

# SOLUTIONS

## NEWSLETTER

Offering practical solutions to help leadership and HR professionals navigate workplace challenges through real-world Q&A.

Volume 28, Issue 2



The following questions and answers offer practical guidance on common challenges supervisors may encounter in the workplace. Acentra Health, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), is here to provide confidential support and consultation to managers seeking assistance with a wide range of workplace issues.

**I keep noticing a problem of engagement among employees coming up a lot, things like not wanting to come to work, being checked out and unmotivated, and feeling unexcited. Has anything new emerged recently that can help employees become more engaged?**

A lot of research has been conducted on employee engagement. The Gallup Organization has invested heavily in it, with recent findings showing that when employees strongly agree that they trust organizational leadership, they are nearly four times more likely to be engaged. Whatever you do to build trust increases the likelihood of having engaged employees. Start with these goals:

- Stay visible and communicate your vision, work-unit goals, what's changing, and why. Communication reduces uncertainty, which fuels rumors and negativity.
- Show employees you care by being empathetic and available. Praise their efforts. You may care deeply, but if they aren't feeling it, it's not happening.
- Never let employees wonder what they should be doing or how their job fits into the larger picture.
- Trust them to do the job they were hired to do; trust helps prevent micromanaging.

- Look for ways to elevate their skills and education so they don't feel stuck or unable to envision a future.
- Be engaged yourself. If you're struggling, turn to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for support.

**Is it appropriate for me to provide a group presentation on time management and productivity and, within this presentation, discuss personal habits and their negative effects?**

Yes, it is appropriate to deliver a group presentation on time management and productivity that includes discussion of common personal habits and how they can negatively affect performance. This type of presentation falls squarely within the scope of general workplace education. You may enrich your presentation with the EAP's participation or by having them facilitate the training.

In this context you are presenting widely accepted, evidence-based concepts such as the impact of procrastination, poor organization, ineffective prioritization, or lack of planning on productivity and work outcomes. Discussing these habits at a high level helps employees better understand



how everyday behaviors influence efficiency, focus, and performance.

This approach does not constitute counseling, diagnosis, or individualized guidance. The content remains educational and preventive in nature, addressing universal patterns that affect most people at work. Even when touching on basic aspects of human behavior or motivation, the presentation stays within the boundaries of common workplace learning.

**If I make a formal referral of an employee to the EAP, would it be helpful for the EAP to have a copy of the employee's performance improvement plan prior to a meeting?**

Verbal input about the reasons for the formal referral is a start, however, submitting a copy of the employee's performance improvement plan can help the EAP consultant understand the scope of the performance issue. The EAP can assess which services or resources are most appropriate to support your work unit's objectives. The performance improvement plan also serves as an item for both discussion and better examination of more nuanced struggles the employee faces. Performance improvement plans typically will help the employee assistance professional assess the employee's historical path of performance decline and failed attempts to make corrections, which give clues to underlying problems the employee faces that may not be readily apparent.

**We have an employee who visited the EAP. She shared with us her struggle with anxiety and burnout and requested time off for a couple of days. Can the EAP help verify whether the work she is doing is too much for her nervous system? She wants to keep her job, but we need expert input.**

Although the EAP can work with your employee to address her mental health challenges, it cannot render an opinion regarding her ability to perform essential

functions of her position. That determination rests with management, in consultation with Human Resources and, when appropriate, occupational health or medical providers whom they may want to consult. The EAP's role is supportive, focusing on helping employees and connecting them with appropriate resources. It does not assess fitness for duty, certify disability status, or recommend job restrictions. Reach out to the EAP for guidance related to matters like this if you're unsure of what to do.

**I suspect my employee may be drinking during lunch breaks. His performance hasn't slipped yet, but his breath sometimes smells of alcohol. Do I need to wait for a performance problem before referring him to the EAP?**

You do not need to wait for a decline in performance before addressing a workplace concern, but it is important to focus on observable behaviors rather than assumptions about substance use. An odor on an employee's breath is a concrete observation, but it does not confirm alcohol consumption, as medical conditions or medications can produce similar smells. Managers should avoid diagnosing or speculating about the cause and consult with Human Resources. If company policy addresses alcohol use or impairment at work, review those expectations with the employee in a factual, non-accusatory manner. The conversation should focus on what has been observed and why it raises a workplace concern. Even when performance has not declined, addressing concerns early can prevent misunderstanding, discomfort among coworkers, or escalation. An EAP referral can be offered as a supportive resource without making it a disciplinary action or formal accusation. The EAP should be framed as confidential and available for any personal, health, or work-related concern.



## ACENTRA HEALTH PODCASTS

Acentra Health produces podcasts covering a variety of well-being topics. Listen to this month's podcasts by visiting: [eap.acentra.com/podcast/](http://eap.acentra.com/podcast/).



## Employee Assistance Program

Your EAP provides counseling sessions at no cost, as well as a wide variety of services to enhance overall well-being and support healthy work-life balance. In addition, your 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 no-cost, 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: EAPHelplink.com**

 **Company Code: IOWA**

