



The Frontline Supervisor

Helping You Manage Your Company's Most Valuable Resource – Employees
Solutions Employee Assistance Program 1-800-526-3485

Q- *I am a newly promoted manager. Instead of being part of the staff, I now supervise them. There is a lot of gossip and snickering behind my back among my employees. I want to end some of the friendships that existed before, but how do I do it?*

A - Now that you're a boss, you're going to face some sniping from discontented or resentful employees. Most experienced managers come to realize that they cannot remain friends with their former peers. Instead, they strive to earn employees' respect. Rather than terminate friendships abruptly, it's better to hold private, heart-to-heart talks with each of these individuals. Explain that you will measure your success in your new role by the extent to which everyone performs at their best and achieves team goals. Express your admiration for their strengths and ask how you can help them attain their personal and professional objectives. By presenting yourself as a listener who's eager to facilitate their success, you can earn their trust even as the nature of the friendship changes.

Q - *When I tried to discipline an employee for declining performance, he told me that he had been diagnosed with an "emotional condition." He said he stopped taking his medications a year ago and that he's mostly fine except for some "bad days." Can the EAP help him?*

A - Yes. Encouraging use of the EAP gives your employee a supportive, confidential setting to discuss his condition. Because he struggles periodically with his illness, he will benefit by sharing his situation with a compassionate, well-trained professional. It is possible that your employee's condition qualifies as a disability under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). That would mean you'd need to provide "reasonable accommodations" to assist him in performing his work, and the EAP may help fill that requirement. Ask your employee what he needs from you, or the work organization, to perform his job satisfactorily. Consider whether those requests are reasonable and can be accommodated. Don't ignore an employee's statement about an "emotional condition." Instead, consult with your human resources representative and the EAP for more information.

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Call Solutions EAP for free, confidential consultation regarding an employee you may want to refer to the EAP: 1-800-526-3485.
Look for Solutions on-line: www.solutions-eap.com

Q - *My employee suffered a string of personal tragedies recently. Although she assures me she's under a psychologist's care, she's as distraught as ever and her performance is declining. If she's already undergoing counseling, would it be overkill for me to involve the EAP?*

A - The need to document your employee's declining performance justifies making a supervisor referral to the EAP no matter what kind of outside help she reports getting. An employee's reported participation in counseling should never be a determining factor in a supervisor's decision to make an EAP referral. You do not know if the right help is being received, or if the help is being dispensed in a proper manner. Because the EAP is designed to provide short-term help and refer individuals to other resources for long-term support, the timing might actually be opportune for her to participate. The EA professional may refer her to additional services to assist her in grappling with her problems, or may help her make better use of the help she is currently receiving. Sometimes EA professionals must convince employees that the help they currently receive is not suitable to resolving their problems or could make problems worse.

Q - *My staff likes to suggest new performance incentives or employee benefits. We have no budget for extras, so I often shoot down their ideas. I hate to say "no" all the time, so what can I do to preserve morale in the face of absence of funds to offer tangible incentives?*

A - Consider being open about your organization's financial situation. Once employees understand cash flow constraints, their suggestions will more likely be cost-saving proposals on how to boost morale in ways that are meaningful to them. As employees realize the cost of adding various benefits, they will realize that you're not rejecting their ideas as much as you are looking for ways to say "yes" without busting the budget. At the same time, apply morale-boosting ideas that don't cost anything by doing your own research. You can find a host of fun-to-read books on boosting morale with no budget by performing a quick search on the site of any online book dealer.

Q - *This year I am determined to improve the level of respect employees show each other in our company. Beyond policies and work rules, what is a key strategy to positively influence change?*

A - Maintaining a respectful workplace is a growing concern for businesses, but what many people do not realize is that much disrespect is not premeditated. Instead, it is reflective of a lack of self-control, education, fear, and the influence of personal biases. Supporting a work culture where employees actively discourage disrespectful behavior toward each other by pointing it out as it happens is a powerful change strategy. Beyond formal training, actively encourage and support a respectful workplace where employees can point it out. Make it a tradition because a respectful workplace is everyone's responsibility. This approach will raise the level of awareness for preventing disrespectful behavior.