

THE CONTINUUM **EDGE**

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS



- **One of my employees has become visibly frustrated and dismissive lately. I find it disrespectful, and it's starting to affect how I interact with him. How do I handle this professionally?**

A: Most supervisors find it difficult to remain objective when they feel disrespected because dismissive behavior feels like a personal attack on their authority. However, correcting and helping employees with attitude problems requires a strategic approach. As a first step, hold a calm conversation focused on observable behavior. Ask what the behaviors mean — for example, interrupting, eye-rolling, dismissive body language, failure to acknowledge

directives, sarcastic or hostile responses, refusal to engage in routine communication, or making disrespectful comments in front of co-workers. These are behaviors you can observe and document. The key here is to discuss his behaviors not his attitude. An “attitude” is nearly impossible to quantify, but behaviors can give you more information about what is troubling this worker. Frustration rarely appears without cause, and a conversation focused

solely on observable behavior can often help reveal something that is addressable.



My employee's performance has slipped, but I am hesitant to refer her to the EAP. She seems emotionally fragile. She's mentioned past trauma and gets tearful easily. My fear is of her reaction, whether she'll treat it as a crisis or get emotionally triggered.

A: The instinct to protect a vulnerable employee is genuinely compassionate, but this is one of the most potentially costly missteps a supervisor can take. You're hoping she doesn't have worsening problems, but waiting is much more likely to contribute to a longer, deeper slide into unhealth. Your hesitation is in effect a clinical judgment you aren't qualified to make.

Think about this for a moment. Deciding that an employee is “too fragile” for the EAP assumes that she won't go, or the shock of the referral will cause a mental health crisis. Continuum EAP exists precisely for employees carrying heavy emotional burdens. Counselors are trained to meet people exactly where they are, including those with trauma histories, emotional sensitivity and internal crises. Continued inaction — however well-intentioned — leaves a struggling employee without professional support while performance problems quietly compound.

DO THIS: Contact Continuum EAP yourself first, describe your concerns, and let them help guide your approach.



- **My employee constantly complains about being overloaded, but others with the same workload aren't struggling. How do I tell whether this is a real problem or an attitude issue?**



A: As a rule, take complaints seriously from employees, then examine them objectively. Compare the employee's workload with peers — not just the number of assignments, but task type, turnaround times, error rates and work product quality. If the numbers align and co-workers are managing, the problem may be less about workload and more about attitude, skill gaps, work habits or personal stressors. Next, meet privately with the employee,

share what you found, and ask for a response. They may offer context that reframes the complaint or reveals something personal affecting performance. Some employees carry hidden burdens — stress, unclear expectations or feeling undervalued — that surface as workload complaints. If you determine no work modifications are needed, and later performance remains below standard, address it directly.



I've referred many employees to Continuum EAP over the years, but lately I've been feeling burned out, disengaged, and low on energy. I know supervisors can use the EAP, and I don't fear counseling, but what's keeping me from making the call?

A: You are demonstrating good self-awareness recognizing the resistance without fully identifying its source. Supervisors have a unique role in organizations, and some of your resistance is linked to dynamics of your position.

- Firstly, supervisors often unconsciously adopt the identity of helper and protector rather than someone who needs help. Calling the EAP means stepping outside that role. That's a little uncomfortable.
- Secondly, there's often a subtle belief that your problems aren't "serious enough" to warrant professional attention or that you need to show strength to your subordinates, and visiting Continuum EAP may cause you to feel less strong.
- Thirdly, making the call means acknowledging something is wrong, and that acknowledgment, however private, can feel like a loss of control.

And lastly, recognize these barriers for what they are: normal human resistance to change, not reasons to wait.



Continuum EAP is confidential, judgment-free and designed for what's affecting you.