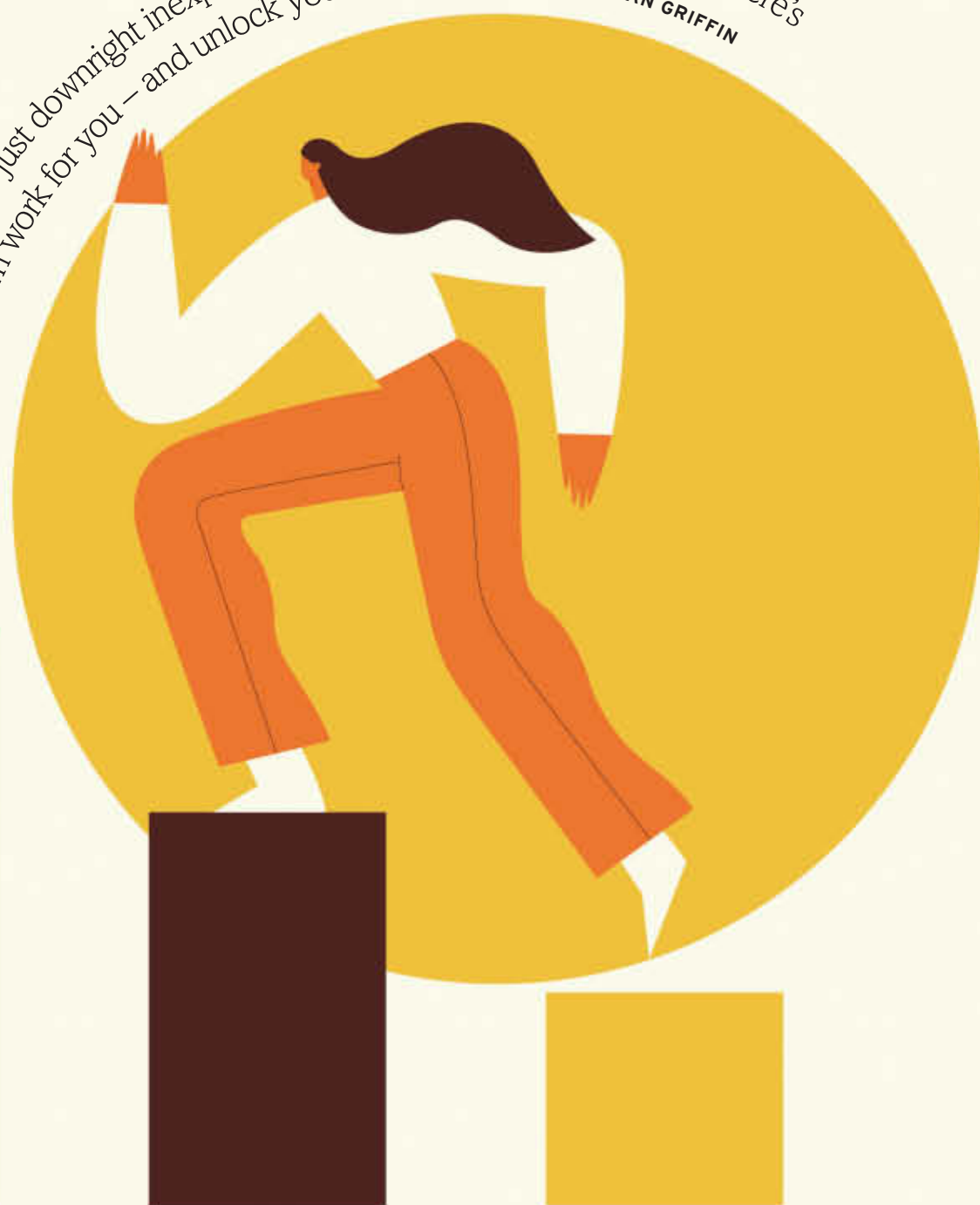


HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MANAGER SO YOU CAN CLIMB THE LADDER

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Is your boss a narcissist? Or just downright inexperienced? Whatever their personality, here's how to make them work for you – and unlock your true potential **BY SUSAN GRIFFIN**



How good your boss is can be the difference between not completely dreading Monday morning and drafting your resignation letter in your head every single second of the working day. No one has more impact on our professional wellbeing than our manager and, sadly, not all bosses are made equal. Some are downright toxic, so much so that 49% of Brits have quit a job due to their boss.*

But in most situations, it is possible to forge a successful working relationship with your supervisor. The key is not to cower, says Sarah-Jane Last, business psychologist and founder of The Work Psychologists. "Traditionally, the working relationship is very parental, so you have the parent (boss) and the child (employee), but what you want to work towards is where both of you take on the role of adult," she adds. "Just because someone earns more money doesn't mean they should get away with behaving a certain way, so don't fixate on the hierarchy and create imaginary walls about what you can and can't say to them." Bosses are just people, too!

