

THIS IS THE BOOK BOSSES DON'T WANT YOU TO READ!

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE
BIG, BAD BOSS?



How to Survive 13 Types of
Dysfunctional, Disrespectful,
Dishonest Little Dictators

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IS THIS HARASSMENT?

I have worked for this organization for the past 6 years. My boss finds fault in everything I do, I have to justify every minute of my lunch and my coffee breaks...I have kept track of my coffee breaks and lunch hours, and any of the other [employees] will vouch for me.

When my boss gets caught in a situation that makes her out not to know as much as she thinks she does, she hauls my [butt] downstairs to the "meeting room" and starts her inquisition. I am asked to hand in my time for the previous 2 weeks, then I have to justify every minute I am at work. I go to work because I used to really enjoy my job but now I hate going to work each day. I (and my fellow co-workers) feel like children going off to kindergarten.

We have had this Manager for the past year, and 2 people have left because of [her]...All of us have emailed her Manager about this situation, and he emailed us all back, and in so many words, put the blame right back on the employees.

Today I approached [her manager] and asked for a transfer to another department as soon as something becomes available. He gave me a few options and I have started looking into each of them. I did find out from him that if my manager summons me again to the meeting room for some reason or another, that I do not have to go, and if I decide to go, I am able to have someone with me.

I am wondering if I have any grounds for harassment in the work place.

Dear Wondering,

To determine whether you might have grounds for a harassment charge, read the criteria on the EEOC's Web site (http://www.eeoc.gov/abouteeo/overview_practices.html). See if your case fits into any of those categories. If you meet any of the criteria, you may have grounds to file a complaint with the EEOC, but they will require that you to first follow your employer's internal procedure for making a complaint. They'll also want to know if your boss treats everyone in the same way or if you are being singled out. From what you've described, it sounds like she treats everyone who reports to her in the same way, so finding grounds for harassment may not work for you.

What you can do, however, is slow her down or get her to back off completely. Here's how:

First, write a memo to her boss thanking him for his advice about having someone else attend the meetings between you and your boss. Clearly restate what he said to you as exactly as you can recall it. Be sure to do this in writing—you may need to refer to it later.

Next, write a memo to your boss. Describe the inappropriate way in which she treated you the last time she met with you (don't include anything negative she may have said about you). Tell her that her behavior was inappropriate and unprofessional, and that it is unacceptable to you. In the next paragraph, tell her that tracking every minute of your time takes away from doing your work and is an unnecessary expense to the organization. Also tell her that, because every meeting you've had with her has been similar, the next time she wants to meet, you will do so only if an objective third party also attends—such as her boss; a Human Resource Manager; or someone in a similar role. State in the last paragraph that her boss advised you to handle the situation with her in this way and that you see it as a way of helping you both stay focused on work issues.

In the future, each time she treats you inappropriately, write another memo to her. Remind her of the last time you reminded her that her behavior was unacceptable to you and focus on the unnecessary cost to the organization. Tell her that you are trying to do your job effectively and minimize costs, and explain how much time her requests take away from your productivity. Copy her boss on all of your memos. You'll need to have everything in writing to have any evidence that it really happened. Write these memos on your own time—yes, it's time-consuming, but it's only temporary. Keep copies of all your memos in a safe place, away from your work location.

When your boss's manager sees how much of a problem this is, he may help find you another position more quickly.

Read the "Tips" and "More Tips" pages of this Web site for additional advice.