

MAX PARADOX

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Self-Help with a Sense of Humor ;)

I'm Afraid to Talk to My Boss

**How to Ask for What You Need
Without Preparing Your Will**



We have a problem. Relax. We can solve it—and
have a laugh along the way.

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INTRO

You need to talk to your boss.

Nothing dramatic. You are not confessing to international espionage, admitting that you accidentally deleted the company, or asking whether everyone can start receiving their salary in gold bars. You just need something normal: a raise, clearer priorities, a day off, more resources, less work, better support, a change in schedule, or perhaps an explanation of why three people's jobs have quietly migrated into yours.

And yet your nervous system has reacted as if you are preparing to negotiate with a heavily armed dictator.

You open the chat window.

"Hi, do you have a few minutes today?"

Too aggressive.

Delete.

"Hi, when you have a moment, could we maybe have a quick chat?"

Too needy.

Delete.

"Hey! Just wondering if at some point, whenever convenient, perhaps we could possibly..."

Now you sound like a Victorian orphan requesting permission to approach the fireplace.

Delete.

Eventually you decide not to send anything. Maybe tomorrow will be better. Tomorrow you will be calmer, more confident, better prepared, and mysteriously equipped with

the communication skills of a hostage negotiator. Tomorrow arrives. You spend most of it avoiding eye contact with your boss near the coffee machine.

Excellent progress.

If talking to your boss makes you uncomfortable, you are not unusual. The strange part is that many perfectly competent adults can present quarterly results to forty people, solve customer disasters, manage budgets, train new employees, raise children, refinance mortgages, and calmly remove a spider from the bathroom—yet become emotionally twelve years old when they need to say, “I think my workload is too high.”

The boss does not even need to be terrifying. Sometimes they are perfectly pleasant. They say hello. They own normal shoes. They occasionally laugh at jokes. There is no evidence that anyone has disappeared after requesting vacation.

Still, your brain keeps a file labeled POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.

Inside that file:

Maybe they will think I am difficult.

Maybe they will think I am lazy.

Maybe they will say no.

Maybe they will remember this forever.

Maybe this will affect my career.

Maybe they will fire me immediately, cancel my health insurance before lunch, and personally escort me into the parking lot while the finance department watches through the blinds.

Your brain likes range.

The problem is not simply that conversations with authority figures can be uncomfortable. The bigger problem is what we do with that discomfort. We postpone. We overprepare. We soften every sentence until it has no skeleton. We hint instead of asking. We wait for the perfect moment, which apparently exists somewhere between "the boss is busy" and "the boss has gone home."

Then we become frustrated because our needs remain invisible.

This creates one of the most absurd workplace arrangements available to modern civilization: you desperately want something to change, the person who could potentially help has not been clearly told what you need, and you are quietly becoming angry at them for failing to read a message you never sent.

Very efficient.

Fear around these conversations usually comes from several things mixed together. There is the power difference: your boss can influence your workload, opportunities, income, reputation, schedule, and sometimes whether you still have the little plastic card that opens the office door. There is uncertainty: you do not control the answer. There is social risk: most people dislike conflict and rejection. And there is imagination, which is useful when writing novels but occasionally less useful when your manager says, "Sure, what did you want to discuss?"

Because imagination rarely produces this:

You ask.

Your boss considers it.

You discuss options.

Something changes.

No emotional soundtrack. No courtroom artist. No emergency statement from corporate headquarters.

Instead, we imagine conversations as battles with one winner and one loser. If I ask for less work, I am complaining. If I ask for a raise, I am greedy. If I disagree, I am disrespectful. If I say I cannot meet the deadline, I am incompetent. If I ask for help, I have revealed that I am secretly three raccoons in a business shirt who somehow passed the interview.

That last possibility remains unconfirmed.

This book is about replacing that entire mental production with something simpler: clear, calm, practical communication. Not aggressive communication. Not motivational-poster confidence. Not walking into your boss's office, placing both hands on the desk, and announcing, "We need to talk about my value."

Please do not do that unless you are starring in a very low-budget corporate drama.

