

Managing Up

YOU MAY NOT BE LUCKY TO HAVE A GOOD BOSS AT ALL TIMES, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOUR JOB BAD.

ARUNA RATHOD TELLS YOU HOW TO WORK AROUND THE SITUATION AND PERFORM BETTER.



Do you dread the thought of getting up and going to work every day because you have a difficult boss who makes things hard for you at work? Hold on, you are not alone. There are millions of them who are in your situation, and trying to make the most of things. A 'bad boss' essentially refers to someone who is perceived negatively by his subordinates either because of his task manager's attitude or lack of empathy or the "my way or the highway" attitude.

Natasha M, a 24-year-old works for an insurance company. Her boss, Sumit K, is 35 years old and heads the project she is working on. Her role is to assess and

prepare reports for the cases that come in. Sumit has a set method in which the reports are to be assessed and prepared while Natasha is creative and hates anything routine. She is good at her work but is forever picked on because she hasn't followed the exact procedures, as per Sumit's expectations. "When Natasha first came to me, she had started losing confidence because she couldn't figure how she was always in the wrong," says Saloni Sawnani, Clinical Psychologist. "She had even tried doing things Sumit's way, but he always managed to find loopholes. The first few things we worked on involved her understanding of Sumit's personality and that it was more

about personality clashes than just work ethic." Sawnani explains, "Natasha had to understand that every time she had tried to explain her point of view, she had been argumentative, which had probably triggered Sumit off even more. So, she had to learn how to effectively communicate without being defensive and provoking."

THE DIPLOMATIC APPROACH

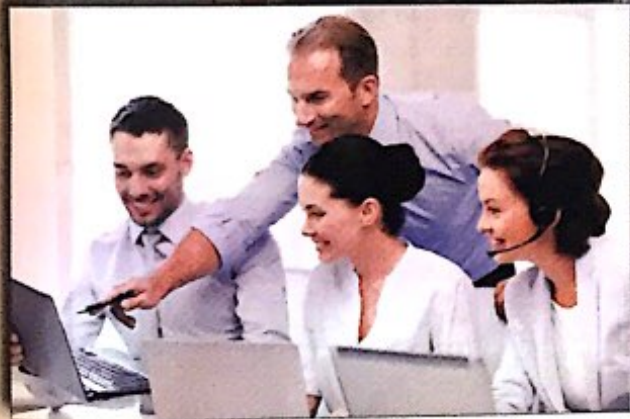
If you are in a similar situation such as Natasha's,



for the feedback sir... will keep it in mind", which eventually made Sumit feel guilty about how much he was picking on her. Earlier, when she reacted, he somehow felt justified about being critical. So, over a period six months there was a drastic change in the way Sumit interacted with her and her confidence levels were back.

THE PRACTICAL APPROACH

Author of *A Wonderful Boss*, Virender Kapoor, talks about a case where Harish Sharma, a marketing manager, in spite of doing a great job was not given a raise. His boss explained to him that the company was going through a financial crisis and it would take a while to get his due reward. Harish refused to listen and went on pestering his boss. Subsequently, he wrote an abusive mail to his boss. The moment he punched on the enter key, he realised that he would lose his job. The very next day, he was fired. Kapoor, says, "Lesson learnt: understand the



adopting the diplomatic approach will help. "Yes, I agree Sir, but I was just wondering if..." as opposed to "Sir, this also

overall situation, your boss' constraints, and never fire from the hip."

THE GENTLY ASSERTIVE APPROACH

Kapoor says that it's best to first examine what subordinates expect from a boss. "A subordinate expects three things from a boss. First, he should be decent and polite; second, he should be a person of integrity, honest and doesn't expect you to engage in wrong things; third, he should be competent and know his job. In case of an issue, try to find out your exact problem and what out of these three are bothering you," adds Kapoor.

works because.....". Sawnani elaborates, "In the second approach, the boss feels challenged but in the first approach, the boss becomes more receptive because the subordinate has agreed and only put in their idea as a suggestion." Natasha too adopted this process, and toughened up emotionally, not reacting to every criticism. She started to smile more, and say, "Thank you

Take the case of 25-year-old MBA Rahul Kumar, employed in a MNC. Rahul was in a high pressure job, but also needed time to socialise.



However, his boss Jaya expected him to work most weekends too. She felt she had the right to call him because she was always there herself. Rahul had feebly requested her at times if he could leave early (which was actually on time) but had been categorically denied and

How to deal with your boss and subordinates

1. Make sure you do your job well.
2. Be assertive and not passive-aggressive (basically means don't just criticise the boss behind his/her back, learn to say "No" nicely).
3. Use effective communication strategies such as "Yes I agree but..."
4. Remember, there will always be personality differences between two people. Identify the differences and focus on your strengths and your boss' strengths and then, things won't seem as difficult.

Question yourself: Are you a good as a subordinate?

1. Try to understand what your boss wants and adapt accordingly.
2. If your boss is successful, so will you be. Find out his/her likes and dislikes, his/her expectations.
3. A bad boss does not mean you can take that as an excuse to take things easy. Do your work well so there are chances that people may pick you up for a different department, giving an indirect benefit to have a different boss.
4. You can't choose a boss, make the most of it. Learn to live with it and make the best of it.

had additional work assigned. "When Rahul first came to me, he was struggling to find balance with work and personal life. The job was important to him but he was unhappy and felt he was losing control over his life," recalls Sawnani.

Sawnani identified that Rahul was not only unable to assert himself effectively at work, but also in his personal life. "In his case, we started with some assertiveness training where he had to learn how to say, 'No' in a nice way. He had to also start prioritising not only his activities at work but also things that were important to him in life and understand that just because people have different priorities, it doesn't make one priority right and the other wrong or even better or worse so he did not have to fall into comparisons." "Learn to say 'No'. Do your job well and in the time frame, over a period of time, the boss will get the message," says Sawnani.

Remember, a boss is responsible to run the show and also has his/her own problems, limitations and targets to meet. Kapoor advises, "Sometimes it is good to look at the boss through his glasses. He also has some expectations from you. He also expects you to be responsive, punctual, respectful, mature, responsible, honest and competent." ❧

(Names in the case studies have been changed to protect identity)