

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Building a Good Relationship with Your Boss

Refining your relationship with your boss can create better understanding, trust and more enjoyable interactions. By being proactive and figuring out the best ways to communicate, you will better enjoy the hours you spend at work.

A bad relationship with a supervisor is a nearly universal source of work-related stress. You can, however, develop the skills necessary to “manage the manager”. Learning to focus, listen objectively and communicate confidently and assertively ensures you a significant place on your supervisor's team.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

The first step is to look at your situation objectively, honestly evaluating your own work attitude and performance.

The boss is the boss. Your supervisor is the one in charge, not you, but you can choose to team up with your boss to enhance the effectiveness of your department.

The relationship is your responsibility. Although unspoken and unwritten, it's still your job to get along with your supervisor, not the other way around. You do have a choice: work creatively with your boss to solve an issue, choose to live with it or begin searching for another position.

Listen intentionally. Effective listening requires that you focus your attention on the person speaking. A significant part of dialog involves listening objectively. Your input will be more focused and to the point if you've listened first. Play back in your head what your boss has just said, analyze it, then take your time to formulate a productive response.

Respect the position if not the person. Give your boss the respect owed to the position, even if he or she has not earned your personal respect.

A few other things to keep in mind when building a relationship with your boss:

- **Be truthful.** Practicing the graceful art of diplomacy allows you to say what you believe in a manner that still moves the relationship forward.
- **Use humor.** But do so without being sarcastic. For example, you could ask your boss, if you were to drop dead in the next 30 minutes, which project they would prefer to have on their desk.
- **Be positive.** Bosses are people, too. Your encouragement or acknowledgment will be appreciated. Managers rarely receive positive, honest feedback from their employees.
- **Be gracious.** Deflect your supervisor's anger by agreeing with him or her, if appropriate. Defer when there is conflict, but never agree with a derogatory term. Begin your comments with a positive statement or point of agreement.

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You can also focus on raising your personal level of professionalism by:

- **Doing your homework.** Pay attention to the dynamics of the organization and how your boss operates within it.
- **Doing your job.** Always doing your best work gives you value as an employee. It can also be the source of your power in the workplace.
- **Making your boss look good.** The quality of your work is a direct reflection on your boss. Your achievements can make both of you look good.

Respect is a two-way street. Chances are if you give your attention, respect and best effort to your boss, your boss will respect you in return. That makes for a great working relationship.