

# Your mean boss could be insecure

July 30, 2012

## *The Washington Post:*

Most people who work inside organizations know the experience of having their ideas shot down as soon as they're floated. And for some folks, it's a daily barrage.

In their book, *The Knowing-Doing Gap*, Jeff Pfeffer and Bob Sutton point to negativity as a primary reason companies fail to implement improvements, even when key people inside those companies know exactly what should be done and how to do it.

And this negativity seems to be taking a growing toll on workers. Recent Gallup research shows that 17 percent of people who quit their jobs leave because they can't stand management or the work environment. In a 2009 survey, 35 percent of executives said that good employees are most likely to quit because of unhappiness with management — up from 23 percent in 2004. Another recent study found that between 28 and 36 percent of U.S. workers report persistent abuse at work. And Amgen CEO Kevin Sharer has said the effects are so destructive that “anyone with a bullying tendency, we fire.”

Of course, sometimes a manager or colleague's criticism is legitimate. Yet, according to psychological science, the negativity bias may get stirred up when people are feeling unsure of themselves.

So that mean boss of yours? You might think it's a personality disorder or blithe insensitivity. But it could be abnormal insecurity.

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