

Supervisor/HR Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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5 Ways to Manage Work-Related Stress

Now is a good time to figure out if you're dealing with stress properly, so you don't burn out or wear yourself down. We reached out to some experts to get advice on smart tactics for tackling work-related stress.

- *Focus on your actions.* It's important to remember that stress is a reaction and isn't inevitable, says Beth Burgess, a therapist who runs anti-stress workshops at Smyls. "It's our response to external events and people that make us feel stressed out. To develop a stress-free mindset at work, it's important to focus on taking action rather than worrying, or actually thinking more positively about things so you no longer feel aggrieved by them."
- *Take action over things you can control.* Taking action in the aspects of your work life you control is key, Burgess says. "Do what it is in your power to do. If you have no control over other things, it's not worth worrying about them. Focus on what you can do to improve things rather than what you can't. It will make you feel much more empowered."
- *Keep your eyes on the prize.* "To deal with conflict, remember that focusing on your common goals and negotiation will get you much further than whining about a colleague or manager or their way of doing things," Burgess says. "If you feel overwhelmed or uncertain, gather more information or tools, or break things down into steps to make them easier. Be proactive about setting up templates and systems to save time. And when you've done a task, mentally leave it behind rather than worrying about it."
- *Establish boundaries.* Focus on your boundaries to keep stress at bay, recommends Stephanie Mazzanti, a mind-body therapist at Cancer Treatment Centers of America. This means not letting your external work environment overly affect your internal mood.
- *Learn to deal.* It's important for employees to have coping strategies, Mazzanti says. "For example, if a co-worker directs a snippy or negative comment toward them, they say to themselves internally, 'That is his/her own stuff, not mine.'" Deep breathing and brief periods of alone time can also help.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/43098/5-ways-to-manage-work-related-stress>



The Importance of Emotional Intelligence for Supervisors

The ability to manage our emotions at work is an important skill for every employee. Unmanaged emotions can lead to overreactions, poor judgment, and unprofessional behavioral in the workplace. This skill is particularly important for supervisors and managers, who are responsible for objective decision making and modeling professional behavior for their teams.

Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence

Managers and supervisors with significant levels of emotional intelligence typically share common characteristics such as emotional self-awareness (the ability to know what you're feeling), the ability to rationally respond to strong emotions (the ability to think before reacting, etc.), and a tendency to use emotion for self-motivation (i.e., use fear of failure to take positive action to improve the situation).

Those with Well-Developed Emotional Skills are more Likely to be Effective Managers

A study done by Dale Carnegie Training revealed that a "caring" manager is one of the key elements of employee engagement. Supervisors and managers with well-developed emotional skills are better able to show that they care for their employees, which will lead to having a more engaged and productive team.

Leaders who manage their emotions well also tend to make better decisions in the heat of battle. They have the ability to remain more objective in difficult situations, even when they're feeling powerful emotions like frustration, fear, or anger. Supervisors and managers with well-developed emotional skills will also have the ability to recognize and be sensitive to the emotions of others, allowing them to tactfully and skillfully interact with an employee who is angry, upset, etc.

How to Enhance Your Emotional Intelligence

Below are several strategies you can use to enhance your emotional intelligence skills:

- *Stay aware of what you're feeling throughout the day* – when you're aware that you're feeling a strong emotion, you can manage the emotion instead of having it manage you which can lead to overreacting, making poor decisions, etc.
- *Think before you speak* – in stressful or challenging situations, everyone experiences the fight or flight response which includes the release of adrenaline and often the experience of strong emotions. In these situations, it's important for leaders to take a step back and think rationally so that they don't overreact emotionally.
- *Have compassion for your employees* – the world is a stressful place, and our employees need managers and supervisors who care about them and are committed to their success.

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Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.



Q. One of my employees appears unmotivated to go the extra mile, which is unlike her peers. I can't diagnosis the problem, but wonder if the EAP could be helpful? There are no performance problems and her work is more than satisfactory.

A. Something about this employee's work style is concerning you despite the satisfactory level of performance she is achieving. True, you don't have a reason to suggest the EAP or make a supervisor referral, but it doesn't mean that over the next few weeks or months you can't monitor work performance; inquire about her productivity level, satisfaction with the job, and interest in the work. Consider gathering observational data to support your inquiry about her

motivation. This is not a diagnostic inquiry, but good supervision. Many supervisors have a gut-level impression that an employee suffers with some unknown personal problem. They can't and shouldn't use this impression to conduct a diagnostic assessment. However, this does not mean that the supervisor can't do anything with his or her sense of concern. In fact, it would be ill-advised to completely ignore these hunches. When you meet, the employee may share information in your meeting that leads you to suggest the EAP.

Q. How can supervisors gain a better appreciation for the impact their behaviors have on those under their supervision?

A. The simple answer is: to work on developing an effective working relationship with your employees. Part of that relationship involves "checking in" on communication, interaction, and mutual understanding between each other. More broadly, learning about emotional intelligence (EI) is a way to appreciate human interaction and impact. In this context, you're able to monitor your emotions, recognize the emotions of others, label them properly, and use this information to guide your behavior and thinking. Many resources are available to introduce you to EI skill-building. Your EAP can point the way to these resources.

Q. I know poor communication is the No. 1 key complaint in the results of employee surveys that have been administered to respondents at work organizations. What other common problems lead to employee dissatisfaction with organizations?

A. Other problems ranking up there, but not as high as communication complaints, are mostly related to information flow from the top of the organization down and are lack of recognition and praise, lack of training and educational opportunities, lack of flexibility in work schedules, and lack of authority given to employees. Having "more authority" is associated with a human need to want more control of one's work in some fashion or form. The key is avoiding feeling like a cog in a wheel. Target this sensation and you'll be on the right track. Consider how to improve communication, feedback, and recognition, and offer ways to insert training and educational opportunities into your employees' experiences at work. Stumped when it comes to how to proceed? Consult with the EAP, create a peer advisory or brainstorming group to discuss the issues. You'll be amazed at the ideas that will emerge from such an approach.

Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.