

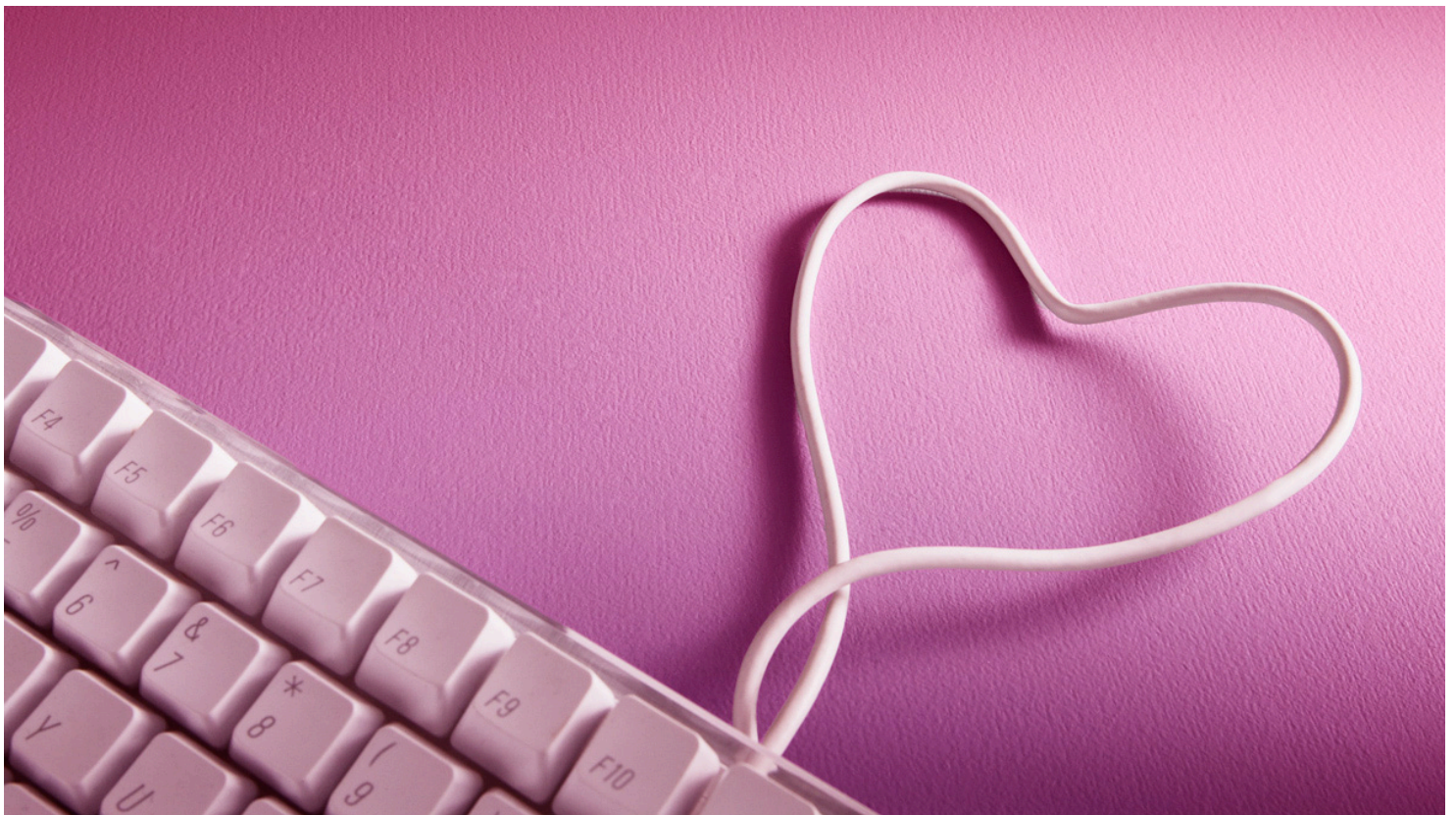
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Interpersonal Skills

