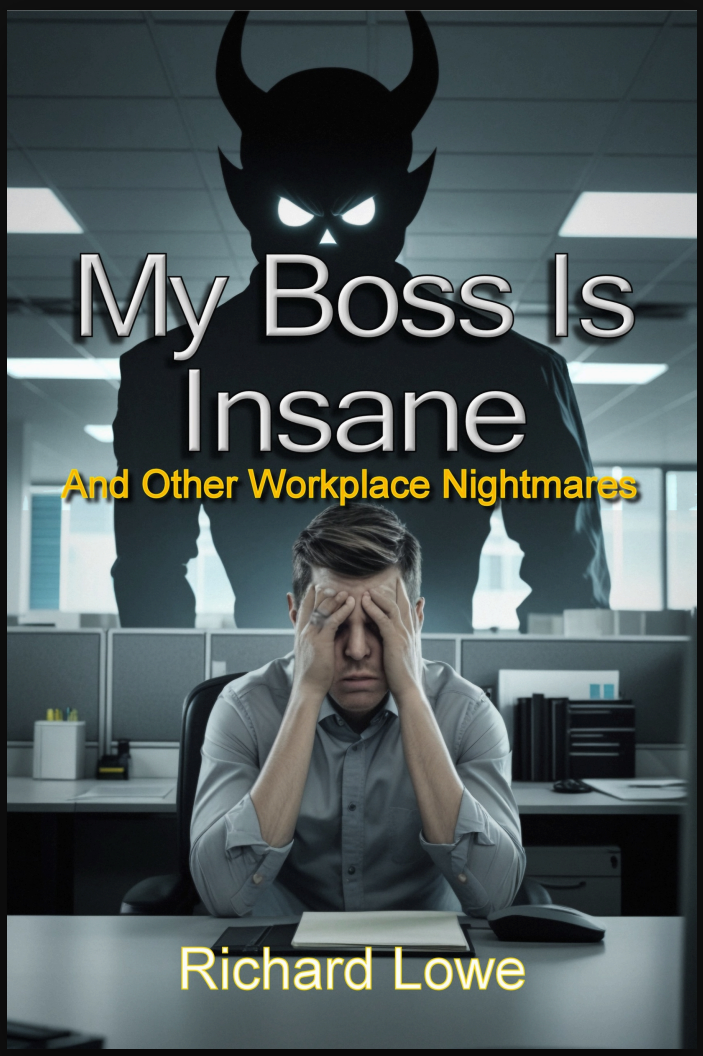
A FREE COMPANION TO MY BOSS IS INSANE

The Bad Boss Survival Workbook

Name what you're dealing with, build your paper trail, fund your escape and get your confidence back.



RICHARD LOWE

How to Use This Workbook

Print it, keep it at home, and fill it in a little at a time.

My Boss Is Insane collects the bosses Richard Lowe met over thirty-three years of working and consulting: the racist, the liar, the checked-out retiree, the micromanager, the unstable executive, the screamer and the predator. The same lesson runs through every story. The people who came out ahead had evidence, money in the bank and somewhere else to go. This workbook helps you build all three.

It has six parts:

1. **The baseline**, so you know what good management looks like.
2. **Name the boss**, to match what you're living with to a pattern and a first move.
3. **The incident log**, your paper trail.
4. **Before you go to HR**, a preparation checklist.
5. **The escape fund and exit plan**, so you can afford to leave.
6. **Boss-proof skills and recovery**, so the next bad boss can't do this to you.

> *You have more power than you think.*

Part 1: The Baseline

Once you've experienced competent leadership, you'll never again accept the excuse that bad management is just "how things are."

The book's good bosses had different styles, one collaborative and one gruff and decisive, but they shared the same foundation. Check each one your current boss does most of the time.

- [ ] Knows the work, and says so when they don't know something
- [ ] Gives assignments with a clear goal, a due date and a way to measure success
- [ ] Explains why when priorities change, and adjusts the timeline
- [ ] Delegates, then gets out of the way
- [ ] Handles mistakes privately, with no public humiliation and no grudges
- [ ] Shields the team from organizational chaos instead of passing it down
- [ ] Gives credit and takes responsibility
- [ ] Asks for extra effort only in real emergencies

Six or more checks and you probably have an ordinary boss having an ordinary bad stretch. The book's conclusion is blunt about this: a bad day, one raised voice or one questionable call doesn't make someone toxic. Fewer than six, and Part 2 will help you name what you're dealing with.

