

### NEW! Ask a Counselor

In this issue of EAO Supervisor newsletter, we address some typical concerns we hear about from supervisors and managers and offer perspective and tips for managing them. We continue to strive to meet your needs and provide you with supportive and interesting content each month and hope that you find these scenarios useful. To that end, we would like to invite you to “ask a counselor” about a topic or concern you would like to read about in a future issue of this newsletter. These could be issues you have struggled with or successfully dealt with in the past, a current concern, or perhaps a question about supporting employee mental health in the future and navigating change and transition as some employees begin to integrate back to the physical workplace. To protect confidentiality, we ask that you do not include employee names and that you be as general in your description as you can. We will summarize each topic to be like those below. To submit your ideas, please use this link: [https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9Ny4PVmrb1rdqxU](https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9Ny4PVmrb1rdqxU) Thank you, we appreciate your input.



### Challenging Personalities

It can be difficult to navigate different personalities in the workplace. Sometimes we might label an employee as having a “challenging personality,” but it is typically more complex than that. Things like past professional and work experiences, un-addressed performance issues, workload distribution, role clarity, stress on the individual, the work unit, or the supervisor, or personal things taking place outside of work are all factors that can contribute to a “challenging personality.” The best method for addressing this is for you to meet with an EAO consultant to offer background information and consult on options for next steps. Be careful not to see their personality as “the problem.” This view can overshadow primary reasons for issues and is less productive. Many supervisors find that having a confidential, nonjudgmental place to lay your thoughts and observations out on table with counselors who also understand workplace dynamics to be very useful.



### Workplace Dynamics and Relationships

Having trust in a supervisory relationship is very important. To build trust, people require a feeling of safety. When an employee comes to you with a concern, ask them what they are hoping will be done about the situation. Clarify their expectations. Sometimes employees need a place to vent and gain support as they navigate the situation on their own. Some people are unsure how to address a situation with another employee, and they may come to you looking for advice. Others may hope that you can just fix it for them. Know your own preferences and expectations on how you want employees to navigate concerns and conflict in your unit. Communicating your perspective and preferences on how to handle stress and conflict at work and explaining the role you see yourself playing can take some of the guesswork and stress off your team. It can also help them choose if they want to approach you or seek advice elsewhere. For some, navigating conflict is an unfamiliar skill. Some handle it well, and some have learned throughout their life that conflict is a threatening and fearful place to be. Allow for some flexibility in your approach. Employee assistance services can support you and your team in navigating work dynamics and relationships. This may include learning and relearning how to navigate conflict, as well as building healthy, supportive, and safe relationships at work.



## Mental Health Diagnoses and the Workplace

At some point in their career, supervisors may find themselves exposed to the mental health experience of an employee. In some cases, information about a known diagnosis is shared directly from the employee, sometimes it may be known from previous interactions, and sometimes assumptions are made based on the behaviors being displayed. It is important whether a mental health diagnosis is known, unknown, or assumed to always keep workplace performance and behaviors as the primary conversation piece. Do not base performance issues or work distribution on your own assumptions or biases of a known or perceived mental health diagnosis. Consult when needed when an accommodation is in place. When a mental health diagnosis is known or assumed, some supervisors will reach out to EAO for support and guidance in navigating it. While there are some modifications to supervisory approach that can be made for employees with, for example, trauma, ADHD, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or other diagnoses, ultimately the diagnosis does not affect your approach. What matters are things like trust, respect, modeling appropriate boundaries, consistency, clarity, consulting on reasonable accommodations and ADA regulations, and providing referrals to your designated disability representative and to EAO when you feel more support may be needed. It is important to maintain boundaries and know your limits in what you can and cannot address, and who the supportive people and departments are for your staff. We are here for you, your staff, and family members.

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This month's promotional content includes:

**LifeMatters Newsletter:** Renewing Friendships after COVID=19, Creative Problem Solving, Understanding your Credit Score, Trimming Your Entertainment Budget

**The Advisor Newsletter for Managers and HR:** Self-Care for Managers, Returning to Work

**Posters:** Mentally Healthy, Companionship

#### May Support Session

**Tuesday, May 11, 12:00 p. m. CST**

#### “Preparing for Re-Entry from COVID-19: Managing Fear and Anxiety”

Due to the popularity of these sessions and your feedback, LM has changed platforms to allow for double the attendance. The session is being hosted on Webex which allows for up to 1000 seats, an increase from the 500 available previously. There is no need for registration. Please forward on the invite to those within your organized. Those who are available can simply join at the time of the session.

