

**Q. This year has been difficult for many employees. I have noticed lower levels of excitement among workers about their jobs and less engagement, meaning they aren't as passionate, innovative, and initiating as they used to be. Is the pandemic to blame?**



A. Research recently shared by the American Psychological Association shows that the coronavirus pandemic has played a significant role in reducing employee engagement as you describe it. This is particularly true as it pertains to dying from the disease. Most employees may not voice this fear. Not all employees respond equally or manage this stress in the same way. Research shows that supervisors can play a pivotal role in helping employees cope and stay engaged when they perform as “servant leaders.” When you behave as a servant leader, you will be perceived by your employees as a good listener, a supervisor who shows empathy and awareness, and is persuasive and committed to everyone’s growth, while placing a priority on “everyone coming together,” pulling through this together as a family or community. Employees who said they had supervisors matching these traits remained more engaged.

Source: [www.psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2020-75403-001.html](http://www.psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2020-75403-001.html)

**Q. Should I expect an employee to act offended if they are referred to the EAP?**

A. Some employees may act offended if referred to the EAP because they believe you are making a declaration of a personal problem, mental illness, or addiction. This reaction is more likely among employees who do not understand the nature of employee assistance programs, have not participated in an orientation to understand the EAP, or do not remember what they were informed of when they did. Although you may have a firm understanding of how to use the EAP in supervision, which directs you to focus solely on performance and avoid the counseling role, the employee may not grasp this principle. To reduce the likelihood of an intractable response, it is helpful to tell your employee that referrals to the EAP by supervisors are based only on the performance issues relevant to your discussion, nothing more. Also stress the confidential nature of the EAP, the non-inclusion of a record of the referral in a personnel file, and nothing about the presenting problem, if any, being given to you.

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