

Frontline Supervisor

ESPȲR

(800) 869-0276

■ **The EAP phoned to say my employee was a self-referral but wanted to sign a release so I could learn of his participation. Nothing else was permitted. I am glad he self-referred because I was considering a formal referral for attendance issues. Should I still make one?**

You could still make a formal supervisor referral, but you can also wait to see if the attendance issues clear up. Consider letting the EAP know about attendance issues, however. The release signed by your employee is obviously limited, so do not expect follow-up reports, etc. Note that the release may be rescinded at any time, leaving the EAP without the ability to communicate with you. It will not be able to acknowledge follow-through with recommendations or share status of participation. Still, none of this will interfere with your ability to manage performance. If attendance issues continue, decide whether to initiate a formal supervisor referral, in which you can request more structured communication (but not clinical information) or take corrective action, as you and your advisers deem appropriate. Remember, when making a formal referral be sure to follow your organization's referral policy and consult with your human resources or employee relations advisor as needed.

■ **I read that rude behavior at work is getting worse. Is this overblown? Haven't employees always shown a bit of rudeness periodically? What can supervisors do, and is there a role for the EAP helping overcome this sort of problem?**

Rude behavior is incivility at work, a topic that has received increased attention because surveys show it has grown worse. Approximately twice as many employees complain about rudeness today than they did 20 years ago. One poll showed that nearly half of employees intentionally decreased their work effort in response to rudeness, intentionally decreased time spent at work, intentionally decreased quality of work, lost time worrying about and stewing over incidents, avoided the rude person, and admitted declines in commitment to the organization. Twenty-five percent said they took out their frustrations on customers! Obviously, rudeness takes a toll on the bottom line. A positive workplace that reduces rudeness is not an accident. A strategic approach that includes education, awareness, and proactive and supportive policies, like those that address other organizational risks, is worth considering. And, of course, EAP referral when needed is appropriate. Learn more: <https://hbr.org/2013/01/the-price-of-incivility>.

■ **I think of the EAP as a productivity program rather than a counseling service, and I convey this**

Your view of EAP is consistent with the business rationale for such programs and with that usually mentioned in policies that establish them. Such a viewpoint may increase the number of employees seen for personal problems, especially among troubled workers, some of whom

viewpoint to employees. It distinguishes the program from a mental health service, which most people are familiar with. Can this view reduce stigma?

pose greater risk to the organization. Direct appeal to reduce the stigma of seeking help for personal problems, however, is also part of the solution to maximize utilization and impact. So a balance of viewpoints is ideal. If employees only view the EAP as a “counseling office” for “personal problems,” the stigma of seeking help can reduce motivation to participate. However, if the added focus on productivity improvement and work quality is well-promoted, these factors will work synergistically for the benefit of all.

■ **I recently stopped paying attention to my phone in meetings with employees, after one of them called me on the carpet for checking it while in meetings. It’s a bad habit, I know! I actually sense the anxiety of not checking it. I’m amazed. Can the EAP help?**

Behavior you are describing is referred to as “boss phone snubbing” in one research study, and it is also known as “phubbing” (phone + snubbing). Anyone can be guilty of this off-putting behavior and earn the ire of meeting participants, but when bosses do it, their status and authority, and the power of being a role model others want to admire, can have an especially negative impact on subordinates. Research on this topic discovered that supervisors who cannot resist looking repeatedly at their smartphones while meeting with employees risk losing their employees’ trust. The productivity cost is loss of engagement. Smartphone addiction is not a recognized disorder, at least not yet, but the problem can create distress. Consider whether your use of a smartphone causes problems but, despite your best efforts, you can’t stop. If that is true, contact the EAP. Check out this less-than-scientific, but humorous quiz on smartphone addiction: <http://www.quizony.com> (search “smartphone”). It is at least a good awareness builder. Also, see the study: www.baylor.edu (search “boss phone snub”).

■ **April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Do have an educational tip or short story on alcohol misuse that I can put on our community bulletin board that will help employees think about their use of alcohol? I think every little bit of information helps, and that employees can always learn something new that will lead them consider getting help if they have a problem.**

Here is a self-diagnostic one question quiz from the alcoholism recovery community that most people have not heard. See if it fools you or helps you understand more about how employees “compare out of the illness” and attempt to discover how their unique definition of alcohol misuse does not include themselves: *One-Question Quiz--In honor of Alcohol Awareness Month, try this one-question quiz: “Have you ever seriously wondered whether you could have an alcohol problem?” The emphasis is on the word “seriously.” Whether your answer is yes or no, make an appointment for a professional assessment. Why? Those without any symptoms of alcoholism never seriously consider this question! If are serious and concerned enough to wonder about a problem, then that is diagnostic enough!* Millions of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts have gathered their wisdom over the years in books, resources, self-help groups, and even short quizzes to help those with addictions diagnose themselves. This is one of those quizzes.

To refer an employee to the EAP, or to consult about a supervisory or organizational issue, please call **(800) 869-0276**. To view an on-line supervisory training about the EAP, please visit our web site at www.espyr.com and log in using our password: **interioreap**