

THE CONTINUUM **EDGE**

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

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I've always considered myself a hardworking, driven supervisor. And I really like what I do. But lately, I'm wondering if I've crossed into burnout territory. How can I tell?

A: There is not much to worry about if being driven feels energizing. You may have tiring days or even feel exhausted, but if you still find work meaningful and rest restores you, then congratulations. You aren't immune to burnout, however, which is a recognized occupational hazard. Burnout feels depleting to the extent that your effort no longer produces a sense of accomplishment or renewal. You don't experience feeling rejuvenated by sleep or being off work for a couple of days. And you wouldn't wake up ready to take on the day, those positive feelings would be increasingly replaced by dread.

As a manager, you are wise to track burnout. Recent studies show 71% of middle managers report burnout, the highest of any group. (*See [high5test.com/leadership-burnout-statistics](https://www.high5test.com/leadership-burnout-statistics).*) Burnout is treatable, and Continuum EAP is the perfect source for help. Even if you aren't there yet, check in with them to learn more and gain preventive knowledge.



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I have a tough referral coming up — an employee with a history of anger issues, and I'm a little afraid of how he'll react. I'm talking to the EAP first because I want to handle this the right way. Does this show my inexperience, or is this a good idea for any supervisor?

A: It's a good call. The underlying principle is this: A supervisor who appears confident and supportive is less likely to trigger a defensive reaction than one who seems uncertain or apologetic, especially in a difficult case involving an employee prone to anger or potential workplace violence. Connecting with Continuum

EAP before the meeting is a solid plan. Describe the situation in detail — the employee's history, your concerns, and what you fear might happen — and ask for guidance on framing the referral. This consultation is confidential and does not require the employee's involvement. EAPs exist as consultative resources for situations like this.

Going in with a plan changes how you show up. Employees notice hesitation, and uncertainty can be interpreted as suspicion or accusation, increasing tension. Although there is no history of violence, consider EAP and Human Resources guidance on safety precautions, who should attend, and how to structure the meeting.

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I feel like I spend half my day managing communication — email, Slack, texts, calls — instead of getting any work done. Is there a better app out there? I'm not alone with this complaint. I also think it's getting worse, and I fear it will be a health issue some day. What's the answer?

A: For many people, the fix is not a new tool but fewer tools. Start by examining all the channels you're using on a quiet day of work. Notice how many platforms you check daily and see if you can consolidate any. Set specific check-in times for email and chat instead of reacting to every “ding.” Be honest; do you like checking email and using this distraction as a way of taking a break? If so, still experiment with batching because it reduces fragmented attention and lowers stress.

Turn off nonessential alerts; you're unlikely to miss what matters. Match the medium to the message. Save time by deciding whether something requires a meeting, a thread, a call, or nothing at all. Ruthlessly declutter your digital life by unsubscribing and unfollowing. Protect your after-hours boundaries by deciding when you're reachable and let everyone know. *Here's a biggie:* Use one inbox and one to-do list. It means fewer places for things to fall through the cracks.



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One of my employees seems distracted and on edge lately, and I found out from others it's because her child is being bullied at school. Is this something I should be involved in?

A: Do not involve yourself directly. Many problems, even this one, can be multifaceted and involve issues you cannot examine or exclude. The bullying concern may be real, or it may be a distraction from performance issues unrelated to the presenting problem. This is another example of avoiding “armchair diagnostic” thinking. Employee assistance professionals often assess employees with one apparent problem affecting job performance only to discover a more serious underlying issue no one considered. This is the hazard of accepting first- or secondhand reports and explanations for performance decline. *Proceed as follows:* Document what you can measure or clearly articulate in objective terms. This might include distractions, missed deadlines or frequent absences. You can be compassionate while responding as you would with any personal stressor affecting performance. Mention that Continuum EAP is available and confidential. Recommend she seek support.



If issues continue, work with HR to sort out next steps.