



UR Medicine EAP

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Q. I need to confront my employee about a performance issue. What are the most common mistakes supervisors make that tend to not only undermine effectiveness of confrontations, but make them more stressful?

A. Inadequate planning and not having suitable documentation prepared for a meeting with the employee are perhaps the key issues that make confrontations difficult and stressful. However, there are less obvious issues associated with corrective interviews that can undermine their effectiveness. They get less mentioned in supervisor training. One of them is not doing them quickly enough after an incident of concern happens. The dislike of confronting employees can lead to postponement or procrastination, and risk that they will not happen at all. This of course would allow a problem to grow worse. If delayed meetings do occur, they can be awkward because details are not fresh in the mind of participants and cooperation may be lessened. An employee may also have more time to prepare mentally for a defensive position.

Q. I promised a couple of my employees that I would address the bad attitude of one of our office staff. I am procrastinating because I am not sure how to go about it. Is there a recommended approach?

A. Have a private meeting and explain the problem with examples of the behavior you have witnessed. Instances you've witnessed are better than hearsay, because employees with attitude problems are well versed at denying second-hand reports of their transgressions. Clearly communicate what is expected in terms of attitude and behavior. Don't omit what the future may hold in the behavior is not corrected. (This means disciplinary measures.) A key part of your intervention should be giving feedback. Do so regularly, be specific, and mention the positive changes, but also any continuation of the attitude problem. Another aspect of this intervention is asking the employee to come to you with any issues or concerns about the job, work environment, or even other employees. The goal here is to deal with issues as a manager and eliminate the likelihood of the employee aggressing against fellow workers.

Q. Is it appropriate to disclose personal history of mental health problems and treatment to employees? I am wondering if it might be helpful to employees and perhaps make them more likely to use the EAP. I am diagnosed with PTSD and depression.

A. Disclosing your history of mental health treatment to employees is a personal decision and depends on your comfort level, but also the specific workplace culture and policies of your organization. Talk to the EAP for a bit of guidance on how much to disclose, and an opinion on the work culture or whether such a disclosure would be helpful. Sharing personal information will unlikely be the defining reason that one your employees will use the EAP. Still, it might be beneficial to reduce the stigma around mental health in the workplace to some degree, and help others feel more comfortable discussing their own mental health. Many corporate heads and CEOs have disclosed their use of the EAP along with personal problems, so your interest is not without precedent.

