

Q. How do I document an attitude problem so there is no uncertainty later about what I mean? What really bothers me most is the cynicism, eye rolling, and sighing.

A. Behaviors such as rolling one's eyes, sighing, and huffing may be triggering but are difficult to document. The key is discovering what is articulable and quantifiable and has an adverse impact. Do words like arrogant, aggressive, cynical, critical, indifferent, or rude describe your employee's attitude? If arrogance is descriptive, documentation might be: "*John often demonstrates an exaggerated sense of his importance or abilities. For example, on (date, time) he remarked that*

'everyone in the office is too lazy to learn the combination to the file cabinet,' so they 'rely on him' to open it in the morning. Such a statement has a negative effect on office morale and creates conflict." (Note how this example does not label the employee as "arrogant."

You are using the definition of it followed by an example. This is more effective.) Formulate attitude documentation with 1) behavior associated with the attitude, 2) a description of what was said or what happened, and 3) its adverse impact. (Hint: The EAP can offer general guidance on documentation, and a dictionary may provide descriptive words you're searching for.)



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Q. I am a new supervisor. What supervisory skills can the EAP best help me develop if I get into situations or experience problems I can't manage properly?

A. There are many skills a supervisor needs in order to be effective. Sometimes it is difficult to identify the specific skill that is lacking in order to address a particular problem. This is where the EAP might help. For example, if morale in your work unit is an issue, and you don't see it improving, is it because you lack effective communication skills? Are interpersonal skills the problem? Could you improve your conflict resolution skills? Then again, is it possible the morale problem is mostly out of your control? Use the EAP to help you troubleshoot issues you experience on the job, particularly interpersonal, intrapersonal, and soft-skill-related issues. The EAP may help you with personal issues, refer you to effective skill development resources, or even send you back to your supervisor or the organization for coaching or mentorship, but with clarification of your needs.

Q. Is bickering a problem I should refer to the EAP? I have a few employees in our small office, and they seem to get on each other's nerves quite a bit. They don't complain about it, and they are great performers. Personally, however, I don't like the tension.

A. Strain among employees in close quarters is probably not something you are going to be able to entirely eliminate. It is the nature of relationships, even good ones, to experience conflict, especially in tight quarters. As you observe, performance appears unaffected. However, not all small conflicts are the same. You may want to delve deeper just to ensure something small won't later turn into something serious or risky to the workplace. For example, is the bickering or tension caused by inequity or unfairness? Are work roles not balanced well? Does one of your employees believe they have a better future than another? Inquire about these or similar issues periodically so you understand what may be underlying the conflicts beyond the apparent issues they involve.