



# FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

ESPYR SUPERVISOR NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2024

## Questions:

**Can the EAP help me address some issues I have with anger without having to actually visit a counselor in person?**

**Some employees want easy access to me while others want challenging assignments, but my most recent hire wants to be mentored. What does this entail?**

## Answers:

**The EAP offers both in person and virtual counseling services, which are often more convenient.** Both modalities provide the counselor an opportunity to observe nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures, which can provide additional insights into emotions and thoughts. These cues can be vital in understanding a person's feelings and concerns, and thus enable the counseling experience to be more helpful to you. Whether in person or virtual, EAP counseling is confidential. Giving you choices honors your personal preference. Also keep in mind the many helpful resources about managing our emotions and communicating with others that are offered at the EAP's website.

**As a mentor, your goal is to be a trusted and experienced boss who offers guidance, support, and advice to facilitate the personal and professional growth of your employees.** It can be challenging to be both a mentor and an evaluating supervisor, but with awareness, it's possible. In this instance, be clear with your employee about the two roles you hold under these circumstances. Encourage your employee to discuss career aspirations, concerns, and educational/skills goals in a confidential and supportive setting. As a helpful technique, you might want to meet in your office when playing the supervisory role and another location when mentoring your employee. This separation may aid in building trust and rapport. Be sure to discuss short- and long-term goals and have a focus when you meet. Don't simply ask how it's going or focus on issues of the day. When your employee experiences a challenge, reflect on your experiences, insights, and knowledge as you offer guidance. Have scheduled "check-ins" and refine the mentorship process so it remains effective and doesn't fade or tail off. Encourage learning opportunities and celebrate your employee's achievements and milestones.

## Questions:

**Is it appropriate for me as a supervisor to invite employees to hang out or go to a bar after work, as a way of improving team cohesion and morale?**

**I am a new supervisor and do not want to become a pushy boss. How can I avoid the common traits of a boss who makes employees feel stressed, anxious, and pressured?**

**It gets very stressful in my position during the day. I can't take a 30-minute break or go to a gym to work out. What stress management techniques are the most effective for supervisors who can't take a long break?**

## Answers:

**Managers inviting subordinates to socialize outside of work might help improve cohesion or morale, but there are risks to doing so that can undermine this goal.** For example, it is crucial that your invitation not exclude any employees. Also, the invitation should be appropriate and respectful of their personal differences and the event, outing or setting should be in line with your workplace's policies, culture, and values. The invitation to socialize should be voluntary and involve no pressure to attend nor negative consequences for not attending. A supervisor who feels self-conscious about being refused or rejected might respond in a manner that causes employees to feel obligated, especially if they want nothing more than to leave at the end of the day for the long commute home to assume other responsibilities. For these reasons, many workforce management professionals advise against socializing after work if any of these associated risks exist.

**Avoid the following 11 behaviors and you will be seen as a supportive leader.** Consult with the EAP if you have trouble giving any of them up! 1) Constantly monitoring and micromanaging as well as excessively checking up; 2) Setting unrealistic deadlines; 3) Demanding an immediate response to issues and problems; 4) Overloading employees with work that can't reasonably be completed in the time frame; 5) Ignoring employee input and ideas; 6) Pressuring employees for answers, as if trying to prevent Armageddon; 7) Taking credit—even a little—for your employee's work, or failing to acknowledge the team's contributions; 8) Showing lack of empathy for an employee's personal problem or crisis at home, and instead focusing only on the work; 9) Using "or else!" or other intimidation tactics to get compliance with your demands; 10) Ignoring personal boundaries by expecting employees always to be available; 11) Nitpicking, like within a report, without acknowledging the greater effort.

**When only five minutes are available for stress management, there are some quick and effective techniques; the more you practice them, the more effective they will become and the faster they will produce results.** Deep-Breathing Exercises: Take slow, deep breaths to calm the nervous system. Inhale deeply while counting slowly to four, hold your breath for a few seconds, and then release it slowly over the course of few seconds (repeat 3-4 times). Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and release different muscle groups in your body. Start with your toes, tensing them for a few seconds and then relaxing them. Gradually work your way up through your legs, abdomen, arms, and neck, releasing tension as you go. Meditation: This short mental break involves closing your eyes and relaxing. Daydream about anything unrelated to work. Do this for a few minutes. There are many other techniques than just these three. Consult with the EAP for many more ideas.

## Questions:

**I know some supervisors don't** believe in counseling and actually discourage use of the EAP. Can you offer responses to common myths about counseling in general that I can use as a comeback to negativity? Life is stressful and people need help sometimes, so I'd like to advocate effectively for use of the EAP.

## Answers:

**Here are a few of the most common myths and responses to consider if** you hear them. Myth: Going to counseling means you have severe mental health issues. Rebuttal: Most people who turn to professional counseling are problem-solving everyday stress, relationship challenges, work-related issues, and personal growth. Myth: Once you start counseling, you are in it forever! Rebuttal: One large study showed 75% of clients met their goals within six months. Myth: Seeking counseling means you're weak or unable to handle problems on your own. Rebuttal: It takes strength to seek help and work on personal growth, and counseling can be a fast track to learning coping strategies, gaining insights, and developing skills to better manage challenges rather than suffering for years.

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