

HEALTH & FITNESS

IS YOUR BOSS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

DOES YOUR BOSS GIVE YOU TOO MANY THINGS TO DO, WITH IMPOSSIBLE UNACHIEVABLE AND EVER CHANGING DEADLINES? DOES THIS LEAVE YOU FEELING DEMOTIVATED, UNINSPIRED AND CONSTANTLY STRESSED? IS THIS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

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In a study carried out by a Swedish psychologist, Anna Nyberg, at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm in 2008, it reported that workers saddled for four years with managers who were inconsiderate and uncommunicative, were about 60 percent more likely to suffer a heart attack or other life-threatening cardiac condition.

The study, which tracked more than 3,100 Swedish men for the better part of a decade, adds to an expanding body of research showing that what happens on the job doesn't stay on the job. It can, instead, potentially wreak havoc deep in our bodies, with blood pressure soaring and stress hormones surging.

And the boss effect appeared to be more important than other considerations, including workload and whether the employee smoked, exercised, or had weight problems, researchers found.

But the researchers said they found an unmistakable trend: The longer workers worked for weaker bosses, the more likely they were to be felled by heart disease. That was a greater negative effect than if the employee smoked, didn't get enough exercise or was overweight, or had high cholesterol.

Studies have repeatedly demonstrated, for example, that stress can cause blood pressure to spike and the heart to race. At the same time, stress can cause the release of certain biochemical agents, including hormones, that can cause blood clots to form and make arteries more prone to thickening and brittleness.

Back in history stress was helpful for cave men staring down the



mouth of a saber tooth tiger. They would want their adrenaline to give them this heightened reactivity causing the "fight or flight" effect to kick in and withdraw them from danger. Clotting was desirable, too, so that when the saber tooth tiger bite them, they did not bleed as much. That primordial response isn't nearly so helpful in modern humans, though.

Workers today can face a different kind of menace, in the form of uncaring and even hostile managers. There is an "undisputed" relationship between a manager's leadership style and workers' productivity and mental health.

A manager needs to be sincere and care about his or her employees from an individual standpoint and know what motivates them, and understand what their skills and competencies are. Also managers should know what employees

want in going forward in their roles. That's what keeps people engaged at work, from a management standpoint.

So how does one go about changing this? I have compiled the following list of techniques which should help you to take back some control of the situation you may find yourself in.

Self evaluation

The first solution is an honest analysis of your actions and behavior. How have you been handling yourself in your job? Have you always taken the high road, or have you resorted to occasional backstabbing, gossiping, or underperforming? If you're human, it's likely your bad boss has affected your performance, so try ignoring all these distractions and focus on your work to see if that changes anything. Find other sources of positive reinforcement for doing your job to the best of your abilities.

Compile a list of bad boss behaviors

The second solution is a bit more involved, but should be a cathartic experience for you. Make a list of all the things that your boss does that drive you nuts. Let the list sit for a few days and then review it again, adding or deleting activities upon further reflection. Next, rank the list from most annoying to least annoying. Pick the top two or three worst offenses and develop some suggestions for how your boss could act differently in those situations. Edit the suggestions to remove sarcasm or anger. Show the suggestions to a trusted friend who has no vested interest in the situation. Edit the suggestions again.

Once you feel comfortable that your suggestions are positive and helpful, consider scheduling a meeting with your boss to discuss. Perhaps suggest meeting outside the office for breakfast or lunch. Leave your emotions at the door, but be prepared for your boss to have an emotional reaction. It's possible that your boss is unaware of his/her actions, and this meeting could be very positive for all involved. It certainly shows that you are attempting to achieve some progress in your relationship with them in order to enhance your performance for the good of the company. Ensure that you act professionally in all situations.

Keep a journal of incidents

The third solution involves documenting each bad behavior of your boss in a journal. Don't judge or write emotional reactions; simply document the facts of the situation and how the bad behavior impacted your performance, as well as others in the department. Again, this process may be enough to relieve you of the stress so that you can cope.

Find a mentor with the company

If you love the company but hate the boss, another solution is

to develop a mentoring relationship with a boss/supervisor in another part of the company. Mentoring is a fantastic strategy that you should consider even if you have a good boss because a mentor is someone who can help you in many ways, from offering advice to suggesting you for a promotion. And in coping with a bad boss, a mentor can be a good sounding board for you, and perhaps after you have documented all the offenses, someone who has the pull and the power to do something about your bad boss.

Report your bad boss

A last resort is reporting the bad actions/performance of your boss to his/her supervisor or to someone in human resources. 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/whiner/complainer and your days at the company quickly become numbered. Be careful.

Start networking

Keep abreast of other opportunities that would enable you to cease working for your current boss. Start networking with recruitment consultants, other areas of the company that are not under your current boss.

Update your CV

Make sure this is ready good if an opportunity reveals itself to you. By engaging in this task, it will confirm to you of your skills and successes and certainly remind you how good you really are.

The worst thing you can do is simply to do nothing, hoping the problems will get resolved. No job, boss, or company is worth losing your health, sanity, or self-esteem. If you can't find a way to resolve these issues and/or your boss simply will never change his/her behavior, you should immediately start working your network and begin looking for a new job, within or outside the organisation. Again, if you love the company, a transfer might be the best option, but keep in mind that your boss might be as evil as to sabotage that transfer. And try not to quit before you find a new job as this will only cause further stress from financial worries.

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