You will learn how to decide what you actually want before starting the conversation, because "I am unhappy with everything" is emotionally understandable but operationally useless. You will learn how to make requests that are specific enough to answer. You will learn how to prepare without writing a seventeen-page legal defense. You will learn what to say when you need more money, fewer tasks, clearer priorities, support, flexibility, feedback, or boundaries.

Most importantly, you will learn how to handle the part everyone conveniently skips: what to do when the answer is no.

Because sometimes your boss will say no.

There. We survived the sentence.

A good conversation is not one in which you always get what you want. That standard would turn communication into magic. A good conversation is one in which you clearly express what you need, understand the response, explore realistic options, and leave knowing what happens next. Sometimes you will get a yes. Sometimes you will negotiate. Sometimes you will discover that the problem cannot be solved inside your current situation.

That information is useful too.

What we are not going to do is pretend that every boss is reasonable, every workplace is healthy, or every request can be solved with the correct combination of eye contact and breathing techniques. Some managers are poor communicators. Some organizations punish honest feedback. Some situations involve bullying, discrimination, retaliation, or serious misconduct. Those require different decisions and, depending on the situation, support from HR, a union or employee representative, legal counsel, or another appropriate professional resource.

But most difficult conversations at work are not emergency situations. They are uncomfortable conversations that have been promoted to emergencies by prolonged avoidance.

A request for one remote-work day becomes a six-week internal debate.

A conversation about priorities becomes nightly resentment.

A question about salary becomes a documentary series inside your head.

Episode four is particularly dark.

The goal here is not to turn you into someone who loves difficult conversations. That would be unnecessary and, frankly, suspicious. The goal is to make these conversations ordinary enough that you can have them before the issue grows teeth.

You do not need to eliminate fear first. This matters because people often wait to “feel confident” before speaking. Confidence then behaves like a delayed train: announced repeatedly, visible nowhere, and somehow still considered part of the transportation system.

You can speak while nervous.

You can ask while uncertain.

You can negotiate without becoming a different personality.

The skill is not feeling nothing. The skill is knowing what to do even when your stomach has decided to join the meeting.

By the end of this book, you should be able to walk into a conversation with your boss knowing three things: what you need, how to say it clearly, and what you will do depending on the answer. No speeches. No psychological chess. No imaginary funeral arrangements.

Your boss is a person.

The conversation is a conversation.

And your last will and testament can remain unfinished.

Wklejony tekst

Chapter 1 - Your Boss Is Not a Weather System

At 9:14 on Tuesday morning, you see your boss walking toward you.

Nothing has happened.

Nobody has sent an alarming email. No meeting has been scheduled. Your boss is simply walking down the hallway carrying coffee and looking like a person who has recently acquired coffee.

Your body disagrees.

Your shoulders tighten. Your brain rapidly reviews every task you have touched since approximately 2019. Did you forget something? Did someone complain? Was that spreadsheet wrong? Did the client hate the presentation? Did you accidentally reply all to something six months ago and the consequences have only now matured?

Your boss gets closer.

"Morning."

"Morning."

And that is it.

They continue walking.

You remain standing there with enough adrenaline to escape a medium-sized bear.

This is one of the stranger features of workplace anxiety around authority: sometimes the boss does not even need to do anything. Their existence is sufficient. A neutral facial expression becomes evidence. A short message becomes a

clue. "Can you stop by later?" becomes the opening scene of a legal thriller.

The message contains five words.

Your brain produces a trilogy.

The first thing we need to fix is the idea that your boss is some kind of environmental force. They are not weather. They are not gravity. They are not the Department of Consequences. They are a person occupying a role that gives them more influence over certain parts of your working life.

That influence is real. Pretending otherwise would be silly. A manager can affect assignments, performance reviews, development opportunities, pay recommendations, flexibility, and the general amount of peace available in your Tuesday afternoon. The mistake is not recognizing the power difference.

The mistake is turning that difference into unlimited power.

That is how a manager becomes mentally upgraded from "person who approves my vacation" to "person who controls whether I am allowed to have opinions."

Most bosses do not actually possess that feature.

The authority magnifier

Imagine two people saying exactly the same sentence:

"I'm not sure this is the best approach."

If a coworker says it, you may think, Fine, let's discuss it.

If your boss says it, your brain may hear, Your professional decline has been officially documented.

The words have not changed. The perceived stakes have.