

Is it appropriate for a supervisor to raise mental health issues with employees, such as pointing out that an employee “looks stressed out”? This might prompt employees to consider using their EAP.



A: Although it is not uncommon for a manager to use phrases such as “you look a little stressed out,” those might be misinterpreted by your employee. So, why not consider a different question with a business purpose, such as “you appear rushed and are having trouble with your work. Is there something I can do to help? Is everything all right?” This can lead the

employee to mention something personal, in which case you can respond by recommending Continuum EAP as a resource. Mental health in the workplace has received much attention in business news recently. Continue to focus on performance issues that don’t resolve. You will ultimately refer employees with personal problems earlier and more often.



I have always struggled with being assertive. As a new supervisor, I can imagine some problems this might cause.

A: Supervisors who struggle with assertiveness often fear saying no. Rather than state unequivocally to their employees that something won’t happen or can’t happen, and risk disappointment or anger, they may give the impression that there is hope or that they will “look into it.” Whether it is about a pay raise or some other question, they give employees the expectation

of an affirmative outcome. For the supervisor, the goal at the time is avoiding anger or conflict with workers. Their strategy is to “wait and see” with a middle-of-the-road approach. Later, when the thing hoped for does not materialize, anger and accusations of broken promises occur. Trust is lost among staff. Unassertive supervisors often

know they are setting themselves up for these conflicts, but the need to avoid conflict in the moment overrides their better judgment at the time. If you struggle with this level of assertiveness, contact Continuum EAP to speak with a professional about tips and tools to use to help you be a more effective supervisor.



Over the years, I have noticed that the most difficult and troubled employees also offer the most resistance to a performance referral to the EAP. Why is it important for the employee seek help from our EAP and not an alternative source of help?

A: Continuum EAP plays a key role in reducing risk to organizations regarding formal referrals. It is not unusual for difficult employees to resist a referral and offer their own “solution” at a corrective interview. However, serious risks may continue without EAP involvement. These risks aren’t dispelled even if the employee goes to the same source of help the EAP would have recommended. Follow-up allows your EAP to gauge progress or lack thereof, identify

waning motivation to continue in treatment, re-motivate the worker to cooperate with the provider’s recommendations, identify additional help, or monitor post-treatment recommendations crucial to success. Imagine an employee with an intermittent explosive disorder, who is prone to violence, agreeing to get help but not going through your EAP. Accepting help is a good thing in such a case, but the risk mentioned above certainly remains.



My employee made a group of coworkers aware of communication problems that she was having with her husband. Another employee gave her the name and phone number of a marriage counselor. I was a little uncomfortable with this process. Should I have discouraged this exchange and recommended Continuum EAP instead?

A: It is not unusual for employees to recommend resources to each other for dealing with problems, but Continuum EAP would have been a better recommendation. Starting with an assessment from an EAP professional can help determine the precise nature of the problem that the employee is experiencing. Imagine a broad spectrum of issues that might exist in any situation similar to this one. Is this simply about communication problems or

is it something more? Financial problems, drug and alcohol issues, sexual issues, depression or even an extra-marital affair might be characterized in a group setting as “communication problems.” Go ahead and recommend Continuum EAP. It is possible that she did not follow through with her friend’s recommendation. Share with her the nature of what a free and professional assessment can accomplish.