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Stop Your Bad Boss From Spreading Toxic Behavior

Los Angeles, Calif.—An August 2014 Michigan State University [study](#) found that bad bosses' toxic habits are often mirrored by their employees, which spreads hostility and dysfunction within the workplace. You can help stop the spread of this bad behavior by the way you interact with your bad boss says [Dr. Noelle Nelson](#), author of [*Got a Bad Boss? Work that Boss to Get What You Want at Work*](#).

“When a supervisor creates a hostile atmosphere in the workplace, employees are not able to come up with their best work much less innovative ideas,” says Nelson. “Just as one bad apple spoils the entire barrel, a bad boss can spoil the entire team.”

To stop this spread, Nelson says workers need to go against their natural responses. “We tend to model the behavior of those in front of us. If the boss is modeling bad behavior, then people that report to him allow themselves to show their worst instead of their best,” she explains. “If the boss encourages yelling and is always irritable, employees will follow. It’s the ‘kick the dog’ phenomenon.”

Nelson believes that these behaviors can be changed. “Instead of accepting your boss’s hostile attitude, turn it around. See yourself as helping with your boss’ success, which will help advance your own career. Make a conscientious effort to not let your bad boss get to you,” says Nelson. “If your boss is always blaming others, particularly you, when things go wrong, be his or her problem-solver. Don’t let this insecure finger pointer cause you to start yelling at your colleagues. Stay calm and immediately offer to help. Then follow through. Eventually, your boss will see you as a much-needed ally to make him or her look good, which is all what most bad bosses want in the first place. The temperature of the workplace will go down.”

By stopping the negative behavior at the source, Nelson says, workers will be less on edge and more likely to be their true selves. “Most people are essentially good and want to do their best at work,” she believes. “Sometimes, they just get caught up in a negative work culture.”

For tips on working with specific bad boss types, go to <http://www.noellenelson.com>, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GotABadBoss or at <https://twitter.com/GotABadBoss>.

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