

Signs You Are About to Be Fired: Cue Music from 'Jaws'

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(Photo: Getty Images)

These days, it seems that everyone is worried about getting fired. Although the official [unemployment rate](#) has been dropping since its 2009-2010 high, the number of people who have been job hunting unsuccessfully for several years has [actually increased](#). This paints a scary picture for those newly out on the market.

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The good news is that, according to experts, there are some very clear signs you might be next in line for the chopping block in the way your [boss](#) is treating you both as an employee and as a person. Ignore these at your peril. Being alert and proactive is the key to dodging the proverbial pink slip. If you remain oblivious for too long, at a certain point, "you can do anything, you can do jazz hands," behavioral analyst and body language expert [Lillian Glass](#), told

Yahoo! Shine, "and it's still over.

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You are out of the loop. "When you are being kept out of decisions and news that normally you would be involved in," [Joel Garfinkle](#), executive coach and author of [Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level](#), told Yahoo! Shine, "it could be a sign that you are being phased out." Garfinkle recommends asking what changes your boss or team leaders would like to see and writing them down. "Take immediate action to make these changes with enthusiasm and a positive attitude."

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Your responsibilities are reduced. "Unless your boss is helping you out because you are breaking under the weight of work two or three people would usually be doing or you are being given bigger and more challenging tasks," [Maren Perry](#), MA, PCC, executive coach and founder of [Arden Coaching](#), told Yahoo! Shine, "getting projects taken away may signal a lack of faith in your abilities."

Request the opportunity to do the work, and make sure your efforts are stellar. "It's a great time to go the extra mile and demonstrate your initiative and value."

Your boss is visibly frustrated. You don't think you did anything wrong, but your boss is acting agitated and annoyed. Glass, a body language expert, said that signs of a boss's irritation include leaning back from you, not making eye contact, and pointing his or her feet away from you when seated. Perry recommended asking for a performance review and then acting immediately to make improvements. If your company doesn't have a formal review process, Garfinkle said, you should regularly request feedback from higher-ups.

You have made a major mistake. You blew it and you know it. "Apologize and acknowledge the impact on your boss and organization," said Perry. "Demonstrate a clear path for how you plan on preventing future mistakes and improving your overall performance in general." Offer a timeline and stick to it.

You receive an unexpected poor performance review. Especially if you are blindsided, this could mean your company is building a case for letting you go to avoid a wrongful termination suit in the future, warned Garfinkle. Ask for coaching or mentoring from your boss, which may help bring your work back in line with his or her expectations and save your job.

Your boss's assistant treats you poorly. "It's a kind of animal-kingdom behavior," said Glass, and does not bode well for your position's future. Perry recommended that you be proactive about asking your boss how you could improve your performance and volunteer for projects. If you feel you are going to be fired imminently, have a frank, respectful conversation instead of avoiding the issue.

Sometimes there is nothing you can do to turn things around and save your position. You are better off directing your energy toward finding a new job. If you suddenly find your communication switching from phone calls to emails, for instance, HR may be building the documentation to support letting you go. It's also a bad sign if your superiors are suddenly aloof and you notice that conversations change when you enter a room. Finally, if you have an unexpected meeting scheduled with your boss and an HR representative on a Friday, brace yourself.

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And if you are fired? Garfinkle said that respectful communication is key, no matter how rejected and upset you may be feeling. "It's really important to leave on gracious terms - you never know if some boss you had two or three years ago might want to rehire you."