



Volume 26, Issue 3

# 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.*

### **Is there a way to motivate my employees? I want to be sure I'm doing everything I can as a manager to keep them energized.**

You can help employees be more passionate about their work by increasing their understanding of the big “why, what, and how”: Why am I doing this job? What’s its importance? How do my tasks contribute to the big picture? Start by sharing the organization’s vision and goals. Focus on how each employee’s work directly fits within the big picture. This helps employees understand how work flows throughout the organization and how their contribution impacts other departments and the final product. A powerful maneuver is to let your employees participate in key meetings where they can interact with internal customers. Finding other ways for employees to engage with other departments can also be rewarding. These steps bring strong context to what they do. Additionally, celebrating employees’ milestones highlights these connections and emphasizes the importance of their contributions. Brainstorming ideas with the EAP can reveal to you their empathy and organizational knowledge, helping you find new ways to inspire your employees.

### **What are a few suggestions for ways that I can increase staff morale?**

A manager’s role is key in engaging staff to increase morale. Are you approachable and supportive? Do you lead by example? If so, these few tips will complement your leadership style to help elevate morale.

1. Praise employees “behind their backs,” not just in front of them. There’s nothing like hearing from a third party how highly management thinks of you.
2. Comment and focus more on what employees are doing right and well. Don’t wait for problems to arise.
3. Regularly, and positively acknowledge and celebrate successes.
4. Seek input from quieter, more reserved employees to see if they can provide valuable insights for the project or task you’re working on. Recognition and validation of their ideas can significantly improve their morale and job satisfaction.
5. If permissible and appropriate, give a hard-working employee a reward of some sort, like a couple of hours off or a gift card to their favorite coffee spot.



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**As the new leader of a team, I'm concerned about gaining acceptance. I understand that people will scrutinize me for a while. However, are there actions I can take to help gain their approval? Can the EAP guide me?**

As a new manager, striving for happy, productive employees is key to your goal. These are some tips to help establish yourself:

1. Avoid micromanaging – place trust in your employees
2. Adopt an “open door policy” where employees feel comfortable approaching you with concerns.
3. Treat everyone on your team equally, even if you have existing personal relationships with some employees.
4. Communicate transparently, enough so employees aren't wondering what's going on.
5. Reflect on team input and implement what you can, to address concerns.
6. Demonstrate interest in employees personally without probing too much.
7. Follow through with commitments to the work group.

The EAP offers unlimited no-cost consultations for those in leadership positions, as well as counseling for anyone looking to improve interpersonal and leadership skills at work.

**I find dealing with inconsistent work and performance to be time-consuming and difficult. Often, employees seem surprised when I raise issues with them. What can supervisors do to improve this process?**

As a start, always ensure that you communicate with the employee about the job roles, responsibilities, and standards. Check in and give feedback often and in real time and continue to provide feedback on a regular basis. Examine their job functions and expectations. Using this process, you are almost guaranteed to have no surprised employees when performance is corrected. Let employees know what “outstanding” looks like, and likewise with gradations like “above average,” “average,” “satisfactory,” and below. Use performance improvement plans to maximize clarity, and then rely on your HR or management advisor for guidance regarding how to implement them. Encourage a workplace culture where accountability is valued and expected. If you do this, employees will naturally take ownership of their performance, reducing the need for constant oversight.

**I want to be a neuro-inclusive supervisor. What are some things I can do to ensure that I am doing everything that I can to create an environment where everyone feels supported and can perform at their best?**

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Neurodiversity is a term used to describe the variations in how the brain functions and processes information from person to person. It was coined to refer to people on the autism spectrum, but has evolved to encompass anyone whose brains operate differently than most of the population. Neuro-inclusive leaders recognize and accommodate these differences. The following tips would be a good place to start.

1. Learn about autism and neurodivergent employee issues and monitor your biases.
2. Understand each person is unique—we're not all the same.
3. Be clear, concise, and direct in your communication.
4. Ask about preferred methods of communication and inquire about anything else you should be aware of that maybe you hadn't thought of.
5. Be patient in anticipating a reply or response to allow extra time to process information.
6. Be mindful of possible sensory issues pertaining to boundaries and personal space, loud sounds, and bright lights.
7. Understand social differences—small talk, eye contact, and social activities may be avoided.
8. Be specific and direct with feedback.
9. Offer opportunities based on observed employee strengths.

By incorporating these practices, workplaces can become more inclusive and supportive of neurodivergent employees, allowing them to thrive and contribute fully to their teams. Learn more at the Association for Autism and Neurodiversity at [www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org).

## 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)**

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*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.*