



Engaging a Disempowering Boss - Sample Phrases

Tool 1: Verbalize an "I need" statement

"I am clear about what you thought was weak in my presentation, but I need to know what part of it was on track. Can you tell me which parts of the presentation were effective and should be retained in the next version?"

"What I need to be more productive is a specific job I can work on independently. I believe my results will speak for themselves. What part of this project would you be willing to delegate to me?"

"Your comments have taken me by surprise. I need to think over what you are saying and get back with you. Can I stop by your office tomorrow morning to discuss this further?"

Tool 2: Clarify roles

"My understanding was that you would be keeping the project on track from the big picture standpoint and I would be handling the details. Are you feeling uncomfortable with the way I am handling the details? Do you want to readjust my role?"

"I really appreciate your ability to find the holes in the strategy. What I think I do best is managing the relationships required to implement the strategy. What is your perspective on what each of us does best?"

Tool 3: Articulate your opinion about potential impact on you, others and the work

"I am certainly willing to do this the way you suggest. However, I would like to state my view that we are moving too quickly without thinking through the impact on the other departments involved. If you want to hear more about that, will you let me know?"

"My opinion is that this change will lead to a delay in the delivery date, but I am willing to trust your judgment. Would you like me to inform the others on the team or would you like to do so?"

"My concern is that by delaying our exploration of that new market, we won't have a base of operation or a track record when we're ready to fully commit. What amount of money would you be willing to invest in a pilot project?"

Remember: Hard-driving, dominant personalities usually will not respect or even take seriously viewpoints that are not offered at least as forcefully as they deliver their own. State it like you mean it and then withdraw.