under-lead"; other?

2. What issues/situations/behaviors are the most difficult to bring up with your boss?

3. Envision the relationship you would like with your boss. What would the relationship look like?

4. How do you typically respond when you are working with a difficult boss?

a. What's worked?

b. What hasn't worked?

5. Self-Advocacy. What are some things you believe you can do to advocate for yourself when working for the "difficult" boss?

*Take a deep breath.
It's just a bad day, not a bad life.*

Ten Things Not to Do in Your Self-Advocacy Efforts with Your Boss

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

*"There is absolutely nothing to be gained by making
the boss look bad, going to war or facilitating his
or her failure."*

Managing the Relationship

Which category does your boss fit in? It will influence the way you can handle the situation and help you to answer the question: "Is approaching them worth it?"

Circle all that apply:

Category

1. Approachable and willing to work with you.
2. Not approachable and closed minded (unwilling to listen).
3. Does not like "confrontation" and will try to avoid it.
4. Over manages and under leads (micro-manager).
5. Not a skilled communicator.
6. Does not give a damn.
7. Lacks compassion and empathy; self-centered.
8. A certified jerk and has no clue.
9. Abusive (bully).
10. In over their head with the job.
11. Stressed by the job/situation/staff.
12. Values out of synch with yours/organizations.
13. Other categories you can think of?

Former Lucky Stores CEO Don Ritchey said that difficult bosses really test your beliefs, and you learn all the things you don't want to do or stand for.

Tips for Self-Advocacy: What to Do

1. Are you dealing with a difficult boss (make sure).
 - What are your boss' motivations?
 - What are your motivations?
2. Talk to your boss about it but first weigh benefit-cost.
3. Work with your boss and not against. Know their "why (motivations).
 - What does he or she care about?
 - What are their goals for the job - both their own job and yours.
 - Is it just style? A strong motivator.
 - What keeps them up at night?
 - What frightens them?
 - How much importance do they place on impressing others?
 - How do they measure success & what do they think about. failure?
4. Stay one step ahead.
 - Help them to be successful.
 - Stay ahead of the micro-manager.
 - Anticipate problems before they come up.
5. Set boundaries.
6. Act as a leader.
 - Try to manage the relationship, not the boss.
7. Be prepared to discuss criticism of yourself.
8. Remain professional when confronting your boss.
(The ego is no amigo in self-advocacy)
9. Take the high road. Never let your boss's bad behavior be an excuse for your own.
10. Take the "H.R. Route" if you feel you must.
11. Document.
12. Avoid future bad bosses. Shop around when you can.

Scenarios

1. The boss comes into your office and he wants something done right away. He does this often and you believe it is because he rarely sets priorities and is a poor time manager. You have a full workload and are working under deadlines already. To accomplish the task he just gave you, you need more specifics as well as direction. Plus, it is something he could have assigned to you at least two weeks earlier - in plenty of time for you to plan your workload. You approach your boss to clarify priorities and get the direction you need. Your boss seems really frazzled and stressed.
2. Your boss is disorganized and often late for meetings.
3. Your boss tries to control everything you do and micro-manages.
4. You are sitting down with your boss in an arranged meeting to discuss how he responded to an idea you had at his last staff meeting. In front of everyone he called your idea "stupid" and said it "would never work around here". How can you approach the boss and still stay on his "good side?"

*When people are rude to you they reveal
who they are, not who you are.*

Five Steps to Manage Conflict

Step 1.

Step 2.

Step 3.

Step 4.

Step 5.

Living with integrity means:

- *Not settling for less than what you know you deserve in your relationships.*
 - *Asking for what you want and need from others.*
 - *Speaking your truth, even though it might create conflict or tension.*
 - *Behaving in ways that are in harmony with your personal values.*
- *Making choices based on what you believe, and not what others believe.*

- Barbara De Angelis

Fundamental Skills

Self-Advocacy and Communicating with the Boss

1. Keep the atmosphere open and professional. Don't put the other person on trial. Explain the problem/issue/situation in a friendly manner. Be assertive and be cooperative. Listen.

2. Let the person know what the problem/issue/situation is and why it is important and concerns you.

(Behavior)

(Effects)

(Feelings)

3. Ask for their concerns, ideas, thoughts or reasons for the situation, approach, reactions...etc.

4. Ask for their ideas and offer yours - to improve work progress, present ideas, quality, reduce stress and strain, build teamwork...etc.

(Discuss each idea/thought/concern openly)

(Offer your help if appropriate - how you can help the person achieve their goals/job demands).

5. Summarize agreements reached. Ask for feedback to be sure the communication is clear and understood by you and the boss. Listen actively and with empathy.

6. End on a positive note (when possible) and set a follow-up meeting to discuss progress (and hopefully offer a thank-you for the boss's help).

Key Principles

- Keep the discussion open and non-defensive.
- Check for understanding, actively listen and be empathetic.
- Encourage participation by asking for their ideas, thoughts, solutions and concerns.
- Stay focused on your objectives and bridge back to those objectives if the conversation gets off track or becomes emotional.
- Give up your need to be right.

Difficult Conversations

Ideas to Consider

- "I need your help in..."
- Tell the truth. There's less to remember.
- Put your ego in the cupboard. Lock the cupboard.
- Don't be defensive when starting a conversation.
- Listen and respond with empathy.
- Don't dominate the conversation. Give others the chance to respond.
- Encourage responses.
- Use positive language especially when delivering negative news or views.
- Use "I" statements.
- Be informed by the past, not driven by it.
- Focus on solutions.
- Show how solving the problem will be beneficial to the boss.
- Ask for help in solving problems.
- Offer your help in solving problems.
- Focus on outcomes. Why are we having this conversation.
- Don't be fussy.
- Don't use absolutes ("always", "never", "should.")
- Try to reach a compromise. Often "you get what you give."
- Don't tell others how to feel.
- Keep the discussion focused on problem solving and improving relationships
- Stay open-minded. You could be wrong. Open-mindedness is listening to others as a learner and not as a judge.
- Give others time to consider your point of view.
- Try to create "healthy" boundaries and solutions.
- Follow-up.
- If things improve, show gratitude and thanks.
- "Work-kindly."
- Don't forget what matters most: manage stress before it manages you.

Convincing people that they are wrong is difficult. Giving them the means to do what they are already doing a little bit better is easier.

Finally

Know when to:

- Give up.
- Toughen up.
- Wise up.

Sometimes there is not much you can do
after all they are your boss.
So, you just have to put your best foot forward
and pretend to be psyched.

But Always Remember

Show respect to people who don't even
deserve it; not as a reflection of their
character but as a reflection of yours.

Stay humble and work kindly.