

Dealing with an insecure boss

1. Read the characteristics. Mark those you think an insecure boss might have.
 - a) caring too much about what others think of them
 - b) delegating tasks to others
 - c) emphasizing their achievements and skills while not acknowledging others'
 - d) making sure that not a single decision is taken without their approval
 - e) being flexible when it's convenient
2. Watch the first part of a [video](https://youtu.be/w9AhH0xnb3M) [https://youtu.be/w9AhH0xnb3M] (to 02:34) and check your ideas in ex. 1.
3. Watch the first part of the [video](https://youtu.be/w9AhH0xnb3M) (to 02:34) again. Complete the gaps with the missing words.
 - a) If you've ever doubted yourself because your boss doesn't have faith in you or your ideas without any explanation, or blames you for their lack of success, this video is for you.
 - b) They're always highlighting their own expertise or credentials, sometimes others to make themselves feel better.
 - c) It is so tempting to, or to push, or confront them, or even report them to their boss, but you shouldn't do that. It is likely to big time.
 - d) Once they sense that you have disdain for them, or that you can't be trusted, they're likely to their defensiveness.
 - e) They end up the tactics I just outlined.
4. Match each cause with its effect.

CAUSES:

 - a) Tim has been **putting down** his subordinates.
 - b) Our manager Isabella never helped Nick and Ella when they needed it.
 - c) Elio never got into conflict, never **pushed back** when his interests needed defending.
 - d) Rose's team leader **shoots down** all her proposals.

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- e) The new boss has tried many ways of establishing her control, but none of them have worked.
- f) The new rules were overly strict.
- g) The new management approach gave positive results.

EFFECTS:

- 1) The employees' motivation **amped up** and their overall performance improved.
- 2) As a result, many of them have quit their jobs. No one likes being criticized and humiliated all the time.
- 3) Finally, she's **resorted to** her last tool, which is firing the unwanted employees.
- 4) She is tired of producing ideas that are only criticized and never accepted.
- 5) In the end, his wishes were completely suppressed.
- 6) Now they are **retaliating against** her by doing the same. They never lend a hand when overtime is necessary.
- 7) Obviously, they **backfired** and the team became even less disciplined.

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5. Discuss the questions.

- In 2020, 84% of US workers said their bosses' poor management caused unnecessary stress. Do you have the same problem in your country?

[source: [SHRM](#)]

- What are the most common problems people experience with their bosses?



6. Complete the questions with one word. Then, discuss them.

a) Have you/your colleagues ever...

- retaliated your manager?
- observed someone being put in front of others?
- felt like pushing against a company policy/tradition that you disliked?

b) Has your manager ever...

- shot a good idea?
- resorted manipulative behaviour?
- introduced something that backfired?
- started something that amped employees' motivation?

7. In a moment, you will watch the second part of the video about how to deal with an insecure boss. Compile a list of your ideas about how to do this.

8. Watch the [video](#) (02:35–06:40). Take notes on the following strategies the speaker suggests for dealing with an insecure boss.

a) Remain patient.

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b) Frame your work as a joint effort.

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c) Signal that you're not a threat.

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d) Flattery works – as long as it's genuine.

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e) Restore their sense of control.

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9. Discuss what disadvantages or negative effects the strategies mentioned in the video can have. Explain in what ways your ideas in ex. 7 are better. Use the words in the box.

amp up backfire push back put down
resort to retaliate against shoot down

10. Read the case studies and choose the most reasonable decision for each one. Give arguments for why it's the best option and why the others are not.

| Case study 1 | Case study 2 |
|--|---|
| William has set a goal to get promoted at his company. He believes he deserves it as he has excellent hard and soft skills, he does projects well and gets along with colleagues. However, his attempts to progress have stumbled upon an obstacle: his manager has picked a few favourites for himself, and promotes only them. He is on the rocks with the rest of employees: their merits always go unnoticed. William doesn't know what to do. | Sherry has been with a new company for six months. During that time, her team's performance has rocketed. She's positive that her management approach is excellent. However, lately there have been complaints that she is too hard on her subordinates. They say that she shoots down their ideas, highlights their failures and doesn't appreciate their strengths, and also makes them work overtime. Now Sherry is confused about what she should do. |

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Possible decisions:

- quit the job and find a new one
- stay at the company and push back against the manager
- stay at the company and find a way to restore the relationship with the boss

Possible decisions:

- ignore the complaints and continue focusing on performance
- change her approach to her subordinates
- quit the job as the team doesn't appreciate her skills