

By the time they reach 65, the average American will have spent 93,600 hours of their life working. That's just shy of 11 years! For those of us who have experienced the dysfunctional workplace, those hours can be so painful that the other 394,200 hours are spent trying to recover, scheming to find alternative employment opportunities and praying for a natural disaster at the exact location where you are to report for duty.

Job stress is a significant contributor to one's mental distress. Managing work load, interacting with customers and coworkers and surviving dysfunctional management takes a toll on one's physical and mental health. Being unhappy at work often means being unhappy in life. When we kick the family dog because our direct supervisor was promoted to an even higher level of incompetency, we know things at home are being affected.

Let's face it; most of us have probably experienced the world's worst boss. No kidding; they probably all had the same mother who told bedtime stories about torturing innocent hardworking people by denying them promotions, passing the blame when things go south, eagerly taking credit for work they "supervise" from afar, and passing out corrective action plans as though part of a quota.

Once on the job, most employees learn the reality of their company within months of their start date—other's within hours of meeting their office mate. For new hires, how does one tell whether their new desk is sitting upon the trap door to hell?

HRWorld.com shares the top 25 signs of dysfunctional workplaces. Here are just a few:

—Nothing can get done without the boss's approval.

—No one is sure who the boss really is .

—Too many pointless meetings are being held.

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Written by Rhonda Osborne, LPC, CAC III

—There's more than one "secret couple" on staff.

—IT rules are so strict that you're not allowed to know your own computer login.

—Your manager was hired because she listed "whiskey" as a hobby on her résumé.

—At least once per week, you hear quiet sobbing from an adjacent cubicle.

—What matters is not what you've accomplished in a day, but how many hours you were seen "working."

—Managers are CC'd on every company email, even when it's just about where to order lunch.
—The only way someone can get promoted is if a senior staff member dies.

Other signs may include having a boss that only hires yes men, having a boss that blatantly lies then lies about the lies, when every little thing is seen as a crisis, when everything is top priority and when the boss is responsible for nothing but the credit (HRWorld.com reader comments).

If you're one of the unfortunate already held captive to this type of management, taking necessary steps for self-protection is an absolute must. A few pointers to keep in mind: Under such management, you will never be the one left standing.

That being said, arrive on time but also go home; giving more of yourself to a company that will sell you out as needed is not a wise investment.

—Make each decision knowing that you stand alone in its defense. —Use every hour of

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vacation that you are granted, and frankly a good share of your sick time allotment.

—Never mistake the boss for a friend.

—Start sending out your resume the moment you notice that you intentionally stay quiet in meetings to avoid disagreeing with superiors.

—Invest your energy into new job searches versus fuming over what has been, what is and what unfortunately will always be.

—Kiss your spouse and play with your children.

—Save your misery for your therapy hour; a neutral professional is a great way of coping with your frustrations.

Best wishes to you all in your efforts to bring home the bacon.