

**Q. What can supervisors do to help their employees correct performance more efficiently? I have often met with employees to discuss problems that need fixing, but I have later been surprised by what's been forgotten or not understood despite what appeared to be a well-communicated meeting!**

A. If you have been a supervisor for any length of time, you have likely noticed how an employee may be very attentive in a corrective interview as you explain a problem, but later it is as though they were daydreaming the entire time they were looking you straight in the eye. You may have asked to have key points in the meeting repeated, but later the details are surprisingly overlooked. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, including attention deficit issues due to stress, fear, or even possibly depression or medical issues. It is common for such employees not to return later for clarification, fearful of the manager's response to their apparent lack of attention. For these reasons, practice putting problems in writing along with the key points needing attention. Doing so early when problems arise may eliminate the need for a meeting entirely.

**Q. Is a "constructive confrontation" with an employee an interview that always includes mention of some potential disciplinary action to help motivate the worker to feel more urgency about making changes in performance?**

A. The term "constructive confrontation" has many definitions and applications in human interaction, but in the work setting it typically refers to a purposeful and planned meeting with an employee experiencing performance or conduct issues to motivate the worker to make improvements or desired changes. Although a constructive confrontation may utilize mention of disciplinary action, this is not a required element. Most employees perceive the supervisor to be a legitimate authority figure who has control or influence over the disciplinary processes. This is a dynamic of authority, and it is not overlooked by employees when confronted by supervisors. This dynamic is also helpful to instill motivation. Supervisors who socialize frequently with subordinates or are viewed by them as a friend may experience more difficulty in succeeding with constructive confrontations. This is because the dynamic of authority has eroded. Reasserting this authority can be tough because it requires choices that stress the friendship.

**Q. I was discussing my employee's attendance problem when she mentioned that family issues were causing her lateness. She added that she would be contacting the EAP. I look forward to positive changes, but should I have done anything more?**

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A. Beyond following up later and affirming the positive changes in her attendance, the situation with this employee seems to have been handled well. This is a self-referral and a great example of how EAP's perform, but there are a couple of tips worth considering. Depending on the seriousness of this attendance issue, offering the employee the opportunity to use your phone or to call the EAP "now" from your office might be effective in helping ensure she does in fact use the EAP. It's the employee's choice, of course. The second is to be firm and supportive but clear that if the attendance problem does not change, then you will be considering the next steps in correcting the problem. This will also facilitate follow-through because a disciplinary step is implied without it being committed to it yet.