

Frontline Supervisor



■ **Does marijuana cause employees to be slow, not show initiative, or be less engaged in the workplace? I have a few employees I know use pot off duty, and I think I would describe them this way. Is this “amotivational syndrome”?**

It is not appropriate to diagnose your employees. For decades, pro-marijuana advocacy groups have insisted there is no such thing as cannabis use causing “amotivational syndrome.” They have insisted that anecdotal reports or studies have been flawed. However, evidence published in February 2018 appears to show cannabis-caused amotivational syndrome is quite real. Over 500 college students who used marijuana were studied. Marijuana use, demographics (age, gender, and race), personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism), other substance use (alcohol and tobacco), and general personal assessments of initiative, effort, and persistence were examined closely. Research showed that marijuana use forecasted lower initiative and persistence (amotivational syndrome) even after accounting for and ruling out other factors. While use of marijuana may be a factor, your focus should be on addressing performance concerns. If the concern persists, make a referral to the EAO. The EAO can work with the employee to address substance abuse issues.

■ **My employee has a psychiatrist who has treated him for depression for many years. He’s never been to the EAO, and I have not considered a referral until now. Currently he is not coming to work often, yet the doctor keeps writing notes to excuse absences. Can the EAO help?**

Consult with your organization’s human resource manager regarding sick leave issues and how to manage these absences and record the leave status. Is the employee unable to adequately perform his duties because of the absenteeism? If so, make note of it. It makes no difference whether the employee is being seen by a psychiatrist. Many issues could exist in this situation, including improper treatment, a problematic relationship with the doctor, poor medication compliance, sudden loss of medication effectiveness, and a host of other factors. The EAO can obtain a release to communicate directly with the doctor and assess what’s going on. If the employee is reluctant to accept a referral, discuss your concerns with the EAO.

■ **I want to do everything I can to help my employees perform well. What is the**

Form good working relationships. Supervisors can learn many different skills and tactics, but few will be effective without positive relationships. Understand the concept of “essential attitudes” for a supervisor.

most important task to accomplish in order to make this possible?

Essential attitudes for success exist in every profession, whether you are a teacher, scientist, minister, pilot, or supervisor. Here's one: Assume your employees are doing the best job they can from their point of view. This attitude will affect the way you speak, act, nurture, and support them. It might even help you remember to use the EAO more often as a resource to improve performance. Another: Spell out for employees what they need to do in order to succeed and then give them the opportunity to do it. Imagine how these essential attitudes influence a positive relationship, and how lacking they are with many managers. Can you think of more essential attitudes critical to relationship success?

■ What do supervisors and managers need to know about the “Generation Z”? I have been hearing more about them recently.

You will hear a lot more about Generation Z as these employees enter the work force. Gen Z are those born between approximately 1995-96 and 2010-14. (Sociologists disagree on the dates.) This is the group following the millennials. Generation Z is more influenced by concepts like “finding my true purpose” and “making an impact.” They want to be independent and are highly attracted to learning new things. They are confident and respond positively to organizations that are engaged in resolving social problems. They are entrepreneurial, realistic, hungry for experiences and want to see the world. Gen Z employees want to be experts and may accept challenges more readily than prior generations. When writing the essential functions of job descriptions, consider the above values and employee traits to help you maximize productivity and employee job satisfaction. Gen Z employees are more open to the idea of getting counseling and more likely to use supports like the EAO to improve their lives. Learn more from the book “Meet Generation Z” (2017).

■ I keep the EAO’s business cards in my desk drawer. If an employee mentions a personal problem as a reason for poor performance, I offer them a card rather than listen to excuses. I haven’t had anyone take a card yet. Is it my approach or is it employee resistance?

Although it is clear that correcting performance issues is your priority, it appears that you are not making effective use of the EAO as a management tool. The EAO is not just for employees. It can also help you get from employees what you need: satisfactory performance. Employees who share their personal problems are not usually premeditating an excuse from accountability. They are looking for solutions. Try selling the solution more effectively, for their good and yours. True, it is inadvisable to discuss any employee’s personal problems, but simply listening and being supportive can help. Discussing the EAO as a good resource rather than simply handing over the business card will help employees seriously consider making the call. You’ll get what you need faster, and you may help an employee resolve a personal problem.

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