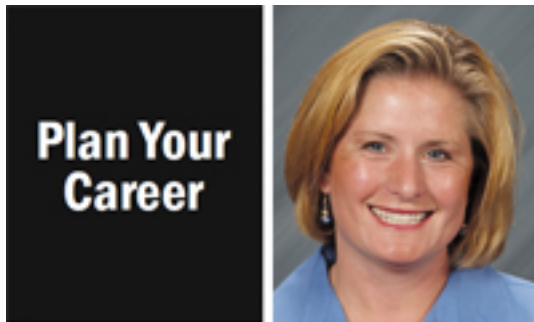


Supervisor makes you want to shout?

Written by Julie Desmond
Thursday, 31 March 2011 14:06



By Julie Desmond
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A reader writes: My boss yells about everything. I'm good at my job, but after he rages at me, it takes a while to get over it. I feel like Cinderella. Just when things start going well, he steps on the edge of my dress and it rips. Then it takes me a while to sew up my self-esteem and get back to the dance. I try not to personalize it, but it's tough.

People yell at people. Parents scream at kids, coaches throw chairs at players. A manager yelling at his subordinates is disturbing because it is conflicting. In a professional setting, people do not expect to be screamed at so, the first few times, anyway, it catches you off guard. Secondly, when your best friend lets you have it, you are free to reply in kind. However, when a manager does it, the balance of power is decidedly off. He can yell at you. But yell back, and who knows...

How to deal?

First, take that deep breath you're always hearing about. The deep breath your manager should have taken before he went off on a tirade. Clear your mind and recognize this is only partly about you and what you did wrong; it is also about a person letting off steam.

Negotiation research shows that he who speaks first loses the argument. Own the moment by silently listening. An adult who is so out of control that he is shouting at people is not clearheaded enough to hear your side objectively anyway; unless he asks a direct and specific question, stay put and stay silent. There will be time later on to state your case.

When the situation has been diffused, possibly later that day or later that week, or when given an opportunity to provide your perspective, do so without accusing anyone else of anything. Own this moment, too, by keeping the conversation focused forward: what happened? And how can we avoid it happening again? Do not point fingers, name names or seek revenge.

Many workplace conflicts begin with a simple misunderstanding. Avoid miscommunications by asking questions about the boss' expectations. Seek clarification whenever needed, and follow up verbal conversations with email. If the situation doesn't improve, seek something else entirely: a new job with a different organization.

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