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# FrontLine Leader

*Employees — Your most valuable asset*



**My employee works overtime almost every day. This is an outstanding worker with high productivity. However, I think help from the EAP may be needed because the work effort is too obsessive. This isn't your typical situation of an employee with personal problems and poor performance. It's the opposite. How do I proceed?**

**A:** It's indisputable that employees who work too much are not performing at their best, nor in the best interest of the organization. Although their productivity may be high, their well-being is in jeopardy, and this does not bode well for the organization's most valuable resource, which is employees. For the same reason, one would not abuse a piece of machinery to get more productivity out of it, thereby shortening its lifespan

and potential. Your employee's performance is not outstanding in the true sense of this term, so do not label it as such. Instead, define what you mean by appropriate work on the job and how an employee can earn the top rating. Then expect it. Overworked employees cost too much in burnout, teamwork deterioration, decline in effective relationships on the job, and they are more likely to make mistakes.

Something has to fall short, and it will likely be found among these factors. Speak to your employee. Let them know how valuable they are to you and the organization, but you are concerned about burnout and their personal well-being. Share that Continuum EAP is a great resource and encourage them to reach out for help to improve their work-life balance.



**The wife of one of my employees phoned to say he was threatening suicide during an argument over the weekend. Looking at him now, he appears fine. This sounds like a domestic disturbance, and not my business. Should I recommend she call Continuum and let it go?**

**A:** Recommend the EAP to the spouse, but inform your boss and HR advisor about the call. Together decide how to proceed with regard to discussing the matter with your employee. This sort of phone call is rare, but it's serious. Many employers have received similar phone calls from family members reporting domestic incidents.

Be calm, but proceed as if the report is true. In other words, you're responding responsibly out of an abundance of caution, because domestic disputes that become violent can spill into the workplace, placing all employees at risk. Always team with your boss and HR advisors to determine next steps with incidents of this nature. Don't go it alone. Continuum EAP can also help consult on this matter.



**I think I am a good role model for my employees because I am dedicated to the company, a good listener, a team-builder, and a problem solver. Does this cover the bases or is there more to being a good role model? Is there a checklist for self-evaluation?**

**A:** Being a role model is leading by example. If you adopt this view of your role, it encompasses nearly everything employees can see you do or hear you say.

There's no checklist to perfection. Employees reflect on nearly everything you do, and all the implications for them. This is a natural process. If you don't take vacations, employees will be self-conscious taking vacations. If you come in late, employees notice it. Some may feel more freedom to come in late, too, or not worry so much about it. This dynamic can be applied to hundreds of matters.

Regarding your role in leading by example, most behaviors fall under these headings:

1. How you prioritize your work and where you put your focus.
2. Your attitude, demeanor and communication style.
3. Take care of yourself, work-life balance, dress, exercise, use of leave, and work hours.
4. Dedication to employer and loyalty to organization.
5. How you treat and interact with others, vulnerability and openness, and how you show appreciation.



**Can I refer an employee to Continuum to help him or her deal with boredom? One of my best workers expressed loss of interest in the work and labeled it boredom. Is this something the EAP can help address?**

**A:** Work with your employee to examine how the job can be structured in a way that rekindles interest. If you don't see an immediate rally, suggest help from a Continuum EAP consultant. Your employee's boredom could be linked to depression. Depression costs business and industry about \$44 billion a year, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

There are other symptoms of depression visible to others in the workplace. Do you see any? They include withdrawing from the team, isolating oneself, being indifferent, putting things off, missing deadlines, seeming absent-minded, procrastinating, being late to work, and more.

All are quantifiable performance measures. Your employee may not go to the EAP, so be prepared down the road to consider a formal referral as needed. Note that the problem of boredom is a good example of how something that appears minor could be a symptom of a serious condition.