When a New Boss Makes You Hate a Job You Once Loved

by Rebecca Knight

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Summary. You've worked at your company for years and always loved your job. But everything changes when a new boss steps in. Feeling annoyed about having to prove yourself again is understandable, but it's important to move past your resentment. In this article, the author outlines strategies to help you get back on track and regain your sense of accomplishment. [close](#)

You've been a dedicated team player at your company for years: a star employee with great relationships up and down the org chart. But then suddenly a new boss arrives on the scene, and everything you once loved about your job has turned into a source of agony and frustration.

"Getting a new boss can shake up your world," says Mary Abbajay, president of Careerstone Group and author of *Managing Up: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss*. "You have to adjust to a new management style and personality, which is hard if this person is a micromanager, not as friendly as your old boss, or has different priorities. You're starting from scratch."

This change might not be what you signed up for, but in order to succeed in this new normal, you need to adapt, says Connie Noonan Hadley, an organizational psychologist and professor at Boston University's Questrom School of Business. The first step is to reframe your thinking. "Instead of dwelling on the past and longing for what used to be, try to see the situation as a learning opportunity," she says. After all, a new boss essentially means "you have a brand new job."

So, how do you get back on track and regain your sense of accomplishment when your new boss seems to be making everything harder? Here's what our experts suggest.

Think positively

It's natural to find yourself missing your old boss and their way of doing things. But the fact is, change is inevitable at work.

“Expecting everything to stay the same is an assumption tinged with arrogance,” says Hadley. To handle this shift, she recommends self-reflection. Where are you stuck in a pattern that's no longer working for you? How might you be acting petty? And how might you be contributing to any negativity? While you can't control the situation, you have power over your mindset. “If you're set in your ways, why would you expect your new boss to be different?” she says. Abbajay recommends embracing a can-do attitude. “Remind yourself: ‘I like my job, and I will like it again. I just have to get through this temporary transition,’” she says. “And keep an open heart — with time, you might find that you like this person.”

Have some empathy

New bosses sometimes have a habit of micromanaging or making unnecessary changes just to stand out, notes Abbajay. This is, of course, irritating for longtime employees, but it's important to see things from their standpoint, she says. The boss might be nervous, or they might be trying to prove themselves. “They're also trying to learn their job.” This is where empathy comes in.

“Give them some grace and space to figure stuff out.” They’ll likely relax as they settle into the role. Consider the broader organizational context too, says Hadley. “Make a good faith effort to understand their life.” Are they dealing with a turnaround situation? Are they facing pressure to deliver results? Or are they supposed to drive cultural change? “This person was put in the job for a reason.” When you have a better understanding of their goals, it can be easier to find ways to work together, she says.

Focus on priorities, preferences, and pet peeves

Figuring out how to work well with your new boss requires research and sharp observational skills. Your main objective, according to Abbajay, is to “learn about your new boss’s priorities, preferences, and pet peeves.” Zoom or Slack? Regular check-ins or quarterly reviews? Friday team-building exercises or TGIF meeting-free days? Discuss their expectations around decision-making and collaboration, says Hadley. Asking questions such as “Which decisions do you want me to consult you on and which should I handle on my own?” helps avoid miscommunications. If you feel like you’re not on the same wavelength with your new boss, she suggests speaking to colleagues and others who’ve worked with them in the past. You can learn from others’ experiences.

Take a “Yes, And” approach

Some people become defensive and bristle at change when a new boss arrives; others may go to the opposite extreme and become overly flattering and sycophantic. Abbajay recommends a middle ground where you support your boss while also providing honest feedback. Taking a note from improv comedy and adopting a “Yes, And” approach can be helpful, she says. This means building on your boss’s suggestions, and offering your own insights and perspectives. Avoid saying things like, “That’s not the way we do things,” or “That’s not a good idea.” And resist the urge to join the snark when your colleagues complain about them behind their back. “Don’t sabotage the boss’s efforts,” says Abbajay. “Bosses can feel it when the team isn’t with them.” Instead, “strive to be seen as an ally,” she says. “When you’re an early adopter, you can influence others to be more accepting and see the positive side.” The bonus is that “the boss will likely be better with more people supporting them.”

