

FrontlineSupervisor

March 2019



EAC
Employee Assistance Center
IMPROVING LIVES AT WORK AND AT HOME

Q. *My employee complained to me that his supervisor was harassing and bullying him. I didn't take action, because I felt the first step was to have him confront his supervisor. I am ready to step in, but isn't this inappropriate until he has tried to resolve the issue with his supervisor first?*

In years gone by, your approach may have been commonly recommended. However, in today's world of work, not taking action after being informed of offensive and hostile behavior is usually viewed by courts as a failure to act and negligence. Likewise, procrastination or putting off investigating the matter can be seen as apathy. Your good intentions are not given much weight. This is why sexual harassment policies support employees going to the next level of management when lodging complaints. It's better to ask, "How do I act now in order to get a fast, fair resolution regarding this incident?" Think speed and responsiveness. Is there a role for EAC? Yes. The employee should be offered support. Do not think that suggesting EAC is tantamount to accusing the employee of being the one at fault. EAP's reduce risk in business organizations, and helping employees manage any sort of emotionally upsetting incident is one way they do it.

Q. *I intended to give my employee a disciplinary action for chronic absenteeism. He's been gone several days. When he showed up, he said he had just come from EAC, where he signed a release. I feel a bit manipulated. Should I hold off on discipline or follow through?*

It is a positive development that your employee decided to connect with EAC, but whether to dispense a disciplinary action is a decision to be considered in consultation with your management advisors. The planned disciplinary action may have motivated the worker to act. Do you feel the disciplinary action is no longer fitting? Do you fear it will now undermine motivation to continue with EAC? Should you base your decision on what's best for the organization? Is the message that the disciplinary action sends, the critical thing? Every organization answers these questions differently. This situation is not uncommon, and it illustrates both the success and the influence of EAC in organizations to attract, perhaps at the last moment, the most troubled workers. Sometimes, this is what a success story at EAC looks like.



Productivity

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

-Confucius

Q. *No one wants a cranky supervisor. Sometimes my mood is not the most pleasant. Are there any tricks or techniques for improving my mood so I can enjoy work more and engage with employees more effectively?*

There are techniques for changing your mood. A frequent need to improve your mood could be a sign of depression or another medical condition. In this case, visit EAC for an assessment to see whether there are other steps worth considering. Quick tips: 1) Exercise regularly. It will influence your mood to keep it more positive. 2) Feel an undesirable mood coming on? Go for a short “exercise snack,” a 10-to-15-minute walk outside or in a new environment. 3) Sit quietly, and for five minutes, imagine some activity you experience great pleasure in doing, such as fishing, gardening, hiking, or cooking. This will influence a more positive mood, and it helps you keep life in perspective. Moods are related to subtle negative “self-talk.” The mood can change as you change this inner voice script. You will notice an improved effect with practice. Visit with EAC if you remain concerned about the need to alter your mood, chronic feelings of irritability, or a communication style that does not facilitate a positive relationship with your employees.

Q. *My employee is quick to get angry. It’s scary. It includes getting red in the face and shaking, even when playing cards on lunch break. Some co-workers think this is funny. Frankly, I am a little nervous. If he had a personal crisis, could he “go off”? Should I be concerned?*

You have enough information to document this situation and be rightfully concerned about it. Consult with EAC and discuss an interview approach that will support a successful constructive confrontation and an EAC referral. EAC can role-play with you about the best approach. Be sure to talk to your employee in private. You don’t have to wait until the next incident, but it will be helpful to have clear examples of the behavior that is concerning, its impact on others and work productivity, and what you would like changed. Certainly, don’t ignore the next opportunity. Your employee likely has keen awareness of his explosive style because others outside of work have either remarked about it or been victims of it. Co-workers should be discouraged from finding this behavior as a source of entertainment, including taunting the worker. Employees with explosive rage can act with violence while feeling detached from their ability to control their behavior.

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