

**Q. EAPs help resolve personal problems such as stress, depression, workplace conflicts, and substance abuse. What about the EAP's ability to teach critical skills, like better listening? That's what my boss recently said I should consider improving.**



A. The history of employee assistance programs has caused them to naturally be associated with resolving personal problems, but EAPs can offer other types of help. Further, EA professionals also specialize. Some

may have expertise in organizational development, while others are seasoned pros at addiction recovery, imparting supervisory skills, conflict resolution, parenting, and more. Meet with the EAP, but zero in on the aspect of the skill about which you are trying to be more efficient. For example, regarding listening skills, key aspects include active listening, summarizing, using empathy, following up, running meetings, listening to learn, listening to evaluate and analyze, listening to understand feelings and emotions, and more. What about your listening skills are you trying to improve? Are you a good listener but experiencing problems that interfere with listening? Meeting with the EAP can help you explore these questions, too. It might lead you to a different approach or solution for improving listening skills.

**Q. My employee's father died of COVID-19 last fall, and there was no real funeral. She appears depressed, and some days not very functional. Friends are worried because she was previously treated for drug addiction and is now drinking. How should I approach EAP referral?**

A. Consult with the EAP when employee situations are compounded by multiple issues, like this one is. If your employee is drinking now but had previously been treated for drug addiction, then she is considered to be relapsed. Addictive disease patients in recovery are directed to abstain from alcohol and psychoactive drugs as part of their recovery program. If your employee is no longer an EAP client, encourage her to self-refer for the sadness and the difficulties she is having on the job. Many people experience a phenomenon known as prolonged grief disorder (PGD). This is a recognized condition that can result from the inability to participate in a normal bereavement and grief process. If her ability to function at work diminishes, consider more formal steps to encourage EAP participation.

**Q. Complaints and problems that employees seem to "drop on my desk" are the part of my job that I like least of all. Sometimes I snap at employees when they walk in and "deliver" me problems. How do I better manage this process for less stress and so I feel like the boss, not a support desk?**

A. Show supervisees how to implement a process for bringing problems to you that maximizes their opportunity to solve problems on their own and properly conveys only the problems needing your attention. Here's a possible start to a dialog: "When bringing problems to me, please 1) share the impact the problem is having on your work situation or work unit. 2) Share with me what you've done or tried to do in order to solve the problem. If it did not work, let me know why. 3) Give me a recommendation. 4) If there are options, share them, but be specific so I do not try a solution that won't work. 5) Let me know which solution you think is the best one and why. 6) Offer ideas for how to go about implementing the solution." This is one approach for teaching a process to solve more problems faster, but avoid being so strict that employees don't come to you at all.

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