



Volume 25, Issue 4

# Solutions

A newsletter designed to support leadership and human resource staff



*The following questions and answers are designed to help provide assistance related to issues that supervisors and human resource personnel may be facing. Acentra Health, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), provides confidential consultation to managers seeking guidance related to a variety of workplace challenges.*

**My employee was once highly motivated - a real go-getter - but recently his energy seems to be gone. Should I explore this problem with him, or is it something I should not dive into and instead refer him to the EAP?**

Meet with your employee and have a conversation about what you are noticing about his motivation and energy decline. Listen carefully for clues that point to potential solutions. For example, what goals is this employee working toward? Consider exciting new work goals to see if that rekindles his motivation. One common reason for demotivation is boredom. If this is the case, come to an agreement on some challenging and interesting tasks that align with the employee's skills and interests. Does your employee work with a team? Isolation is a frequent motivation killer. If not, finding a way to incorporate him on projects that are part of a team may help your employee discover drive that results from workers who synergize. Encourage an EAP referral if your conversations do not prove fruitful.

**I referred two employees to the EAP because they experience frequent conflicts with each other. I have not threatened disciplinary action and instead have asked that they be professionals and resolve their issues, but it is not working. Am I doing anything wrong with this situation?**

Asking employees to resolve differences can be difficult, because sometimes neither party will initiate taking a constructive path to end the conflict. It often takes a third party to help, which is where the EAP can step in and provide you with some tips.

- The EAP may recommend meeting privately with each employee.
- Listen actively to their perspectives.
- Empathize, and avoid casting judgement.
- Clearly communicate your expectations for professional behavior, respect and mutual cooperation,
- Schedule regular follow-up meetings with the employees to monitor their progress.
- Address any new issues immediately if they arise.
- Let the employees know you are keeping a record of the conflict and your efforts to resolve it. This sends a message that the manager is serious about ending the conflict one way or another and motivates the employees to seek resolution and stay motivated to remain cooperative.



**How can I be less stressed out as a supervisor? Yes, I know about work-life balance, finding a mentor, and even relaxation exercises, but there must be more generally helpful ways to cope. How can the EAP help?**

A Gallup survey last year found that 35% of supervisors report being extremely stressed out. Being stressed and experiencing burnout grew after 2020 and was worse in 2021. With the EAP's help, examine your stress more closely. Often, stress management requires a closer look at a person's unique circumstances. For example, you know you are overworked, but is conflict at work making it worse? Is feeling you don't measure up to the job making it worse? A discussion with the EAP can help you see the bigger picture so that you can implement proper strategies that are more likely to be effective.

Source: [www.gallup.com/workplace/357404/manager-burnout-getting-worse.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/workplace/357404/manager-burnout-getting-worse.aspx)

**My employee was an outstanding performer until recently. Over the last few months, she seems distracted and less engaged. Is it appropriate to refer her to the EAP?**

The employee could be experiencing a personal issue which could be influencing the decline in performance. This may require some help or intervention which would be beyond the scope of your ability as a supervisor to influence. The EAP is a great resource to suggest to the employee and encourage them to reach out for support. It's important for supervisors to avoid diagnosing and keep any discussions focused on performance.

**I am now supervising remote staff. What are some tips for managing a virtual team?**

Communication is the key issue that affects remote workers and your relationship with them. An effective communication strategy will build trust and maintain engagement. It is crucial to create communication protocols and systems so those you supervise do not feel left out or unsure of their expectations. Despite being off-site, remote employees still want to feel recognized, valued, and experience parity with coworkers. Any deficits in communication may lead to cynicism, coworker conflicts, loss of engagement, and diminished loyalty and turnover. Employees may compensate for their feelings of disconnection by reducing productivity or splitting their work time between work and personal needs.

**What does it mean for a manager or management team to lead with empathy?**

Leading with empathy means that the supervisor puts a priority on recognizing, understanding, and addressing the emotions, needs, and perspectives of their employees. They create a positive and supportive workplace where employees feel valued and understood. This leads to higher morale and a more engaged workforce. That translates into lower turnover, higher productivity, fewer disciplinary matters, and a happier place to work. Empathetic supervisors are good listeners and provide valuable feedback. Empathetic leaders involve employees in decision-making processes, valuing their input and diverse perspectives. Learn more from "Leading the Empathic Agile Enterprise" (2021) by Dr. Gail Ferreira.

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**Acentra**  
HEALTH

## **Conflict resolution is a crucial skill for supervisors. Can you offer a checklist of steps?**

Effective conflict resolution involves the following steps:

1. Recognize that a conflict exists.
2. Gather information separately from parties to the conflict.
3. Determine what you believe is the root cause of the conflict.
4. Remain neutral.
5. Review the goal of the employees in conflict: finding a mutually satisfying solution (while fixing or improving the relationship between the employees).
6. Create a respectful place for the involved parties to express themselves without fear of judgement.
7. Explore a way to find common ground.
8. Brainstorm solutions.
9. Evaluate and select solutions.
10. Agree to a timeline for implementing the solution, including steps, dates and who does what.
11. Agree on a follow-up and feedback plan to keep the ball rolling.
12. Monitor the solution and team together as needed to modify the final agreement.

## **Employee Assistance Program**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counseling sessions at no cost, as well as a wide variety of services to enhance overall wellbeing and support healthy work/life balance. In addition, the EAP is available to provide meaningful solutions to address the many challenging situations facing those in management roles. Leaders can take advantage of unlimited management consultations and receive guidance and assistance related to employee and team functioning concerns.

The EAP can be accessed anytime. For free, confidential support from a licensed, experienced counselor, call today. You can also access helpful management tips and resources on the website.

 **Phone: 1.800.999.1077**

 **Website: [www.EAPHelplink.com](http://www.EAPHelplink.com)**

 **Company Code: DOUGLAS**

*Solutions is a newsletter for managers, supervisors and human resource staff eligible for Acentra Health services. Acentra Health EAP services provide assistance and guidance to supervisors dealing with workplace performance issues. This newsletter is intended for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. Individuals should follow the policies and procedures laid out by their human resource management department concerning use of the EAP. Some articles reprinted with permission from DFA Publishing and Consulting, LLC. Acentra Health, McLean, VA. All rights reserved.*