

**PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES**

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.

a) [00:37], c) [00:42], d) [00:49]

Other characteristics of insecure bosses:

- always being hesitant in decision-making [00:40]
- restricting communication [00:53]

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 **shoots down** your ideas without any explanation, or blames you for their lack of success, this video is for you. [00:19]
- b) They're always highlighting their own expertise or credentials, sometimes **putting down** others to make themselves feel better. [00:41]
- c) It is so tempting to **retaliate**, or to push **back**, or confront them, or even report them to their boss, but you shouldn't do that. It is likely to **backfire** big time. [01:05]
- d) Once they sense that you have disdain for them, or that you can't be trusted, they're likely to **amp up** their defensiveness. [01:16]
- e) They end up **resorting to** the tactics I just outlined. [01:49]

## Dealing with an insecure boss

### 4. Match each cause with its effect.

#### CAUSES:

- a) Tim has been **putting down** his subordinates. **2**
- b) Our manager Isabella never helped Nick and Ella when they needed it. **6**
- c) Elio never got into conflict, never **pushed back** when his interests needed defending. **5**
- d) Rose's team leader **shoots down** all her proposals. **4**
- e) The new boss has tried many ways of establishing her control, but none of them have worked. **3**
- f) The new rules were overly strict. **7**
- g) The new management approach gave positive results. **1**

#### 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.

**IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES****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 **against** your manager?
- observed someone being put **down** in front of others?
- felt like pushing **back** against a company policy/tradition that you disliked?

b) Has your manager ever...

- shot **down** a good idea?
- resorted **to** manipulative behaviour?
- introduced something that backfired?
- started something that amped **up** 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.**

[If it works for your classroom, ask your students to do this task in pairs.]

**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. **Exercise empathy as your boss might be under a lot of pressure. Imagine your boss as a child who is unaware of the harm they're causing. Control your anger. [02:41]**
- b) Frame your work as a joint effort. **Instead of competing with your boss, try to achieve your common goals together. Start sentences with 'we' and highlight**

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the partnership. Acknowledge that you're on the same side in order to build trust. [03:29]

- c) Signal that you're not a threat. Show that you're an ally. Replace phrases that may sound like a threat with something more friendly. [04:06]
- d) Flattery works – as long as it's genuine. Give positive feedback and express appreciation. Even a simple 'thank you' can work. This will increase your influence and decrease your stress. [04:44]
- e) Restore their sense of control. Keep an insecure boss assured that they're in charge and up to date as much as possible. Be transparent about your work. Make them feel included in the process. Frame your suggestions as questions. [05:27]

**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

[If you want to organize a group activity, do the following:

- a) Ask your students to make three groups. For each case study, each group receives one of the three solutions to work on.
- b) Ask each group to come up with a list of advantages for their solution.
- c) Ask a student from each group to work in a pair with a student from a different group.
- d) In pairs, they should:
  - enumerate the advantages of their solution
  - listen to the opponent's ideas
  - give arguments against their opponent's ideas.]

[This worksheet includes an additional task that you can use as homework or revision. It's only available in the teacher's version of the worksheet. The task with the answer key is below, while the students' version is on the last page. Print it and hand it out to your students.]

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**Paraphrase the sentences using the words in brackets. Change the forms of the words if necessary.**

[The answers provided are just suggestions. Your students might come up with different ideas.]

- a) Their choices are likely to face intense resistance from their business partners. (push) **Their business partners are likely to push back against their choices.**
- b) The new policy is bound to have a lot of negative consequences that might lead to a fall in the company's market value. (backfire) **The new policy is bound to backfire and lead to a fall in the company's market value.**
- c) One of the reasons the head of the department was fired was that he used to criticize and offend his subordinates. (put) **One of the reasons the head of the department was fired was that he used to put down his subordinates.**
- d) Companies should retrain their bosses and teach them to refrain from using destructive communication methods. (resort) **Companies should retrain their bosses so that they do not resort to destructive communication methods.**
- e) The new perks aim at increasing worker motivation and reducing staff turnover. (amp) **The new perks aim at amping up worker motivation and reducing staff turnover.**
- f) Before rejecting a new idea, make sure you've weighed up its pros and cons. (shoot) **Before shooting down a new idea, make sure you've weighed up its pros and cons.**
- g) If you take revenge for aggressive behaviour towards you, you are unlikely to solve a conflict. (retaliate) **If you retaliate against aggressive behaviour towards you, you are unlikely to solve a conflict.**

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