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DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES

EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

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DEER OAKS EAP PRESENTS:

Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

Transitioning from Staff Member to Supervisor

Date: November 14, 2022

Time: 1:00-2:00 PM CT **REGISTER**

Stress in the Workplace

More workers are absent from work because of stress and anxiety than because of physical illness or injury.1 In small doses, stress can be a good thing, giving the push one needs to do one's best and stay focused and alert. However, when the going gets too tough and life's demands exceeds the ability to cope, stress can become a threat to one's physical and emotional well-being.

Over time, stress can lead to mental health problems such as:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse

In addition to grinding away at one's mental health, chronic stress can also lead to physical ailments such as tension headaches, back pain, body aches, and irregular sleep.

Tips for Employers

- ***Value work-life balance.*** It is not enough to simply state that work-life balance matters. The entire culture needs to support a separation of work and home life. It is especially important that this be adhered to on all levels of the organization. Employees will take their cues from upper management or supervisors, so all levels of the organization should model healthy work-life boundaries.

- ***Offer healthy methods for addressing stress.*** Educate your employees about better ways to manage their time and stress. Create methods to bring those ideas into action at the office. Organize an exercise program for employees to take advantage of. This can be as simple as organizing a walking group, or offering discount gym memberships.

- ***Communicate openly.*** Communicating openly with employees, especially during times of corporate change or difficult financial situations, can dramatically decrease their level of stress. Often the stress of not knowing can be far greater than the reality of a situation.

- ***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.

Reference

1. Marlowe, J. F. (2002, March). Depression's surprising toll on worker productivity. Employee Benefits Journal, 16-20.

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

Workplace Success Takes Teamwork

Teamwork is an essential part of workplace success. Like a basketball team working together to set up the perfect shot, every team member has a specific role to play in accomplishing tasks on the job. Although it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by many people's planning, coordination, and cooperation to get that player the ball.

Employers look for people who not only know how to work well with others, but who understand that not every player on the team can or will be the one who gets the ball. When everyone in the workplace works together to accomplish goals, everyone achieves more.

The ability to work as part of a team is one of the most important skills in today's job market. Employers are looking for workers who can contribute their own ideas, but also want people who can work with others to create and develop projects and plans.

Teamwork involves building relationships and working with other people using a number of important skills and habits, such as:

- Working cooperatively
- Contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and effort
- Communication (both giving and receiving)
- Sense of responsibility
- Healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences
- Ability to participate in group decision-making

When employees work together to accomplish a goal, everyone benefits. Employers might expect to "see" this in action in different ways. For example, team members in the workplace plan ahead and work cooperatively to assign tasks, assess progress, and deliver on time. They have professional discussions, during which differing approaches and opinions might be shared and assessed in a respectful manner. Even when certain employees end up with tasks that were not their first choices, jobs get done with limited complaints because it is in the spirit of teamwork and with the overall goal in mind.

A leader or manager may often serve as the teamwork facilitator. In this case, team members participate respectfully in discussion, carry out assigned tasks, and defer to the leader in the best interest of the goal. Consensus is wonderful, but not always possible, and an assigned leader will often support and facilitate the decision-making necessary for quality teamwork to exist.

Learning the value of teamwork and becoming an effective member of a team is an important first step to developing leadership skills. Affording people experiences through which they learn to rely on themselves and others is an important factor in the development of a productive teamwork mentality. Use these experiences to bridge teamwork skills as a stepping-stone to leadership development.

There is no I in team.

Teamwork can be tough. Dealing with different personalities and compromise is not necessarily easy, so what do you do when you are part of a team and there are barriers to the team's success? This could be a sports team, a team at work, or a group working on a school or community project.

Some of the reasons why teams sometimes don't work or what makes teamwork so difficult at times may include inconsistent team players, time issues, compatibility, differences in communication styles (both giving and receiving), lack of trust, no clear goal, and so forth.

Part of becoming a functional member of a team is learning to understand what you bring to the group and what you might need from others. It's important to identify individual strengths and needs regarding teamwork.

How many shapes does it take?

It takes all types of team members to create a balanced, cohesive team. Not only does it take all different types of players to make a team effective; it takes all kinds of shapes, too. Five different "personality shapes" exist: The shapes are a square, a rectangle, a circle, a triangle, and a squiggle.

Which shape are you?

There are some people who believe there are five basic personality types, and each type tends to prefer a different shape. Knowing whether you, your coworkers and friends are squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, or squiggles just might help you build better careers, teams, and friendships. Here is what each shape might say about you, and how you can recognize other people for their shapes.

If you are a SQUARE: You are an organized, logical, and hardworking person who likes structure and rules. However, sometimes you have trouble making decisions, because you always want more information. You feel most comfortable in a stable environment with clear directions on what to do. You tend to like things that are regular and orderly. You will work on a task until it is finished, no matter what.

How to spot a square: They appear to move "straight," use precise or specific gestures, love routine, and are very concerned with detail. They are also very neat in their appearance and their personal workspace. They do a lot of planning and are always prompt.

If you are a RECTANGLE: You are a courageous (brave), exciting, and inquisitive explorer who always searches for ways to grow and change. You enjoy trying things you've never done before and love asking questions that have never been asked. You like structure and will often be the person to be sure things are done the proper way, taking all rules and regulations into consideration. When you are given a task you will start organizing it to be sure it can be done in the most systematic way.

