

MY supervisor newsletter

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Is it appropriate for a supervisor to raise mental health issues with employees, such as pointing out that an employee “looks stressed out”? This might prompt employees to consider using the EAP.

Although it is not uncommon for a manager to use phrases such as “you look a little stressed out,” those might be misinterpreted by your employee. So, why not consider a different question with a business purpose, such as “you appear rushed and are fumbling with your work. Is there something I can do to help? Is everything all right?” This can lead the employee to mention something personal, in which case you can respond by recommending the EAP as a resource. Mental health in the workplace has received much attention in business news recently. This does not mean that supervisors should probe mental health issues or become diagnosticians. Continue to focus on performance issues that don’t resolve. You will ultimately refer employees with personal problems earlier and more often.

Everyone’s heard the adage that employees don’t leave companies, they leave bad bosses. Isn’t this just a management training cry to impress supervisors?

More than 57% of workers in a recent survey conducted by Developmental Dimensions International quit a job because of a “bad boss.” Of those who stayed, a third gave quitting serious consideration. Here’s the bottom line, according to analysis of data and experiences of managers: How managers handle their emotions and how they make other people feel are the strongest drivers of employee retention. More specifically, for many managers, their promotion or selection to lead others is often unexpected, and a third of managers don’t like being the boss. With a growing millennial work population who place a high value on work-life balance, making a difference, and positive workplaces, the belief that these young professionals will respond even more negatively to a bad boss is a trend that is expected to continue. So, what makes a bad boss? According to the research, it’s bosses who are overwhelmed, unfair, poor listeners, impersonal or disorganized, don’t solicit feedback, and withhold responsibility from line workers. The EAP can help supervisors overcome most, if not all of these limitations.

Source: www.hrdiver.com “Employees Really Do Leave Bad Bosses, Research Shows”

I have always struggled with being assertive. As a new supervisor, I can imagine some problems this might cause. Are there any problems outside my awareness that I should be careful to avoid?

Supervisors who struggle with assertiveness often fear saying no. Rather than state unequivocally to their employees that something won’t happen or can’t happen, and risk disappointment or anger, they may give the impression that there is hope or that they will “look into it.” Whether it is about a pay raise or some other question, they give employees the expectation of an affirmative outcome. For the supervisor, the goal at the time is avoiding anger or conflict with workers. Their strategy is to “wait and see” with a middle-of-the-road approach. Later, when the thing hoped for does not materialize, anger and accusations of broken promises occur. Trust is lost among staff. Unassertive supervisors often know they are setting themselves up for these conflicts, but the need to avoid conflict in the moment overrides their better judgment at the time. If you struggle with this level of assertiveness, contact the EAP.

What are the costs of misconduct in the workplace, and what are the dominant behaviors constituting misconduct?

There are many areas of misconduct, but the three that drive costs are discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying. A recent study found that the cost of workplace misconduct nationally is about \$20.2 billion per year. When an employee leaves an organization because of these behaviors, the cost to hire a new worker averages \$4126. And that is a low average, because this cost estimator from the Society of Human Resource Management is several years old and does not include many indirect costs. The latest report on misconduct in the workplace can be found at www.vaultplatform.com/the-trust-gap (a short form appears before you can download the 16-page document). Among the findings, of women who have experienced sexual harassment, only one in five reports it despite today's education, policies, and legal remedies. Fear of retaliation and impact on one's career still drive the hesitancy to report victimization.

Over the years, I have noticed that the most difficult and troubled employees also offer the most resistance to supervisor referral to the EAP. A few have actually agreed to go to counseling, but not to the EAP. Why is it important to not accept the employee's alternative source of help?

The EAP plays a key role in reducing risk to organizations regarding formal referrals. It is not unusual for difficult employees to resist referral and offer their own "solution" at a corrective interview. However, serious risks may continue without EAP involvement. These risks aren't dispelled even if the employee goes to the same source of help the EAP would have recommended. Follow-up allows the EAP to gauge progress or lack thereof, identify waning motivation to continue in treatment, re-motivate the worker to cooperate with the provider's recommendation, identify additional help, or monitor post-treatment recommendations crucial to success. Imagine an employee with an intermittent explosive disorder, who is prone to violence, agreeing to get help but not going through the EAP. Accepting help is a good thing in such a case, but the risks mentioned above certainly remain.

Please call our EAP professionals for advice on confronting and referring troubled employees to the EAP. We will assist you in developing action plans and coach you toward successful confrontations. This is part of your EAP service with MYgroup.

MYgroup 704-529-1428 or 800-633-3353