

Frontline Supervisor



■ **I am frustrated and angry with my employee for coming to work late. Sometimes, I lose my cool. However, I am not letting the employee get away with it. I encourage coworkers to confront the behavior. A fellow manager said I am an enabler. How so?**

Enabling exists because you are failing to implement a strategic approach to resolving this problem, and the emotional and personal involvement prevents its implementation. When an employee exhibits unacceptable performance like poor work quality, tardiness, or conduct problems on the job, it is appropriate to address it. The correct approach relieves you from the emotional involvement you have experienced. Instead, make the assumption that some personal problem or concern outside the employee's control drives the behavior. This is an opportunity to both hold the employee accountable and offer EAO as a resource to help them address whatever is getting in their way with attendance. You will most likely be successful in getting your employee to accept help because the steps demonstrate to the employee that the organization will not permit an ongoing problem with attendance.

■ **One of my concerns about seeking help from the EAO is that I will be “analyzed” or that my past decisions will be scrutinized if I want to talk about problems I’m having with an employee. Should I be concerned?**

EAPs would quickly lose their support from supervisors if, upon visiting, supervisors felt as though they were under a microscope. The EA professional may ask you questions about your interaction with your employee to determine what has and has not worked in your attempts to correct performance. You may feel self-conscious about sharing this information if you have struggled to turn things around without much success, however, the EAO's focus is on what you want to accomplish – not on analyzing you. EA professionals have, as their fundamental purpose, the role of helping supervisors. In fact, in their own “core technology” (a set of officially recognized components that define the profession), consultation with supervisors and management is mentioned first.

■ **Can the EAO advise our management group on the possible psychological effects of a pending disciplinary action on an**

The EAO might discuss a manager's concern about a pending decision to use disciplinary action, to help him or her gain clarity, offer support in managing stress associated with the decision, or address personal fears. However, the EAO would not render a psychological judgment regarding risk of a disciplinary action. Doing so interferes with

employee who is not a client of the EAO?

management processes and violates an ethical boundary of non-interference. If the EAO engaged in this process, it could be viewed as authorizing, consenting to, approving, and sanctioning the decision. This would produce a schism within your management group if the EAO overruled others' opinions. Some managers might agree, while others not. Management would feel forced to accept whatever the EAO recommended. This bind would take a toll on the EAO's ability to attract employees and managers for consultation. A consult with HR, a third-party consultant, or other management advisors should be considered.

■ I saw an online article that said bad supervisors can make employees sick. What are they referring to, and exactly what boss issues affect employees most?

Studies show that 50% of employees have quit a job because of the relationship with their supervisor. One study reported that 75% consider their supervisor a major source of stress, but most have no plans to quit. The health issue is stress. Here's a list of common complaints from a Harris Poll in order of severity: 1) not recognizing employee achievements; 2) not giving clear directions; 3) not having time to meet with employees; 4) refusing to talk with subordinates, 5) taking credit for others' ideas; 6) not offering constructive criticism; 7) not knowing an employee's name; 8) refusing to talk with people on the phone or in person; and 9) not asking about employees' lives outside of work. Nearly all of these fall in the realm of communication, and some you may find surprising. For example, employees want you to know more about them personally. Do any apply to you? The EAO can help you with any of these issues.

<https://hbr.org/2015/06/the-top-complaints-from-employees-about-their-leaders>

■ I have done very well in my career, so they keep moving me up the ladder. I am happy about it, but I can't seem to relax and accept my success. Self-doubt still creeps in, and I am feeling more fear because more is expected of me and the stakes are higher. How can I relax?

It is easy to fall victim to the stresses associated with success. When you earn promotions, gain responsibility, and wield more authority, your inner voice can begin to work against you. You can feel like an impostor who does not deserve such success, and your anxiety can translate into an ongoing sense that others will discover that you are ill equipped for your role. Self-doubt can even get to the point where you are rereading positive written comments on old performance evaluations. Challenge the inner voices and scrutinize the validity of your fears. Acknowledge how they can undermine your life so that you muster the will to overcome them. The key is to eliminate defeatist self-talk by changing the wording. If your inner voice says, "I have no idea what I'm doing," replace that with, "I'm learning more every day." If it says, "People think I don't deserve to have this job," replace that with, "I am earning their respect." Don't hesitate to contact the EAO for more support.

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