

MY supervisor newsletter

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My employee's father died of COVID-19 last fall, and there was no real funeral. She appears depressed, and some days not very functional. Friends are worried because she was previously treated for drug addiction and is now drinking. How should I approach EAP referral?

Consult with the EAP when employee situations are compounded by multiple issues, like this one is. If your employee is drinking now but had previously been treated for drug addiction, then she may be considered to be relapsed. Addictive disease patients in recovery are directed to abstain from alcohol and psychoactive drugs as part of their recovery program. If your employee is no longer an EAP client, encourage her to self-refer for the sadness and the difficulties she is having on the job. Many people experience a phenomenon known as prolonged grief disorder (PGD). This is a recognized condition that can result from the inability to participate in a normal bereavement and grief process. If her ability to function at work diminishes, consider more formal steps to encourage EAP participation.

Complaints and problems that employees seem to "drop on my desk" are the part of my job that I like least of all. Sometimes I snap at employees when they walk in and "deliver" me problems. How do I better manage this process for less stress and so I feel like the boss, not a support desk?

Show supervisees how to implement a process for bringing problems to you that maximizes their opportunity to solve problems on their own and properly conveys only the problems needing your attention. Here's a possible start to a dialog: "When bringing problems to me, please 1) share the impact the problem is having on your work situation or work unit. 2) Share with me what you've done or tried to do in order to solve the problem. If it did not work, let me know why. 3) Give me a recommendation. 4) If there are options, share them, and be specific so I do not try a solution that won't work. 5) Let me know which solution you think is the best one and why. 6) Offer ideas for how to go about implementing the solution." This is one approach for teaching a process to solve more problems faster, but avoid being so strict that employees don't come to you at all.

EAPs help resolve personal problems such as stress, depression, workplace conflicts, and substance abuse. What about the EAP's ability to

The history of employee assistance programs has caused them to naturally be associated with resolving personal problems, but EAPs can offer other types of help. Further, EA professionals also specialize. Some may have expertise in organizational development, while others are seasoned pros at addiction recovery, imparting supervisory skills, conflict resolution, parenting, and more. Meet with the EAP, but zero in on the

teach critical skills, like better listening? That's what my boss recently said I should consider improving.

aspect of the skill about which you are trying to be more efficient. For example, regarding listening skills, key aspects include active listening, summarizing, using empathy, following up, running meetings, listening to learn, listening to evaluate and analyze, listening to understand feelings and emotions, and more. What about your listening skills are you trying to improve? Are you a good listener but experiencing problems that interfere with listening? Meeting with the EAP can help you explore these questions, too. It might lead you to a different approach or solution for improving listening skills.

My employee is a hothead, but most of us are used to it. When does anger become a performance issue?

Consider whether your employee's anger management problem is a serious performance issue right now. Don't reinforce toxic behavior by adapting to it or encouraging others to do the same. Coping with inappropriate displays of anger enables the employee and may encourage his or her bad behavior to grow worse. You can bet that not all employees feel this behavior is benign or that it should not be addressed by management. Anger is associated with violence in the workplace, and the anger issue you describe might benefit from a professional evaluation. So, the behavior is a risk issue. Could an explosive incident in the future lead to some tragedy? If the behavior creates an offensive and hostile work environment, which it does by virtue of the need to adapt to it, take steps to have the employee correct the behavior by referring him or her to the EAP.

Can the EAP work with an employee who is having trouble as a proper "work culture fit" in our organization? Although hired with great expectations, things aren't working out so well. We believe this employee will eventually leave because of not being in tune with our workplace values and style of work.

Employers are often concerned about work culture fit in hiring. There is a good rationale for desiring employees whose temperament complements that of the organization. However, when cultural fit does not appear after hire, working with the EAP may help discover whether issues of concern are symptoms of treatable conditions resolvable with counseling or coaching. Culture fit in many organizations is not well defined, and it can be a reason for loss of valuable talent. Many job interviews help identify employees who are adaptable, articulate, and able to persevere or show high energy, confidence, and passion for the products or services offered by the organization. If evidence of these attributes diminishes later, could an underlying problem exist that the EAP can help resolve? An assessment is the way to find out. Turnover is costly and disruptive, so it is a smart move to discuss your employee's performance issues and hope for an equitable solution that prevents loss of the worker.

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.

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