



## UR Medicine EAP

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**Q. What can a supervisor do if employees are demonstrating anxiety and have too much discussion about war news and terrorism? I am growing concerned that it might interfere with productivity, but I can't just tell everyone to stop watching or reading the news. There needs to be a balance.**

**A.** Productivity is paramount, but you're right: telling everyone to get back to work would be counterproductive. Still, boundaries are important. The organization's needs can't be subordinate to the news. Acknowledge the concern and be supportive. Ensure employees know that the EAP can help them with anxiety. Remind them of boundaries by encouraging discussions during breaks or after hours. It's timely to offer stress reduction skills training as a wellness activity, as well as team-building exercises. See how the EAP can help. Almost universally, people experiencing anxiety and worry do better when they have a routine, so simply encourage employees to maintain their daily routines. Even with these suggestions, however, keep an eye on productivity. Don't micromanage but focus on outcomes and results. Lastly, your behavior, as always, sets the tone, so demonstrate a calm and composed demeanor. You will be surprised how quickly it is adopted by staff.

**Q. What problems can supervisors anticipate if they ignore or don't confront disrespectful behavior in the workplace?**

**A.** When employees witness a supervisor ignoring serious conduct issues with a coworker, it can have several significant consequences that affect the workplace. Employees may lose trust in the supervisor's ability to enforce workplace standards and maintain a safe and productive environment, which can lead to decreased confidence in leadership overall. Growing discontent can then lead to less engagement, decreased motivation, and diminished commitment to the employer's mission. If employees become preoccupied with the problematic behavior, it can hinder their focus on performance. Also, negative conduct can be contagious, creating more frequent conflicts and even the possibility of workplace violence. Generally, when problems remain unresolved, ripple effects and unpredictable consequences follow. The costliest problem typically is turnover, as employees tire of conflict and tension and leave to find a happier workplace.

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

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- A. Hundreds of resources exist to help you acquire conflict resolution skills. Here's a checklist: 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) Stay neutral. Don't take a side. 5) As the supervisor, plainly describe the goal to 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 judgment. 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.

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