

Let's just say it up front: No one's perfect so there's probably something every boss doesn't get. But not all of those "somethings" are created equal. There's no shortage of bosses who get how to *manage* but are clueless about how to *lead* people. And being "led" by a bad leader can be incredibly painful!

There is no silver bullet to overcome this challenge. But you are not helpless. In fact, if you handle it well your difficult situation can be a powerful gift for developing your own emotional intelligence and communication skills.

Your personal success is not determined by what happens to you, but by *how you respond to what happens to you*. Many highly successful people overcame insurmountable odds to get there. In fact, life's difficulties are the Ivy League training ground for success. But it starts with you leading yourself well: *You control your attitude instead of letting circumstances control your attitude*.

Here's some guidance on how to make lemonade out of your lemons:

- 1. Grow your influence.** Even being right doesn't mean you get to tell your boss what to do. You don't have control, but you have some influence. Your effectiveness is dependent on you increasing that influence. Trying to win every argument is a losing proposition. Having an attitude, constant correction, and harshly shooting down their ideas (especially in front of others) are all good ways to decrease your influence. Your influence grows as you support your boss's success. So look for opportunities to be supportive, affirm their good choices (however rare), and have their back. You'll earn the right over time to respectfully question or even challenge their weaker decisions.
- 2. Accept reality.** Don't carry the monkey on your back for your boss's failures. Despite your best efforts your boss may never change. Not your problem: Your skill in dealing with difficult people is your problem. The boss is responsible for his/her own choices; you are responsible for influencing them toward success¹. Strengthen your resolve and skills to be a positive influence in a negative situation. Even if your organization fails, have the reputation of a bright light through dark times.
- 3. Care about your boss's needs.** It really can be lonely at the top, especially for a poor leader. People who don't give affirmation don't usually get affirmation. But they still need it, so look for opportunities to give it. Learn to read what's driving their behaviors. They are driven by their own values, often rooted in their own needs that are seeking to be fulfilled. Help them succeed at meeting those needs in less destructive ways.
- 4. Don't be a cancer cell.** How you communicate with others about your boss determines whether you are a cancer to the organization or a cure. Don't pretend you're wearing rose-colored glasses but discipline your words to generate light instead of heat.



Leadership works through influence. If you want to be a good leader, learn how to influence even difficult people.

enLumen Leadership Services: Turning Leadership Potential into Leadership Success

¹ <https://www.enlumenls.com/defining-leadership-success/>