Part 2: Name the Boss

The patterns repeat everywhere. Find yours, then make the first move the book recommends.

PATTERN	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	YOUR FIRST MOVE
Discriminating	Raises, promotions or assignments that track race, nationality or faith instead of performance; demands that you hide your religion	Document it and confront it when you can. Written evidence is what made the difference in the book. Talk to an employment attorney.
Liar	Promised commissions, bonuses or equity that become a "misunderstanding" once the work is done	Get every promise in writing before you do the work. Once you catch a deliberate lie about pay, start planning your exit.
Checked out	Announced retirement, passed over or burned out; nothing gets approved	Put every request in writing, ask for more authority, build relationships with their peers, and expect a flood of signatures near the end.
Unethical	Asks you to bury an expense, pad an estimate or present misleading data, "just this once"	Take time before reacting, discuss the ethics directly, document the request and your answer, and be ready to refuse.
Micromanager	Approval for every small expense, hourly "what are you working on," every email reviewed	Send status updates before they ask, ask in writing for authority over routine decisions, and agree on check-in times.
Unstable	Wild mood swings, a 35% raise in the morning and a tirade by afternoon, isolating the team	Put your safety first. Document, don't try to manage their condition, have an exit ready, and tell security if you feel threatened.
Hostile	Screaming in public, intimidation as a management tool, rotating targets	Stay calm, move the conversation out of public view, document, and start planning your exit. Don't study their triggers.
Harasser	Unwanted advances, then worse reviews and worse assignments after you say no	Reject clearly, document everything, report it, and remember the EEOC deadline (below).
Remote controller	Keystroke tracking, check-in calls all day, messages at midnight, abuse kept to private calls	Screenshot everything, compare notes with teammates privately, and set firm limits on your availability.

If your company won't act on sexual harassment, the book says you can file with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or your state's civil rights agency within 180 days (300 in most states). Employment law varies by state; the book is not legal advice, and neither is this workbook.

The pattern I'm dealing with: _____ Since: _____

Part 3: The Incident Log

Your memory means nothing in a workplace dispute. What you can prove means everything.

Write entries the same day, while details are fresh. Record specific, observable actions, never interpretations. Instead of "he was unreasonable," write what he did, what he said in his words, and what it contradicted. Keep this log at home or in a personal account, never on company systems.

DATE / TIME	WHERE	WHAT HAPPENED (EXACT WORDS WHERE YOU CAN)	WITNESSES	IMPACT ON WORK OR HEALTH

The follow-up email

After any meeting or call where a decision was made or a promise given, send a short summary the same day. Silence leaves a record that nobody disputed your version. A correction gives you their position in writing.

> *"Hi Frank, just wanted to confirm what we discussed in today's meeting. You agreed to approve the $50,000 equipment purchase and said the bonuses for early project completion would be processed by month-end. Please let me know if I misunderstood anything."*

Paper trail habits

- [ ] Save every email, text and written instruction that matters
- [ ] Screenshot message threads and keep email headers, which show when things were sent
- [ ] Photograph whiteboards before they're erased
- [ ] Keep backups in more than one place you control
- [ ] Check company policy before forwarding or photographing company documents
- [ ] Check your state's law and company policy before you record any conversation
- [ ] Log patterns as well as incidents: five unreasonable demands in two weeks is a pattern
- [ ] Never exaggerate. Good documentation is truthful, specific and complete

Part 4: Before You Go to HR

HR exists to protect the company from lawsuits. Go in prepared, with realistic expectations.

Sometimes you have no choice, especially with clearly illegal behavior like sexual harassment or racial discrimination. When you go, go ready. Check each box before you walk in.

