

Q. Can I learn the details of an employee's personal problems if a release is signed by the employee that allows me to have this information?

A. The EAO would not have a release with the provisions you mention. Although an employee could sign such a release, it would be discouraged and considered inconsistent with EAO policy and purpose. It could undermine support for the program in general, distract from your role in focusing only on performance, complicate your relationship with the employee, and even jeopardize the program's being perceived as offering safe and ensured confidentiality, which is its most precious asset. Nothing prohibits an employee from sharing information voluntarily with others, including supervisors, of course.

Q. I've heard that supervisors can use Employee Assistance Services to role-play different situations in confronting and correcting employee performance, even if not making a supervisor referral. I have decades of experience as a supervisor and feel I have "seen it all". What's the value in doing role-play with an EAO consultant?

A. A key provision of Employee Assistance Services is management consultation regarding productivity and performance issues. A strong relationship with managers engaged with Employee Assistance is essential to any program maximizing its value to the work organization. Role-play consultation is an opportunity Employee Assistance offers supervisors. It can help reduce manager stress when conducting corrective interviews, encourage supervisors' assertiveness with employees, increase the likelihood of earlier Employee Assistance referrals when needed, help managers encounter difficult employees more successfully, and in a global sense, reduce risk to the university.

Q. I've heard that employees don't leave employers, they leave bad supervisors. Is this true?

A. 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. How managers handle their emotions and how they make other people feel are the strongest drivers of employee retention. For some 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 manager is a trend that is expected to continue. So, what makes a "bad boss?" According to the research, managers are overwhelmed, unfair, poor listeners,

impersonal or disorganized, don't solicit feedback, and withhold responsibility from workers. The EAO and LifeMatters consultation team can help supervisors and managers overcome most, if not all of these limitations.

*Source: <https://www.hrdiver.com/news/employees-really-do-leave-bad-bosses-research-shows/568774/>*

Q. A common complaint of management advisers is that supervisor documentation is not descriptive, factual, or measurable enough, or it is filled with emotional and subjective language. What other problems interfere with effective supervisor documentation?

A. Another issue with documentation's usefulness is its being created too late or too long after problems are first noticed. It's rare for performance to be an even downward line of deterioration. Deterioration may waver between problematic performance and surprising levels of high achievement despite the downward trend. This choppiness is sometimes graded by supervisors on the high side, creating delays in administrative or corrective actions. This may be coupled with employees bringing attention to their achievements or requesting recognition for satisfactory performance. Both tend to drive the curve up as supervisors delay and give employees the benefit of the doubt. Supervisors that engage with Employee Assistance Services early-on in their attempts to manage employees, risk fewer problems associated with delay and other forms of enabling.

Q. I consider myself very assertive and I think it has helped me get ahead. However, in a recent workshop, I learned that my colleagues feel I am too assertive. I was surprised, but is there a balance?

A. Assertiveness is like salt in a sauce, according to researcher Daniel Ames, Ph.D. of Columbia Business School. "Nobody notices a problem with assertiveness unless there is too much or too little of it." Aspiring leaders who are low on assertiveness may not stand up for their interests, and may suffer by being ineffective at achieving goals and delivering results. On the other hand, people with too much assertiveness may get their way, but only by choking off the relationships around them. Over time, the social costs undermine their efforts. Effective leaders push hard enough to get their way, but not so hard they can't get along. Awareness is your best weapon in the pursuit of control over assertiveness. Being able to ratchet it up and down as necessary is a valuable skill. Reach out to Employee Assistance Services to talk about your assertiveness style. You will find an objective listener and get advice from someone who is not competing with you.