

Frontline Supervisor



■ **My employee shows up late to work, and I am about to write a corrective letter as a first-level warning. What negative effects of tardiness can I insert into this documentation? And how are supervisors affected if they ignore tardiness?**

Effects of tardiness include resentment from coworkers, which can result in conflicts. This in turn affects productivity. Morale also suffers. Being chronically late has ripple effects for almost any part of the organization's operation, including customer service. Consider the impact on your team's productivity and professionalism. Chronic tardiness is the type of problem that frustrated employees often end-run to the next level of management to lodge a complaint. You want to avoid management's coming to you, and instead be proactive with this problem. Failure to do so will earn you a reputation for playing favorites, being unfair, and being a pushover. If employees believe you don't care about tardiness, they may begin to ignore other rules and standards of excellence, and be less concerned about their productivity.

■ **What is the most important consideration to keep in mind when meeting with an employee to correct behavior or performance so the employee is cooperative, appreciative, and motivated to change?**

The manner in which you speak to employees when confronting them about their performance plays a big role in facilitating cooperation and correcting their problems. Speaking down to the employee will elicit one type of response. Speaking "up" to the employee will elicit another. So approach any problem as though both you and the employee have a stake in its resolution, and as though it is a problem you mutually desire to resolve. This does not mean you as a supervisor will resolve it. It is still the employee's responsibility to correct noncompliant performance. However, this "mutual desire approach" aids cooperation, motivation, and focus. And it decreases defensiveness. This approach does not minimize the importance or severity of the problem. Share with employees that the EAP is a resource to help them find a solution. Obtaining a signed release of consent from the employee, when there is a formal referral, is a way to facilitate appropriate communication between the EAP and supervisor.

■ **Employees on my team are clearly impacted by national issues. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the highlight on race and police relations are consuming the interests of many of my employees. As a supervisor it's hard**

Supervisors are human beings with their own set of values and opinions. As a leader you may want to tread lightly with expressing your opinions. However, when issues involving ethics, integrity, and fair treatment are elevated to national conversations you want to assure your team that you understand the impact these issues may have on them and their families. Demonstrate support for their emotions and needs. You set the tone for a respectful and safe work environment. Acknowledge the community tension and the concerns your employees articulate. Express your own commitment to fairness and equity. Reassure your team that safety is the priority when it comes to making decisions about COVID-19. Don't hesitate to ask how you can support them. Based on what you're hearing determine whether it may be appropriate

to determine what my role should be. Is it appropriate to address these issues?

to facilitate conversations about anxiety related to being at work when the virus has not been contained as well as equity. The topic of race is more challenging, but no less important. When deciding the best way to tackle it consider your race, and that of your team, as well as your skills as a facilitator. Based upon relationships in your workgroup and previous handling of controversial topics, consider how your comments may be perceived. Good intentions don't guarantee positive outcomes. Consult with the Arlington EAP or HR for guidance.

I have been referred to the EAP for bullying because I yell at my employees. Coach Vince Lombardi yelled at his football players, and so do drill sergeants. Even Steve Jobs of Apple, Inc., was known to yell at workers. And there are more examples — so what gives?

While we know the public image of these leaders, we don't know the private toll their behavior may have had on their employees. You can make millions leading a football team, and the more you yell, the more you *might* be loved and paid — *if you're successful*. But context, tradition, and work culture are everything. Typically, employees in these big-mission and charismatically led organizations don't feel subjected to a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment, at least not in large group meetings. With respect to you as a manager, yelling affects others adversely, demeaning people and humiliating them. When you yell, employees don't hear you more clearly and more deeply. Fear and anxiety cause them to comprehend less of what you are trying to communicate. Your workers won't engage with the organization more effectively if you scream. They will only tune out. You're yelling because you want to move your employees to action. There are many ways to inspire your employees that will leave you feeling more satisfied about your position, and the EAP can show you how.

I referred my employee to the EAP. He had a great experience, but last week told everyone in the lunchroom about it. He did not mention that he was referred by me. I kept silent to maintain confidentiality. It was awkward. Some saw my silence as disapproving. Any thoughts?

You did the right thing by not involving yourself in the public conversation about his EAP participation. Doing so may have turned the discussion toward you and the supervisor referral of your employee. The positive testimonial offered by your employee will not be diminished by your lack of commenting on the program. Although you did not publicly praise the worker for his participation, you can still encourage EAP attendance at any time through a memo to all staff or other communication channel. Doing so periodically is advised, along with mentioning the free and confidential nature of the program. EAPs rely upon word-of-mouth promotion to help keep their utilization rates high, so what occurred was a positive thing.

June marks several important observances. Men's Health Month is a time to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and encourage early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys. Encourage your loved ones to seek regular medical advice and early treatment for disease and injury.

June is also **Pride month**, an opportunity to celebrate diversity as well as peacefully protest and raise political awareness of current issues facing the LGBTQIA community.

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