



Volume 26, Issue 2

# Solutions

A newsletter designed to support leadership and human resource staff





*The following questions and answers are designed to provide practical guidance related to issues that supervisors may be facing. Acentra Health, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential consultation to managers seeking guidance related to a variety of workplace challenges.*

**An employee that I supervise has become complacent after working with us for over 10 years. How can I help motivate him to achieve his full potential?**

Encouraging an employee to demonstrate more motivation and initiative can be a delicate task, but it is an essential role for any supervisor, so knowing effective strategies is critical. Start with a candid conversation. Discuss performance and potential and rely on your observations and belief in his capabilities. Link these things to his aspirations and goals. They almost certainly have some, despite the non-action; this is true for almost everyone. Draw these out. State your expectations in a positive way and what you believe success looks like, but also point out opportunities for growth and advancement. Come to an agreement on a few changes and begin. Offer

feedback frequently, recognize improvements, and recommend training and new learning experiences to complement his development of new skills and knowledge.

**As a manager I find myself facing increasing levels of stress that never seems to let up. On most days I just power through but I know this approach can't be good for my health. What can I do?**

Supervisors may face difficult and unique work challenges in their roles, but there are strategies that can prevent the ill health effects of relentless stress. High stress that does not subside can contribute to hypertension and heart disease. Anxiety, depression, and burnout may follow, and poor work-life imbalance will exacerbate these conditions, as will sleep disorders and sleep deprivation. Consider seeing a medical doctor if you suspect health effects that are stress related. The EAP can help you devise a mitigation plan to cope with stress. Such a plan may include self-care strategies to prevent burnout, time management techniques, mindfulness practices, physical exercise regimens, and establishing healthy boundaries between your work and personal life.



## **What's the best way to show that I support the well-being of my team?**

There are many actions managers can take to demonstrate the importance of mental health and well-being. Model healthy behavior by prioritizing your own self-care and boundaries. Take a walking break, attend a therapy appointment, or talk about self-care strategies that you find effective to combat stress. Endorse the use of employer-sponsored benefits such as the EAP that offer services to assist with professional and personal growth and overall mental health. This sends a strong message that leadership encourages employees to utilize these resources and take care of themselves, especially in a proactive manner. Employees are more engaged when they feel like their employer cares about them. Adding a blurb about the EAP to staff meeting agendas or on a slide of a presentation can reinforce this idea.

## **What type of drug causes the most problems with attendance?**

Alcohol is still the number one drug that causes the most issues around absenteeism. Affected employees are not limited to those who suffer from an alcohol use disorder but include social drinkers who miss work because of hangovers. But it does not stop there.

Those with alcohol use disorders may arrive on time for work but may leave early because of severe agitation and a craving for a drink (withdrawal symptoms), which interfere with their ability to be productive. Some may drink at lunch, outside the workplace, or they may hide alcohol to drink on the job.

This drinking pattern may lead to another form of absenteeism associated with availability, meaning the employee is at work but is incapable of functioning productively or is somewhere at work but unable to be found (present but unavailable). It is important to avoid attempting to diagnose the problem, but rather pay attention to, and document conduct and performance issues. Discuss next steps with HR and consult with the EAP for recommendations around best practices to approaching this scenario.

## **Employees are often defensive when confronted about their conduct and performance issues. What are some ways to reduce the likelihood of this when I have a conversation with someone on my team?**

A “constructive confrontation” or corrective interview is often undermined if the employee is not receptive and cooperative.



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The supervisor has a key role in setting the tone for such meetings, so they are not conflict-laden. The following are some tips to reduce defensiveness:

- Make sure you can clearly describe what performance is not acceptable. A vague or awkward description of the performance complaint will more than likely result in confusion and misunderstanding.
- Conduct your meeting in a private place.
- Set enough time to relay your comments and for the employee to respond.
- Seek confirmation that the employee understands your concerns.
- Avoid any focus on personality style, which can be difficult if you have experienced much frustration.
- Maintain a constructive tone. Stay calm.
- Seek cooperation, not confrontation, by remembering that your goal is to improve the employee's performance. A good approach is to "team" with the employee to resolve the problem and end on a positive note because both of you have the same goal.

The EAP offers professional recommendations from Acentra Health's Management Services Team for tips to prepare for having difficult conversations. It's also important to consult with HR for guidance related to appropriate steps to take to address conduct and performance.

## Employees Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counseling sessions at no cost, as well as a wide variety of services to enhance overall wellbeing and support healthy work/life balance. In addition, the EAP is available to provide meaningful solutions to address the many challenging situations facing those in management roles. Leaders can take advantage of unlimited management consultations and receive guidance and assistance related to employee and team functioning concerns.

The EAP can be accessed anytime. For free, confidential support from a licensed, experienced counselor, call today. You can also access helpful management tips and resources on the website.

 **Phone: 1.800.833.3031**

 **Website: [www.EAPHelplink.com](http://www.EAPHelplink.com)**

 **Company Code: IOWA**

*Solutions is a newsletter for managers, supervisors and human resource staff eligible for Acentra Health services. Acentra Health EAP services provide assistance and guidance to supervisors dealing with workplace performance issues. This newsletter is intended for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. Individuals should follow the policies and procedures laid out by their human resource management department concerning use of the EAP. Some articles reprinted with permission from DFA Publishing and Consulting, LLC. Acentra Health, McLean, VA. All rights reserved.*

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