- [ ] My incident log covers weeks or months of behavior
- [ ] My complaint is about behavior that is clearly illegal or breaks a specific written policy, because vague "poor management" complaints are easy to dismiss
- [ ] I have copies of the key documents stored outside company systems
- [ ] I know which witnesses saw what, and whether they'll speak
- [ ] I assume HR will share everything I say with the person I'm reporting
- [ ] I will send an email summary after every HR conversation, listing what was discussed and promised
- [ ] I am ready for retaliation, which is illegal and still common
- [ ] My escape fund (Part 5) can carry me if this goes sideways
- [ ] I have considered going straight to the EEOC, my state's civil rights agency or an employment lawyer

My HR summary, in three sentences

WHAT HAPPENED	
WHICH LAW OR POLICY IT BREAKS	
WHAT I'M ASKING THEM TO DO	

Watch for these after you file

- [ ] A sudden performance improvement plan
- [ ] New criticism of work that was fine last month
- [ ] Exclusion from meetings, followed by blame for not knowing what was said
- [ ] Deadlines that can't be met

Log every one of these in Part 3 with the date. Retaliation that follows a complaint closely in time is part of the record.

Part 5: The Escape Fund and Exit Plan

Always be prepared to leave. When you can afford to walk away, you're no longer trapped.

The book's target is enough savings to live without income for at least six months, preferably longer. Start with your bare minimum, the amount you could survive on, well below what you spend now.

MONTHLY MINIMUM	AMOUNT
Rent or mortgage	
Utilities and phone	
Food	
Health insurance without an employer (look up COBRA and individual plans now)	
Transportation	
Debt payments	
Job search costs	
Total per month	
Times six months = my escape fund target	
Saved so far	
Amount I'll move to a separate account every payday	

Exit readiness

- [ ] Escape fund in its own account, labeled so I don't touch it
- [ ] Resume updated within the last six months, with numbers on my accomplishments
- [ ] Copies of my own work samples saved to personal storage (nothing confidential)
- [ ] I know what my non-compete, confidentiality and stock option terms say
- [ ] Medical and dental checkups done while I still have good coverage
- [ ] Three recruiters in my field know who I am
- [ ] I contacted one former colleague this month
- [ ] I stopped working unpaid overtime to cover for poor planning

> *Plan your exit even if you love your current job. The best time to build your escape fund is when you don't need it.*

Part 6: Boss-Proof Skills and Recovery

The best defense against bad bosses is being so valuable and marketable that no single manager controls your career.

Skills inventory

QUESTION	MY ANSWER
What do I know that only matters at this one company?	
What industry-standard skill would replace it? Which portable skill (problem solving, communication, project management, leadership) needs work?	
One course, certification or project I'll start this quarter	

Accomplishments with numbers

Write results the way the book shows: "automated manual processes that saved 20 hours per week," instead of "improved efficiency."

WHAT I DID	THE MEASURABLE RESULT

Recovery check

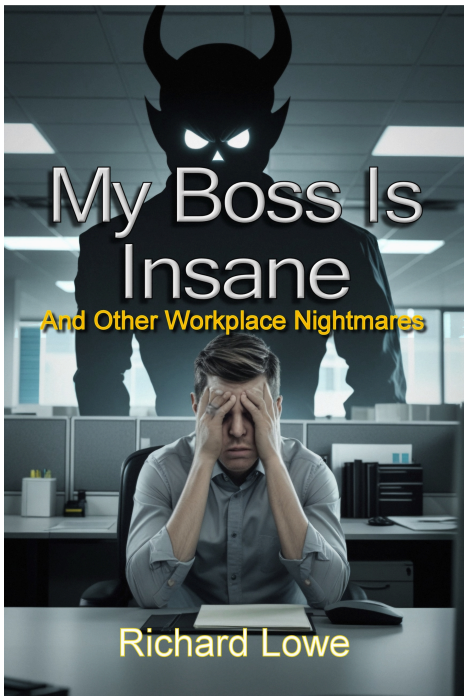
Prolonged abuse at work causes real symptoms. Check any you have noticed.

- ☐ Trouble sleeping, or waking at 3 a.m. thinking about work
- ☐ Lost appetite or weight without trying
- ☐ Sitting in the car before going in, working up the nerve
- ☐ Doubting work you used to do with confidence
- ☐ Pulling away from family and friends

Two or more checks: treat it seriously. Keep exercising, stay connected with people outside work, and consider a counselor or therapist. If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Whole Story

This workbook is the toolkit. My Boss Is Insane is the field report: the racist, the liar, the micromanager, the hostile screamer and the executive who needed armed guards to be fired, with what worked against each one, the truth about HR, and how to build a career no single boss can wreck.



My Boss Is Insane:
And Other Workplace Nightmares
The Working Life

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