

Q. I met with my employee to discuss performance and attendance issues, but I was taken aback when the employee pointed out some of my own performance of coming in late and communicating poorly. While they have a point, I feel undermined in my ability to lead. What should I do now?

A. Self-awareness and consistency in leadership are important, so focus on correcting your performance. A supervisor's actions set the tone for a team or department. A leader's behavior directly influences whether the workplace becomes positive and productive or heads in the opposite direction.



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Don't dismiss your employee's comments. In fact, do the opposite by thanking them for their feedback and telling them you will improve your conduct. After you have acknowledged their points, steer the discussion back to their performance and attendance issues. Schedule another meeting focused solely on their performance and attendance. Remember to document, follow up, and implement accountability.

The employee's performance cannot remain unsatisfactory despite the issues you face. Consider role-playing the conversation to build confidence and improve your approach. [UR Medicine EAP](http://urmc.rochester.edu/EAP) can support you in challenging conversations with an employee.

Q. I was speaking with my employee about performance issues, and there was a definite mismatch between his cooperation with me and his nonverbal cues. He seemed defiant. Should I ignore what I see nonverbally and just go with what I can quantify?

A. Ignoring behaviors such as crossed arms, lack of eye contact, or a dismissive tone could leave underlying issues related to productivity and behavioral problems unaddressed. Nonverbal behaviors reveal underlying emotions or attitudes that words alone may not express. These feelings could be disengagement, frustration, or dissatisfaction. Any of those feelings could be associated with additional risk issues for the employer. Perhaps you have seen employees in the past whose dismissed nonverbal cues became routine. Over time, the undermining of authority followed, and team morale decreased. The term "attitude performance" refers to nonverbal cues like tone of voice, facial expressions, and general disposition, which you should consider when judging the emotional orientation employees have toward their jobs, coworkers, and the work environment. They can be tricky to document, but support from EAP can help you understand how to best navigate these situations.

Q. Three weeks ago, I encouraged my employee to contact EAP to get help with serious financial issues affecting his performance. He did not know where to turn, but I knew EAP could help. He just told me EAP has not referred him to a source of help yet. I'm baffled.

A. Delays in getting connected to a referral source could be due to several factors, and it's unlikely that EAP has failed to follow through, forgotten the employee's needs, or been unable to locate a resource considering the amount of time that has passed since the original assessment. Lack of follow-up may be related to multiple factors, including a lack of motivation to seek help, anxiety, or a desire to handle the issue independently. Many concerns, such as financial issues, are multifaceted and take time to resolve. A good response in this situation is to acknowledge their frustration, offer support, and encourage them to communicate directly with the EAP for further assistance:

"Thank you for letting me know. I'm sorry to hear that your experience with EAP hasn't met your expectations so far. They're usually very dedicated to helping employees find the support they need, so it's worth following up with them to make sure they understand your specific concerns. Your well-being is important, and I want to make sure you get the help you need."

This response shows empathy, offers practical next steps, and reinforces that you're invested in their success and well-being.