

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/the-toxicity-of-tyrants-explicit>

Bob Sutton, professor of management science and engineering at Stanford, lists the negative emotional and physical effects that workplace jerks have on their peers, as well as on people's performance. Sutton, a bestselling author of several books on the subject, asserts that, whether or not overbearing bosses drive success, their bad behavior poisons their organization.



Transcript

So, if we're gonna do a rough parsing of the academic literature on what I'm calling all things asshole, there's two kinds of effects.. And my focus is especially in the workplace, and I'm talking about studies that look at conditions, and this is, I guess, my definition of an asshole, that leaves others feeling demeaned, de-energized, and disrespected.. So that would be my definition.. Anxiety, depression, physical health problems.. There was a longitudinal study in the UK that people who had abusive supervisors were more likely to have fatal heart attacks, for example.. And then you got a whole bunch of performance effects.. So we might have the whether or not assholes finish first conversation, which people seem to love in Silicon Valley, but whether or not they are finishing first, the people around them are not, is the evidence is really clear on that.. So the way I like to describe it is if it helps you get to the top of the hierarchy, you are climbing to the top and simultaneously destroying it at the same time.. Okay.. Another thing about it that's really important is it's incredibly contagious..

We have very good research that shows that negative emotion is more contagious than positive emotion, that if you're around nasty people, you're gonna catch it.. And there's another thing that happens.. There's even been some studies published since I finished this book in late 2016 that show that assholes prefer to hire and be around other assholes, especially assholes like them.. So if you're Machiavellian, you wanna be around Machiavellians.. If you're a narcissist, you wanna be around narcissists.. So assholes attract...