

FrontLineSupervisor

Employees — Your most valuable asset

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Q: How can supervisors support employees who have depression? I know at least two within my workgroup who are on medication. I don't pry or get personally involved, but I don't want to be unaware of what might be helpful to them.

A: **Recognize that depression** is a disease like other chronic illnesses, and that it is managed, usually with the help of a medical doctor. The patient and doctor work together to reduce symptoms in order to prevent interference with social and occupational functioning. Symptoms may lead employees to be less assertive about their needs or when discussing their thoughts, feelings or ideas around a project or work problem. Do not misinterpret this as laziness or unprofessionalism.

If your workplace is under stress, and serious changes are at hand, this can also make depression worse. Encourage all employees to be open with you about their needs and how you can support them. Remind them as appropriate to reach out to the EAP, but also hold employees to the standards reasonably expected for their positions. This can help troubled employees in general seek help sooner from Continuum no matter what their problem might be.

Q: I've always been a little resistant to referring my star performers to the EAP. Instead, I have discussed personal problems with them. This probably is not the right approach, but I fear the word might get out and damage their careers. Can you help me with this issue?

There is an important dynamic worth understanding when it comes to helping employees with their personal problems who you also supervise. This is the "dual relationship" conflict where the employment relationship interferes with your ability to play the role of a counselor or problem solver. Playing both roles of boss and counselor interferes with employees' ability to share complete information that is potentially critical to resolving their problem. You may hear only 95 percent of what's going on, and therefore offer the wrong advice, discuss the wrong problem, or at best facilitate half-measures that make the problem worse. A better approach is to encourage your employees to reach out to Continuum and make their own decision. Confidentiality rules associated with EAPs are the strictest of their kind. Consider talking with Continuum about confidentiality. You'll discover how truly safe EAPs are for employees to use.

This information is provided by Continuum EAP. If you would like more information on these or other topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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Q: The best supervisors in my career did not just supervise; instead, they raised employees up, attracted their loyalty, and inspired their desire to be part of a cohesive and close work unit. I think this is a learned skill, not just charisma. Am I correct?

A: You are describing the qualities of a good leader. The following are a few contrasts between being a supervisor and being a leader.

- Instead of simply administrating, look for ways to innovate and improve systems within your work unit. Place your focus on people and developing them, rather than only paying attention to the letter of their job descriptions. Take safe risks with your employees' abilities and talents, rather than pigeon-holing them into who should do what. This inspires trust between you and them.
- Think about the future of your work unit, not just what is happening from day to day. When employees complain, pay attention to their needs. Do not see making changes as giving in to demands, but rather as challenging the status quo.
- You have unique talents. Know what they are, and how you will elevate your work unit and organization with them. Focus on doing the right thing for your employees, rather than thinking "we can't do it that way because it has never been done." Stepping outside of the structure will cause you to make some mistakes, but leadership means you will lack one attribute: being perfect.

The QUALITIES OF A GREAT LEADER



SOURCE: www.forbes.com [search "Top 10 Qualities That Make A Great Leader"]

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