How to spot a rectangle: These people often have "fleeting eyes and flushed faces." They also tend to giggle, and they like variety. For example, they'll come into work early or late—but not on time. Those who have offices tend to be disorganized with a mishmash of furniture.

If you are a TRIANGLE: You are a born leader who's competitive, confident, and can make decisions. You also like recognition. You are goal oriented and enjoy planning something out and then doing it (you are motivated by the accomplishment). You will tend to look at big, long-term issues but might forget the details. When given a task, you set a goal and work on a plan for it. American business has traditionally been run by triangles.

How to spot a triangle: They have powerful voices, love to tell jokes, and play as hard as they work. They also tend to be stylish dressers.

If you are a CIRCLE: You are social and communicative. There are no hard edges about you. You handle things by talking about them and smoothing things out with everybody. Communication is your first priority. When given a task, you will want to talk about it. You are a "people person," with lots of sympathy and consideration for others. You listen and communicate well and are very perceptive about other people's feelings. You like harmony and hate making unpopular decisions.

How to spot a circle: They are friendly, nurturing, persuasive, and generous. They tend to be relaxed and smile a lot. They're talkative but have a mellow voice. They also have a full laugh and like to touch others on the shoulder and arm.

If you are a SQUIGGLE: You are "off-the-wall" and creative. You like doing new and different things most of the time and get bored with regularity. When given a task, you will come up with bright ideas about to do it. However, you don't think in a deliberate pattern from A to B to C. Instead, you tend to jump around in your mind, going from A to M to X.

How to spot a squiggle: They can be "flashy," dramatic, and extremely creative, and they don't like highly structured environments. Both men and women squiggles tend to be funny and very expressive. They also have great intuition. Most performers and writers are squiggles.

Consider the following questions:

- Do you think people have the characteristics of more than one shape?

- Why do you think it is important to have all different shapes working on the same team?

    - *The Square, Rectangle, and Triangle are all convergent.* This mean they are working TOWARD something specific and finite, and they do it in a logical and systematic way. However, they might be lacking in personal creativity.

    - *The Circle and Squiggle are divergent.* This mean they are creative, extroverted, and intuitive. They will reach out around them into new areas and to other people, but they aren't particularly systematic or dependable.

- Do you think it is easy or difficult for different types of personalities to work together? Why is it important not only to understand how you work best, but to learn how others work best?

Conclusion

The importance of teamwork is undeniable. The benefits of teamwork include the following:

- **Support**—Teamwork leads to camaraderie between team members. This not only will lead to better social relationships, but can also act as a support when things go wrong.

- **Varied skills**—Different team members bring with them different skills.

- **Distribution of work**—Distributing work not only reduces each individual's burden, but also increases responsibility and ensures better commitment to completing the task individually and as a whole.

- **Creativity**—Different people have different skills and possess different perspectives. Therefore, any activity that involves teamwork benefits from the various creative thoughts and inspirations of different people.

- **Faster accomplishment**—People working together will tend to complete a project faster than if one person was working alone.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). (n.d.). Teamwork [Excerpt] (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved November 13, 2018, from https://www.dol.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. What is a key method to keep an employee from becoming defensive when confronted with ongoing work quality, conduct, or attendance problems?

A. There are many aspects of the corrective interview that can lead to an employee's unfavorable reaction to being confronted with poor performance, but one overlooked approach is the use of the supervisor's prior documentation in the history of addressing the performance problem. Prior documentation, known to the employee and may have also been acknowledged with a signature, is one of the most certain ways to gain cooperation. Without it, the supervisor is forced to rehash prior discussions from memory, and these stories may be less accurate when recalled than the notes and documentation that have been previously accepted and agreed to.

Q. I know how to formally refer an employee to the EAP, no problem. However, is it helpful to speak to the EAP anyway before I make a formal referral?

A. Although there is no fast rule regarding consulting with the EAP beforehand regarding a formal referral, there are advantages to doing so. Even if you know how to help arrange a referral, use documentation effectively, and communicate later when following up, every referral to an EAP involves an employee whose issues are unique. Employee assistance professionals are extremely attuned to performance issues and the nuances of how they present themselves in the workplace. This is where the art of the interview exists. Based on patterns you experience with an employee, an EA professional will make decisions about what interviewing techniques to employ. If you phone the EAP to inform the program about a pending referral and speak with a staff member about issues such as the type of interactions you have with your employee, prior cooperation, patterns of performance problems, environmental influences, and history of other concerns not relevant to the current matter, this may help the EA professional consider the assessment approach that will ultimately make the referral more successful.

Q. I have wondered about the EAP experience and employees getting attached to the counselor at the program but then perhaps not wanting to establish another relationship with the mental health professional to whom they are referred. Can you comment on this?

A. EAP employee-clients are assessed with "the end" in mind. This means assessing an employee to understand fully the nature of a problem, if any, contributing to job performance issues but not bonding with the client so thoroughly that referral to a specialist would be resisted and difficult. Trust is important, and so is the client's willingness to disclose information, so a limited therapeutic engagement is important. This is another key professional skill important to well-functioning EAPs. Clients may be told directly that the goal is to understand the nature of the issues at hand and then get them to the right resource. This often has the intended effect of helping the client prepare for a resource referral without bonding with the EAP. The need to have several interviews in order to accurately gauge the client's needs makes referral resistance more likely, but it is the skill of the EA professional that helps the employee get to the right resource.

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.

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