Read on to discover your boss' personality type, and how to manage them to work better for you, without them even noticing...

THE LAISSEZ-FAIRE BOSS

What they're like The laid-back manager is super-relaxed, hates being pinned down or held accountable and ditches all responsibility. "There's usually very little structure or order, and very few boundaries. On paper, this might sound brilliant, but in reality this lack of engagement and motivation is unfulfilling, because they won't tell you what you need to do or how you need to behave to progress," says Sarah-Jane.

What you can do "If you're looking for guidance and instruction, focus on one or two solid things you can extract from your boss, rather than bombard them with questions. For example, ask: 'At our yearly review, how will you know I've done a good job?' It's about focusing on expectations, explains Sarah-Jane, who adds there are benefits to having a hands-off boss. "As this type of boss doesn't micromanage, you're given a lot of free rein and with that, you can become autonomous. So work out what you want from your role and how you can make yourself stand out to the people above your boss and the wider organisation, in order to make that happen." Whether that's signing up for extra training, volunteering as a mentor or offering to attend meetings your boss is keen to avoid.

THE INEXPERIENCED BOSS

What they're like Although these people may be brilliant at working by themselves, they can make bad bosses because no one's ever taught them how to manage other people. They also tend to micromanage. "They'll have a specific way of doing things and get frustrated if people aren't following the same process, so they'll be snappy, shouty and stressed as they try to keep a lid on things," says Sarah-Jane. "They'll also show high levels of burnout, and meetings will be cancelled at the last minute because they're overwhelmed."

What you can do When someone is lacking leadership skills and isn't great at delegation, get some clarity and bring the calm. "Remind your boss you're there to help, and ask what you can do to

HEALTH

WHAT DOES MAKE A BRILLIANT BOSS?

"A good leader will be self-aware, because no one is perfect at everything," says Sarah-Jane. "Getting the title of boss doesn't mean you've made it and can then just cruise along. You should always be open to learning, developing and changing. Be passionate and curious and really understand what your team's strengths are and how to use them in order to do a good job. You should also be humble enough to regularly seek feedback and take it on board."

make their job less stressful. It's not necessarily about taking on more work, but asking how they'd like the work done, which will alleviate stress, for your boss and you," advises Sarah-Jane.

THE PEOPLE-PLEASING BOSS

What they're like These leaders want to make everyone happy and promise the earth, but then fail to deliver. "They desperately want to be liked, are often conflict averse so will avoid difficult conversations, and can't give feedback properly or be truly honest," says Sarah-Jane. "The problem is, people's expectations are raised and the excitement kicks in when they think they're finally being heard, so it can be damaging and bad for morale when it transpires it's absolute nonsense."

What you can do Sarah-Jane recommends really unpicking what the people-pleaser is actually promising. "Say something like: 'You've promised this to me quite a few times now, but it hasn't happened. I'd much rather we focused on one thing that can be achieved.' Ask what, when and how, and always follow up meetings with an email. Reference what you discussed, and what you've agreed is going to happen and by when. It's taking all their fluff and hot air and immediately drilling it down into action and tangible outcomes."

THE CHECKED-OUT BOSS

What they're like These bosses can often be good leaders, but any decision-making power has been taken away from them because there's something happening at a higher level that they have no control over. "The lack of transparency and honesty this can cause is frustrating and confusing for those lower down the pecking order," says Sarah-Jane. "It's common for a boss who knows what's really going on to relinquish the responsibilities of their role as they wait to see how things pan out."

What you can do "You might ask them about a budget or an idea, and they'll do everything they can to skirt around it and struggle to give you a firm answer," says Sarah-Jane. Next time that happens, be upfront with your boss, she suggests, and acknowledge the fact they're in a challenging position. "In an empathic way, I would call out the elephant in the room, so they know that you know what's going on, and that enables a much freer discussion about how to best work in the interim."

THE NARCISSISTIC BOSS

What they're like The narcissist is controlling and micromanaging, but unlike the inexperienced boss, they're cold and calculating, so you'll never see their true emotions. "They're usually calm, charismatic and intelligent," says Sarah-Jane. "They're not interested in anyone or anything that is not going to get them where they want to go, and they will throw anyone under a bus."

What you can do Lots of workplaces now have 360 feedback systems in place where people are assessed by employees, so it's a lot more difficult for a narcissist to rise through the ranks. But they are still out there. "If you encounter this type of boss, leave immediately because they're never going to change," says Sarah-Jane. "Perhaps it's

something to do with life post-Covid, but where people used to feel it essential to stay in jobs for a long time, now it's a year or so and they'll be gone. They just aren't putting up with crap any more." **F**

'A narcissistic boss is never going to change. Leave immediately!'