

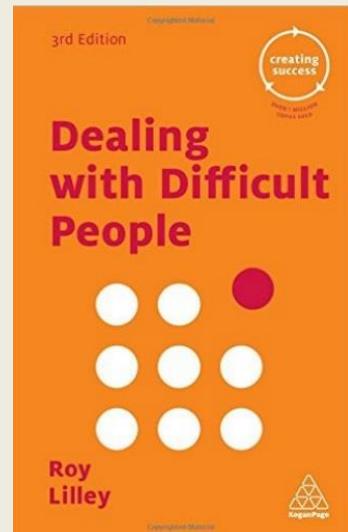
# Beating the bullies at their own game

There is nothing ignoble in loving one's enemies –  
but there is much that is dangerous

*Bernard Levin*

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## Beating the bullies at their own game

Let's face it, Atilla-the-Hun got things done. Ghengis Khan went places. Working for either of them wasn't exactly a bowl of cherries!

Bosses do think (or some bosses), that the best boss is the boss that shouts the loudest, slams the doors and frightens everyone out of their wits.

They see TV bosses shouting and read about pulp fiction bosses that leap off the page and grab staff by the short and curly bits.

Tyrants want a fight and bullies love a victim. There's the clue in what to do with a bully-for-a-boss. Don't fight and don't be a victim.

Bullies become bullies because they find they can get away with it and bullies are bullies because they have no other management technique. Lack of skills, insight, insecurity and incompetence turns bad bosses into bully-bosses.

### The decibel dictator

The screamer, the abuser, the table thumper. Stay calm, unemotional and objective; '*I know you are concerned about this and of course, it needs to be sorted out but shouting at me (abusing me) is not going to solve the problem, it is very unsettling and upsetting and won't make me work any better....'* Hmm, very straight to the point.

What next? The boss will need a way to climb down, so expect a follow-up tirade of less intensity and of the self-justification type; 'Just as long as you understand the importance of all this....blah, blah..'.

Answer; '*I do, so let's concentrate on the issues. What is the first step....?*'



Let's think about this

If bullies need a victim, why are you a victim? You need a job? Sure, we all do. You need to pay the bills. Yup, of course. But you only have one life, so don't spend it in fear.

If you've tried everything and life is still hell.... What next?

Shouldn't you be taking your time and quietly, subtly and decisively looking for another job?

## Can't you do anything right?

Made a foul-up? Admit it, don't fudge it, apologise and offer to work to put things right. Common-sense. Being wrongly accused? Then try; '*You need to know the following three facts. The work is not completed because 1 ... 2 ... 3 ....*'

## When all else fails

The boss has lost it. The screaming can be heard in mainland Europe and the rest of the staff have run for cover. What do you do? Cower, hide, cringe, tremble, quake, shrink? Go to the bosses boss – risky.

### How to deal with it?

Stabbing with the office staple-gun? A crack on the with a ruler? Electrocution a badly wired keyboard. Sounds very satisfying but you're likely to end up in jail the bully isn't worth the best years of your life.

Stay as calm as a cucumber try this; '*Mr Bulstrode, sit down/still and think*'.



### Hazard Warning

Bully bosses often mimic their behaviour. They get it from their boss.

If their bosses boss is a bully, the chances are your boss will be a bully. Accepted behaviour and part of the organisation culture. So, appealing to a higher authority is likely to prove an unfruitful tactic.

What to do? In truth? Find another job and let some other mug take the flack. You don't need it. You're too good!

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I'll bet Bulstrode will shut up (or your money back). Continue; '*You are upset and I can see why but you have no right to talk to me like that (use that language/say those things). If you want to continue this, talk to me in a civil way and we can sort out the problem....*' Then say nothing, look as neutral and unflustered as you can and wait. Bulstrode will have to back-off.

### TIP

The worst thing you can say to someone who has lost-it is, *calm-down*. They'll scream back at you; 'I am calm'! Try and major on the issues and not the behaviour

Don't  
stay  
and be  
the  
victim.

Get out of the firing line and do it without blame accusation or reproach. Say '*Brian, I'll see you later....*' And clear off. Get-out-a-there! Bullies need victims and audiences.

### The firework colleague

What lights their touch-paper? One minute they're cuddly and workable-with, the next they are a Chinese fire cracker. Can you detect what sets them off? If you can, keep off the topic, or issue. When the fireworks start obey the four golden rules:

- Don't accuse – *it adds fuel to the fire*
- Don't say things like; 'Calm down' – *it'll exacerbate things*
- Don't join in – *you'll prolong it*
- Don't stay in the firing line – *it's safer!*

When the dust settles don't get into recriminations. Move on; '*I know this is important. Let's sort it out together because together we're more likely to succeed....*'



### Let's think about this

#### Feeling intimidated?

If you are feeling intimidated, the chances is you are being intimidated. This kind of fear is insidious. Ask yourself why you're feeling intimidated? Do you feel insecure, inadequate, not up to the job, got something to hide? How we react to people starts within ourselves. If we want to be a victim – then we will be. If we let people push us around – they will.

If you are on top of the job, doing the best you can you have no reason to feel intimidated. Don't expect logic to play any part in this human relations equation. Bullies are not logical, they are opportunistic and unpredictable. Your defence is your talent, skill, patience and coolness under fire. Avoid the emotions and stick to the facts. Stay away from the passion and follow plan.