



THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

April
2020

April Online Seminar

Effective Communication With Children

Learn about different communication styles and how to communicate effectively, starting in early childhood.

Available on-demand starting
April 21st at
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Deer Oaks 2020 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series *Employee Engagement*

Advanced Communication Skills that Improve Employee Motivation
February 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/794103984746779139>

Successful Approaches to Difficult Employee Conversations
May 4th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/444956266369821443>

Maintaining Effective Communication Channels
August 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5196350630268998915>

Advanced Coaching Skills for Leaders
November 2nd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8703449675246617347>

Anxiety Disorders at Work

Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only one-third of those who suffer from an anxiety disorder receive treatment. Anxiety disorders are medical illnesses. They are chronic, relentless, and can grow if left untreated.

Most people feel a little anxious before a big speech, a job interview, or a visit to the doctor. Sweaty palms and butterflies in your stomach are normal reactions. Crippling fear, however, is not normal.

Having an anxiety disorder is not a sign of moral weakness. In fact, experts believe that anxiety disorders are caused by a combination of biological and environmental factors, much like physical disorders, such as heart disease or diabetes. The most common anxiety disorders are panic disorders, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and generalized anxiety disorders.

Major Signs and Symptoms of an Anxiety Disorder

Although each anxiety disorder has its own distinct features, all include some degree of excessive, irrational, or ongoing anxiety or fear, and feelings of dread and terror.

Specific symptoms can include

- Sweating, trembling, nausea, and difficulty talking
- Painful, intrusive memories, or recurring nightmares
- Fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, muscle aches, irritability, or difficulty swallowing
- Persistent obsessive thoughts
- Intense feelings of panic and fear

Tips for Employers

- **Educate employees and managers about mental health disorders, including anxiety disorders.** Encourage employees to seek care when they need it by educating the workforce that mental illnesses are real and can be effectively treated. Teach supervisors how to (and how not to) intervene appropriately by focusing on job performance.
- **Promote the use of employee assistance and health programs.** Early intervention is key. Remind employees of the availability of resources for staying healthy and productive. Ensure that employees know how to access care confidentially and quickly by providing information on how to do so in multiple places and throughout the year. Heavily push these messages during times of stress, at the holidays, and so forth.
- **Integrate mental health educational messages in health communication strategies.** Include content about anxiety disorders in company newsletters, on the intranet, and in other regular employee communication platforms.

Source: Partnership for Workplace Mental Health. (n.d.). Anxiety disorders. Retrieved August 17, 2016, from <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>

Career Coaching

What is coaching?

Coaching is an experiential development process that facilitates change and growth in both individuals and groups. Coaching is often utilized to address professional or business-related challenges. Through structured dialogue, coaches assist their coachees to deepen their insights and translate those insights into actions. Coaches apply specific techniques and skills, approaches, and methodologies that enable the coachees to develop their goals and design actions to achieve them. The coachee drives the coaching agenda and is ultimately responsible for the outcome of the coaching engagement.

How can employees promote coaching culture without formal coach training?

Leader as a Coach

It is important for leaders to develop coaching skills so they can help others reach their potential. A leader who leverages coaching techniques will support positive behavior change and develop a growth mindset in his or her employees. When leaders create a coaching culture, the goal is to work with employees to solve performance problems and improve the work of the employee, the team, and the department.

Peer Coaching

Peer coaching is a confidential process where two or more professionals work together to reflect on current practices to expand, refine, build new skills, share ideas, and solve problems in the workplace. Each participant acts as both the coach and the coachee, collaborating in a highly focused group. They work together in partnership to address each of the topics or challenges presented.

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (n.d.). Coaching [Excerpt]. In Career development planning. Retrieved September 5, 2019, from <https://www.opm.gov>



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. Do employees self-refer to EAPs for help with alcoholism, or is this the type of personal problem that will ultimately require a formal referral because of denial?

A. Self-referrals do occur, but they typically result from drinking-related incidents, not simply the awareness of alcoholism. Like other illnesses with behavioral aspects to them, enabling and denial act as forces making self-diagnosis difficult. A DUI, the fear of divorce, or a “close call,” among other situations, may motivate self-referrals. Alcoholics are seeking help for their “drinking problem,” even in these circumstances—they hope to regain control over their drinking. They often have ruled out the possibility of alcoholism based on their own unique definition, which excludes them. This is where expertise is crucial in the assessment process. The EA professional may have only one shot at helping these employees understand the nature of what they are dealing with and motivating them to take the next step. The client must be sold on the benefits—the promises of recovery—that result from proper treatment. Some clients are ready for this message, while others are not. The window of motivation is short. The good news is that the predictability of future crises almost guarantees them another chance to hear the message and accept help.

Q. Regarding supervisor behavior, what does the phrase “silo mentality” mean? Can EAPs play a role in helping supervisors overcome this practice?

A. The phrase “silo mentality” is more applicable to the dysfunctional practice of departments within organizations isolating themselves by being concerned only with their unique purpose. Withholding information, competitiveness, communication breakdowns, and, when severe enough, nearly isolated work environments with charismatic leaders can result. Supervisors can unwittingly practice a similar behavior by isolating themselves, withholding information, failing to engage with workers, and focusing more on charts and metrics than developing their people. Avoiding this practice requires skills of engagement, collaboration, sharing information, coaching, and modeling. New supervisors are especially at risk for isolation behavior if they give in to their insecurities. Some may deny their role and hope the work unit can function without their direction by deferring to one or two strong subordinates. It may feel safer, but it is a recipe for disaster. The employee assistance program is an ideal source of help. Beyond coaching, which is more appropriately obtained from a next level manager, the EAP can confidentially assess personal issues and help the supervisor identify and overcome roadblocks to full engagement.

Q. One of my employees has a teen who was caught selling marijuana in school. I learned about this from another employee. The father of the teen is an excellent worker. Should I leave this issue alone, not say anything, or mention the EAP as a resource?

A. In a private conversation, let your employee know that you have learned of his child’s problem. Mention the EAP and say that the professionals there can offer several types of support helpful to the family, including referral to expert resources in the community, help for understanding unique issues associated with parenting a teenager with a drug use problem, follow-up, support, and education. Encouraging use of the EAP may also reduce lost productivity or future attendance problems as your employee manages the legal problems, treatment issues, probation, and enforcement of his child’s participation in a recovery program. This can be a rocky road that involves relapse, parenting challenges, and crises requiring the support of experts that the EAP can help locate.

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