

Preface

I stop to admire my efforts. My family now has a newly painted hallway. I take pleasure observing our kittens tossing, turning and rolling around; they are getting along really well. I had decided to paint the hallway to take my mind off the past six months and the negative effects work had bestowed upon me. Lately I have been able to give my time to my deserving family, and I am far away from the cries and criticisms of my bullying boss. My time off has simplistically been tagged 'work related stress', but I call it 'bullying boss syndrome' (BBS for short). BBS is rife and playing havoc wherever there are people having to earn their crust under the scrutiny of a bullying boss.

I bought some kittens because the kids are at an age when they will no longer be conned into soft toy substitutes. They wanted a dog, so I bought them lots of cute teddy bears. They wanted a rabbit, so I bought them a soft, cuddly, plush Easter bunny to accompany the chocolates. They wanted a parrot and I managed to find one: a beanie baby type of parrot. But explaining why this parrot was full of crumpy, scrumpy beans took some explaining. I was also now at home, though not through choice, and was able to help raise the new family pets. The kittens have been therapeutic; they have helped me de-stress and restore an element of calm into my life. Our kittens, aka 'Sox' and 'Boots', (blame the kids!) are keeping my stress levels in check and my blood pressure in line. As for scooping cat poop instead of breaking through the glass ceiling stuff – no problem. Anything is better than being in the presence of my bullying boss.

Watching Sox and Boots having fun momentarily puts the negatives of my time at work on ice. Admittedly BBS is not the only thing you want to put on ice. I have had some surreal moments, imagining sending my bullying boss to either of the poles, so long as the temperature was minus fifty and falling.

If any of you are either going through what I have gone through, or have fallen prey to a bullying boss, I know you will be able to catch what I throw at you. I want to share the situation as well as bullying boss syndrome with you – not just so I can bring closure to the past months of torment, but because I would like to help you too. It is difficult to move on without closure – so that your bullying boss does not continue to consciously or subconsciously gnaw away

at your state of mind twenty-four-seven. One day I will be able to visualise my bullying boss upon his bully boss throne, the lavatory, and point my finger and laugh uncontrollably.

The past months at work were the most gruelling I have experienced since giving birth. For a while I completely lost faith in the working world. I began to wonder whether all ethical sense had been forgotten in 21st century working culture. Not only do you have to work longer, harder, faster and sharper, but if you throw a bully behaving badly into the mix then you have a clear recipe for personal self esteem meltdown.

What is bullying boss syndrome? Simply put, it is how the victims of bullying bosses are affected. It's when you find yourself in the company of a bullying boss who is as trying as diets that don't work and skinny jeans that no longer fit. It's when you begin to question yourself, friends and family as to what is just and right. It's when you experience deep and meaningful sorry-for-yourself moments. It's when working life gets to you, to the extent that you seek advice from under tens – my son's advice was to strap my bullying boss to a rocket labelled Mars No Return (if only!). And my daughter suggested that Dad have a word with the organisation (yeah, right!). And of course, my husband – who is a man of few words – tells me to quit. But I am stubborn and will dig my stilettos in like a garden fork to soil. I was first in, and doing a good job before the bullying boss arrived.

A bullying boss does not know you and refuses to get to know you. A bullying boss can be any gender, race or creed. All they want is to succeed in the ways they know best, and their strategy is to make your life as miserable and pitiful as theirs secretly is. I am not here to slate all bosses, because I have worked for some great people. Prior to those gruelling six months, I had a boss who deserved a trophy for treating fellow employees well. He had an open door policy and took time to actually talk to me with respect – the fact he was a doctor was irrelevant in terms of our relationship. I would put my head around his door to say, 'Hi', and he would welcome me in with a smile as bright as happiness itself. 'Come in, sit down'. He would shuffle his papers to one side, and ask 'How are you feeling?' There were times when I wanted to really offload and confide in him. 'Well, you see, Doc, the kids are playing up and my husband

is mad at me for the long hours you've got me working', but he was a good, honest boss and gave credit where credit was due, so the long hours could be excused.

I believe bullying bosses map their own codes of bad practice. They have their own remit, no affinity with emotional intelligence and project poor leadership skills. All the same they like to shine and take credit for work they had no part in. They abuse and misuse their powers, they denigrate, manipulate and yes, they adopt 'behind closed doors' terrorisation, so they have no witnesses. I did not fully recognise how docile I had become in my situation. But one day I took stock and the penny dropped – my bullying boss had made me victim to BBS, which was later diagnosed as 'workplace stress'.