

Q . I have an employee who has started recently ignoring deadlines, forgetting assigned tasks, and not responding to emails. Usually, she is a strong worker, so this is a difficult situation. How can EAP help me manage it?



A EAP can provide supervisor consultations to support you with situations like this, including practicing effective communication and constructive feedback through role-playing. Role-playing can be highly effective in similar scenarios to this. We can also discuss how to appropriately recommend EAP services to the employee. At the same time, it's important to continue documenting behavioral discrepancies and having transparent conversations to reinforce accountability in her role. Keep working on building trust through consistent communication and empathy. It may also be helpful to remember your employee could be experiencing personal stressors that are impacting her work performance

Q. I'm a senior manager but also a recovering drug user who's been totally abstinent and sober for over 22 years. I am not fooled easily. I can spot subtle cues of those using drugs because of my past experiences. It's not my job to point out these subtle cues, but how can my experience be useful in my role?

A. While you cannot diagnose or directly confront employees about potential health issues, your personal experience in recovery gives you a unique level of empathy that many other managers may not have. This perspective can help you foster a team environment that feels safe and supportive. When performance issues arise, it's appropriate to document and address them through open, work-focused conversations. Asking about the cause of performance concerns without making assumptions or diagnoses can sometimes lead the employee to disclose a personal issue, which you recommend EAP as a support to their challenges. It's also worth noting that individuals in recovery often share their stories in informal or social settings. While this can be meaningful, it's important to maintain professional boundaries in your supervisory role by focusing on observable behaviors and work-related concerns.

Q. How can supervisors help employees deal with anxiety, and provide meaningful support without overstepping professional boundaries? I hear this problem has surpassed even depression as a key struggle for many workers.

UR Medicine EAP
179 Sully's Trail
Suite 200
Rochester, NY 14534

(585) 276-9110

Email:
EAP@urmc.rochester.edu

Website:
urmc.rochester.edu/EAP

A. Some surveys report that up to 30% of employees believe anxiety interferes with their productivity to some degree. Although supervisors can't diagnose anxiety, they can play a supportive role and make it easier to get help and overcome resistance toward professional counseling. If an employee seems overwhelmed, inquire about it by saying something like, "I noticed you seem overwhelmed with all these new changes. Can I help in some way?" Also, never dismiss or discount the value of mental health services. Avoid downplaying counseling or use language like "the in-house shrink" or other terms that imply bias or stigma. Instead of focusing on the term "anxiety", focus on observable workplace factors such as performance, conduct, attitude, quality and quantity of work, attendance, and availability. When you rely on observable factors, you're more likely to identify employees who may be experiencing personal challenges that are affecting their work.