



DO YOU HAVE A DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOSS?

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DO you ever wonder if your relationship with your boss is hopeless?

While it's common to disagree with a boss, or even to dislike a boss, how can we know if our relationship with our boss is never going to improve? How do we know if we should "fire" our boss, or stick it out a bit longer? I'm not talking about the obvious signs like sexual harassment or racism or clear human resources (HR) violations. What if things aren't *that* bad, but you aren't sure if the devil you know is better than the next boss you don't know?

I recently read an excellent book about toxic relationships called, *Why It Can't Work: Detaching from Dysfunctional Relationships to Make Room for True Love*, by Thomas G. Fiffer. It's not about workplace relationships; it's about how to identify dysfunctional romantic relationships and how to determine when it's time to make the painful decision to move on. But I couldn't help but notice strong parallels between Fiffer's chapter on "21 Signs Your Relationship Is Doomed" and signs that one's relationship with her boss is doomed.

7 SIGNS OF A DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP

So, with credit to Fiffer, here are the signs of a dysfunctional relationship that could apply to your boss and may warrant a job change or at least a conversation with a HR professional.

1 RESENTMENT

If you are suffering silently and never bring up things about your job or behaviours of your boss that bother you, you are loading up on resentment and it is bound to spill over some day. When



resentment moves in, communication moves out, and there is little hope for an improved relationship.

2 DISRESPECT

If your boss is showing signs of disrespect or is routinely dismissive of you and your ideas, it's a sign that mentally he or she is disengaged with you.

3 LYING

A manager has every right to withhold certain information that is unnecessary to the performance of another's job, or to protect sensitive information. However, having a boss outright lie to you is highly unprofessional. Trust is paramount for any successful relationship, and if you have proof that you are being lied to, it's a sign that your professional relationship is beyond repair.

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4 PUBLIC DERISION OR HUMILIATION

Anything good someone has to say can and should be said in public. But saying anything negative, or delivering criticism, should be shared with you in private. And intentional public humiliation is abusive and should never be tolerated.

5 REQUESTS TO COVER UP UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

I've heard of stories of assistants being asked to buy flowers for her boss's wife *and* mistress, of requests to doctor expense reports, of "covering" unexplained absences out of the office, and even requests to take the blame for something that was the boss's fault. Anytime you are asked to cover up unethical or illegal behaviour, that is *not* being a team player. These

situations always end badly and nobody will care that you were "told" or "ordered" to do something that common sense indicates is wrong.

6 COMPARISONS TO YOUR PREDECESSOR

Does your boss always compare you with the person who was in the job before you? Statements like, "David never would have missed that typo," or "Hector could do that in half the time," are inappropriate. Professional coaching conversations state the performance requirement, where you are falling short (i.e. the gap), the impact it is having, and an action plan for improvement. We all have different strengths, limitations, training and experiences. Comparing you with someone else is designed to hurt you, whether your boss realises it or not.

7 INDIFFERENCE

Your indifference. Life is too short to be unhappy at work. If you truly no longer care, shouldn't you move on?

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

If your boss is showing signs that he or she doesn't respect you or like your performance on the job, you might be wondering why he or she doesn't just fire you. That's a good question. In large companies, it might be because it would look bad or require HR-related hassles. In busy times, a boss might feel he or she just doesn't have the time to recruit, hire and train a replacement. And there is the possibility that your boss has emotional issues and treats *everybody* poorly!

So should you stay or should you go? If your boss is just temperamental or you think time will improve your professional relationship, it may be worth the wait. But if you see any of these signs of a dysfunctional relationship, it may be hopeless and you should make a plan to move on.

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