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how to deal with 10 types of difficult bosses

Get advice for handling micromanagers, workaholics and more

By *Samantha Toscano*



Supervisor Stress

How sad is this: The average employee will spend 19 hours a week (including six weekend hours) worrying about what her boss says and does, according to a survey commissioned by Lynn Taylor, author of ***Tame Your Terrible Office Tyrant***. Luckily, there are ways to cope with even the most

mischievous of managers, as well as the ones with zero leadership skills. Take these expert-approved tips to the office to forge a healthy boss-employee relationship that could leave you loving your job.

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1. *The*

Micromanager

Such a hands-on boss tends to “squander her own time on re-do work or too much involvement in her reports’ work,” explains leadership expert Linda Henman. These perfectionist qualities may make you feel untrusted and creatively impeded, but **Ask April** founder and relationship expert April Masini suggests taking the extra attention as a compliment and feeling grateful for that kind of safety net. To cope, Taylor recommends over-communicating and offering up regular status reports, so she doesn’t approach you as frequently to stay in the loop.

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2. The Hands-Off Supervisor

Employees under this “manager” work freely, but the lack of guidance comes at a price. “The hands-off boss allows you to do your best work, but hang yourself when things go wrong,” says Taylor. With this laissez-faire approach to supervising, Henman says you need to solicit

feedback whenever possible. So set up regular meetings to discuss the most critical projects that matter to your mutual goals. That should engage her.

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3. The Workaholic

Work-life balance isn't a thing this boss gets. "You'll feel like you're not living up to standards unless you live at the office," Masini says. But just because your manager never seems to stop working doesn't mean you have to tirelessly toil. If your boss pressures you into her nonstop ways, Taylor

suggests sharing that your projects are proceeding well and providing plans for the next steps. If emails are landing in your inbox after hours, let your boss know that obligations outside the office prevent you from checking work email frequently on weekends. When emails that warrant longer discussions come through, respond with plans to meet during office hours.

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4. The Friend

Acting more like a co-worker than a manager, this boss emphasizes her personal, rather than professional, relationship with you—which is fine so long as you're "friendly" and not friends. Translation: Enjoy the occasional lunch or post-work cocktail together, but avoid discussing deep,

personal issues, like marriage or family problems. As Masini explains, a chummy supervisor can make work fun, but your boss's job and income are on the line if you don't perform. Be prepared for her to "change hats when there's a problem at work," she warns.

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5. *The Seemingly Unqualified*

Your new boss hasn't been at the company (or in the industry...or alive) as long as you, so why are you reporting to her? Managers rise up for a variety of reasons—sometimes political ones. Instead of resenting her, Henman says to look for the valuable qualities that got her to this

position. Try being open-minded about her ideas and asking her questions when you want a better understanding of where she's coming from. You stand to pick up info that could boost your career. If after all that listening you still can't see what she has to offer, her hiring may be part of a larger company issue. **Consider a switch.**

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6. *The Shouter*

She's a micro-manager with the volume turned up. You messed up, she'll tell you; you did great, she'll tell you that too because she sees it critical to call attention to things to adjust them as well as simply acknowledge them. How to survive the yelling? "Pretend you're on a football team, and this shouter is your coach," Henman advises. Taylor also suggests responding to her in a mild-mannered way to **contrast her tone** and model appropriate office behavior. Maybe she'll get the hint.

Photo Credit: Getty Images



7. *The Nitpicker*

While this superior may find ways to criticize your best work (infuriating!) or make inane changes, like switching the borders in your Powerpoint presentation from green to blue (ridiculous!), Taylor says her control issues likely have nothing to do with you. "The nitpicker finds comfort when everything

is organized just so," and she may be that way because she was nitpicked. Taylor recommends picking your battles wisely. When you stand up for your work, offer a mix of positive reinforcement and questions that may lead her to second-guess her suggested changes. For example: "I love what you did here, but given our deadline, would it make more sense to focus on X instead of Y? Or do you prefer a different strategy moving forward?" According to Taylor, these choices give her enough control over the situation so you'll both wind up with a positive outcome.

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8. The Pushover

Want to leave early? No problem! Make every weekday casual Friday? Go for it! Structure isn't a priority for this boss, who's more interested in avoiding conflict than getting results. She won't motivate you to improve, so your career may plateau. Masini's advice: Look to your driven co-workers for feedback and guidance and engage in team-oriented projects that will inspire you to perform well. This way, you'll make the most of your office time and avoid picking up the pushover's bad habits.

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9. *The*

Manipulator

What a weasel! This supervisor isn't afraid to make empty promises to see results. She'll also stretch the truth when it serves her, even if it's to others' detriment—including yours. Her actions, questionable as they are, can teach you about morality and "the ability to **say no** with logical reasons and alternative choices," says Taylor. To deal, rephrase her questions and document your communications so your tasks don't inflate and her vows to you aren't forgotten.

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10. The Impulsive Leader

Last week, you had coffee meetings every day; this week, your desks are in a circle because your boss read an article that it'll help promote productivity. According to Mansini, there's a lot to learn from this probably creative person. But don't let her constant switching of gears wear you out. "If you made all her changes, you'd drive yourself (and possibly others) crazy," says Taylor. Embrace the changes that fit with your work style and offer advice on the pros and cons of the other ideas.

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