

Aunt Bossy: The Life Coach Your Mother Never Was

Written by Susan Murphy

Tuesday, 20 May 2014 12:58 - Last Updated Wednesday, 21 May 2014 06:23



Managing Off the Precipice

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I belong to an organization where I have to interact with all kinds of folks, and it is generally very rewarding. However, I am currently in a position where I have to interact and depend upon a fellow who gets his power and happiness out of managing what doesn't need to be managed.

For example, I am managing the production of a brochure and am very experienced as a writer and graphics person. This fellow I have to work with keeps interfering by correcting my work. There is nothing wrong with it, but it isn't the way he would do it. He positions himself as an expert trying to help make things better. This is not his job. His job is to lead the education programs and insure their growth. My brochure is for a different function.

He isn't my boss, but he can cause me a lot of trouble. Sometimes I even feel pushed to leave the company. What should I do?

Ellen

Dear Ellen,

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Oh, my, you have two jobs: one is to produce the brochure and the other is to produce calm and happiness in this pushy intruder.

The brochure part is easy. Just keep doing what you are doing, but do be open to listening to other ideas even from obnoxious people. They might be fine. Don't reject suggestions just because they come from the enemy.

As for your "helper," listen to him, echo back what he is saying, (So what you are saying is that yellow would be a better color for the back) and then probe, ("tell me more."). Let him hear himself try to explain. Keep probing. Wait for, "Because I think so." Surely that will make him feel foolish.

You can then say, "I appreciate your viewpoint, but I have to go with my instincts and experience, so I will stick with green." If you can ever throw him a crumb, do, but don't blot out your talent to accommodate his ego.

Ego is what this is all about. He needs to be heard. Listen to him, even ask for input. You needn't feel obligated to act on it.

If he gets nasty, fall back on the "cheerful but clueless" behavior, which allows you to act like you don't get it.

Let me know how it goes.

Best, Aunt Bossy

Slow Dancing

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Dear Aunt Bossy,

I have an acquaintance that I do business with. She is very needy and only talks about herself, but I have to see her socially. It feels like work. Any suggestions?

Martha

Dear Martha,

Don't you resent those people who make every second feel like an hour?

This is a difficult situation, but there are ways to ease the pain and turn that deathly slow dance into a jitterbug.

Firstly, just ask questions about her, and probe and sort of listen enough to keep her going, while you sit in awe of her self-absorption. It's a skill that gets easier with practice. Secondly, try to introduce her to someone just as needy who won't notice her lack of social grace. You might even be doing something good for another by doing this.

If you have to be with this person, make sure you are doing something that would be fun under any circumstances. It won't be as much fun with her, but at least you aren't stuck sitting and having to focus completely on her. Whatever you do, do not turn to food and drink to distract you. There is nothing worse than wasting an evening with some bore and then compounding the situation by wasting the next morning hating your bloated and hung over self.

The last recommendation I have is to work hard and become so successful that you do not have to do business with her anymore. Your time is too valuable to waste on someone with no

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self-knowledge and a complete lack of consideration for others.

Note that people like this do serve a good purpose: they give us concrete examples of why we should monitor our natural instinct to self-absorb and make an effort to pay attention to others.

Good luck,

Aunt Bossy

Aunt Bossy is Susan Murphy, an internationally known Communication Skills Coach who adores spending every winter and spring in Beaufort. ☐ Ask for advice @☐ Bossymurph@mac.com

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