

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

March 2012

This Month's Message:

The Boss From Hell.

Paths Forward

- **Need Career Coaching?**
- **Tired of boring**

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The Boss From Hell.

Last November's LifeMap focused on the "co-worker from hell". We received a very strong response and about half of them were questions about what to do about a "boss from hell." After doing some thinking about this and reflecting on

meetings??

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neil." After doing some thinking about this and reflecting on my own consulting and coaching experience I decided to do some research.

First let's define the behaviors we are addressing. How's this: "repeated, health harming abusive conduct committed by bosses and co-workers." Sounds about right, eh? That is the very definition of workplace bullying used by the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI). Here are some findings from a 2010 survey conducted by Zogby International for the WBI of over 6,300 respondents.

- 50% of workers have either experienced bullying firsthand (35%) or witnessed it (15%).
- 62% of bullies are men, 38% are women.
- The majority (68%) of bullying is same-gender harassment.
- Women bullies target women in 80% of cases.

An additional (but depressing) finding was that same-gender harassment is mostly legal according to anti-discrimination laws and workplace policies. This is bad news for everyone who cares about a humane and productive workplace but why women would overwhelmingly chose to victimize other women is a topic that demands strong future research. (For more results see www.workplacebullying.org)

For some thoughts about dealing with this issue in regard to a co-worker I suggest you go to www.drpaulpowers.com, click on *LifeMap Archive*, and select 11/11 *A Co-Worker from Hell?* in case you missed it. But dealing with an abusive boss is much more difficult. Here are some suggestions you can use to get some relief from a bad situation.

Paths Forward

* **What's the Source?** In my experience most bad bosses are not bad people. Most have either been promoted beyond their capabilities and/or have not received adequate (or even *any*) training in the management of people. Understanding this will not - in and of itself - resolve the situation or make your life immediately easier. But it will affect your attitude as you implement some of the ideas I suggest below.

* **Start a Log.** Does the boss take credit for your work, scream, put you down, use insulting, demeaning, sexist, ageist, racist language? Is she a control freak, a name-caller, a gossip, or a back-stabber? Is he emotionally out of control? Call the behavior by name, write down specific examples and note the date, time, place and any witnesses. Your notes

should be unemotional and factual. Keep it off-site and on your (not the company's) computer. One occasion is a slip up, a second may be a rare relapse but three times means you've got a bona-fide problem and need to take action.

*** Is Support An Option?** Is your boss under unrelenting pressure from above, floundering from inadequate resources or living with difficult personal, family, financial or health problems? This does not excuse bad behavior but it may explain it. You may make some headway by trying harder to support this person. Doing this will raise your stock as a team player. I have observed instances where this approach actually improves the boss's behavior.

*** When and How to Confront.** If increasing support for the boss is not an option or you have tried it and it hasn't worked it is time to directly confront the behavior. Some bad bosses back off after a direct confrontation (think back to school-yard bullies).

- If your boss is insulting, demeaning, or a screamer responding calmly with something like "I find your language (or tone or ---) unhelpful (or offensive). There's a better way to deal with this such as - - -" (and here you insert your solution).

- If your boss has been wreaking havoc with your reputation try something like "I'm disappointed to hear from others that you're not satisfied with my work. I'd like to sit and talk with you about how to improve this."

- If your boss is a hovering, micro-manager try saying "Look, if I'm doing something wrong or not getting the results we need I certainly welcome your feedback. And maybe you don't realize you're doing it but no one does their best work with someone constantly looking over their shoulder."

- Your approach should be positive, assertive, unemotional, and professional. For more ideas along these lines try [A Survival Guide for Working With Bad Bosses: Dealing With Bullies, Idiots, Back-stabbers, And Other Managers from Hell](#) by Gini Scott Ph.D. (AMACOM, 2005).

*** Bumping It Upstairs.** If trying to fix it on your own hasn't worked it is time to elevate the issue. If your organization is one that has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or bullying you should bring your situation to the notice of a professional human resources department or another senior manager who is motivated to review your log, hear your attempts to fix the situation and intervene on your behalf. If this level of support does not exist in your organization it is time for you to start the job changing process. Do not sign

any releases without counsel nor relinquish any of your documentation as it will be value to any employment attorney who can advise you as to possible actions for defamation, hostile workplace or emotional / physical distress.

* **Beware of the Psychopath.** If your boss has a nickname like Chainsaw Al, the Queen of Mean, or the Boss-atollah you've probably got a bigger problem than you (or me or anybody without jumper cables and the willingness to use them) can fix. The more current term "sociopath" refers to those who are callous, without conscience or empathy, deceitful, verbally and psychologically abusive, exploitive, conning and cunning, delusional and megalomaniacal. Interestingly these same people can be seen as glib, charming, charismatic, take-charge, likeable, visionary, and motivated by power and control over others. These latter traits are often sought in senior managers and CEOs. If you've ever wondered why so many supposedly intelligent executives are willing and capable of engaging in outright criminal behavior this is the answer. These traits are screened for by the FBI, many police departments, some teachers and firefighters and operators of nuclear power plants. But corporations are far more likely to look for an MBA than the existence of a conscience. If you work for a sociopath (or think there may be one among your family or friends) I have only two suggestions. The first is to confirm your opinion by reading the best book I've found on the topic: [The Sociopath Next Door](#) by Martha Stout (Broadway Books, 2005). If this accessible book confirms your personal assessment then I offer you suggestion number two: terminate the relationship by finding another boss or another job or eliminating this family member or friend from your life. You will not be able to change them - ever. Good people have a hard time believing that even a small percentage of others can be so evil and destructive but, sadly, it is true.

LifeMap is about helping you to face up to difficult situations, stand up for yourself, and demand the respect that you rightfully deserve.

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<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingschedule.html>

Resources

· Are you or someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

The best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. Revised Edition [Winning Job Interviews](#) by Dr. Paul Powers.

In this easy-to-follow, step-by-step book, Dr. Paul Powers demystifies job interviewing, explains why the process actually favors the job hunter, and shows how you can dramatically improve your interview skills.

Packed with solid, practical information and laced with both humor and "kick in the pants" motivation, *Winning Job Interviews* is the book you wished you had before your last interview... and is mandatory preparation for your next one!

· Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? Order your copy of [Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love](#) by Dr. Paul.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksandarticles.html>

Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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Dr. Paul

Email: **drpaul@drpaulpowers.com**

Phone: 781-237-0550
Web: <http://www.drpaulpowers.com>

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Dr. Paul Powers | 218 Brandywine Circle | Englewood | FL | 34223