Crush it at work

Feeling annoyed about having to prove yourself to a new boss is understandable, but Hadley says it’s important to move past your resentment. While it can feel like you’re starting at square one, bear in mind that your new boss needs to get to know you and see what you’re capable of, she says. “Try not to take it personally; this isn’t about you.” She recommends focusing on your goals and investing your energy in activities that will help you achieve them. And importantly, make an extra effort to “crush it at work.”

She recommends excelling at “the most prominent, high-impact project you can do to make your boss look good.” This might require additional time on your part, but the good news, says Abbajay, is that while you’re *kinda sorta* starting a new job, you already have the knowledge and skills to succeed. “You need to do a little bit extra,” as your new boss gets up to speed, she says. “You want to be considered a go-to person.”

Consider if a reset conversation is needed

Depending on the tension level between you and your boss, you might consider directly asking for a reset in your relationship. Approach this potential conversation with care, says Hadley. Think about your boss’s personality and the current dynamic between you. If your boss is no-nonsense and pragmatic, you could take a straightforward approach by scheduling a one-on-one meeting and saying something like, “I want us to be more in sync. How can I work better for and with you?” However, if your boss tends to be anxious and insecure, a softer approach might be more effective. You could suggest an informal setting, such as lunch or after-work drinks, and say something along the lines of, “I’d like to talk about how we can work better together.” If it feels genuine and appropriate, you might consider complimenting your boss on a specific aspect of their leadership, says Abbajay. “Say, ‘I really appreciate how you handle XYZ.’ This gives them affirmation.” After all, “Bosses like praise, too,” she says.

Think about alternatives

If your new boss is making your job so miserable that you're considering quitting, some serious soul-searching is in order. Do you like your company, the benefits, your colleagues, and the work itself? If the answer is mostly yes, it's probably worth staying and figuring out how to make it work. Don't be rash, says Abbajay. "Unless they're a screamer or a psychopath, give it six months," she says. "They might be incompetent at first, but they're learning." But if you've waited a while and your boss is still undermining your job satisfaction, Hadley suggests exploring opportunities inside or outside the organization. "If you have a better alternative, you can walk away," she says.

Quick Tips

- Adopt a positive mindset and remind yourself: "I like my job and I will like it again. I just have to get through this temporary transition."
- Be patient and show empathy. Micromanaging? Maybe they're nervous. Shaking things up? They might be trying to prove themselves. Allow them time to adjust to their role.
- Work on understanding your new boss's priorities and preferences and talk to them about expectations around decision-making. This helps you get on the same page.

- Support your boss while also offering constructive feedback. Avoid saying things like, “That’s not how we do it.” Instead, build on their ideas and provide your own insights.
- Make an effort to excel on a prominent and high-impact project. This gives your new boss a chance to see what you’re capable of.
- Think about having a reset conversation with your boss if the relationship is strained. Provide genuine compliments, if appropriate, and express a desire to work better together.
- Don’t leave your job prematurely, but if the situation doesn’t improve, explore internal or external opportunities.

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Rebecca Knight is a journalist who writes about all things related to the changing nature of careers and the workplace. Her essays and reported stories have been featured in The Boston Globe, Business Insider, The New York Times, BBC, and The Christian Science Monitor. She was shortlisted as a Reuters Institute Fellow at Oxford University in 2023. Earlier in her career, she spent a decade as an editor and reporter at the Financial Times in New York, London, and Boston.

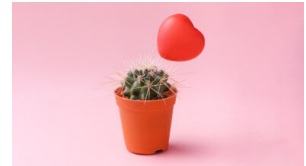
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