

I'm concerned about an employee who seems very fatigued. I read that fatigue is important to monitor and could be the result from too much work and not separating work and home life. What is my role in helping an employee who may be fatigued?

First, you should not try to diagnose employees or refer employees for services because you think you have identified a medical condition. Fatigue can be the result of a number of things including health conditions, medications, sleep disorders and even depression. When an employee looks tired, ask them how they feel and acknowledge you are concerned they appear fatigued. Suggest options depending on their response i.e., see their doctor, utilize EAP as a self-referral or support ways to seek work-life balance if possible.

At times I find myself discussing employee's personal issues with them and I know this is not the best approach. I find myself hesitant to refer them to the EAP for fear that word might get out and damage their careers. Do you have any suggestions for me?

Yes, when it comes to helping employees with their personal problems whom you also supervise can create an important dynamic worth understanding. This is a "dual relationship" conflict. Playing both roles of manager and counselor interferes with the employees' ability to share complete information that is potentially critical to resolving their problem. Likewise, you may also learn information that makes it difficult to remain objective as their manager. A better approach is to encourage your employees to phone the EAP and make their own decision. The confidentiality rules/policies associated with EAP's are the strictest of their kind. If you have further questions about confidentiality, talk with your EAP. You'll discover how truly safe EAPs are for employees to use.

Some of my employees are college students who party on the weekends and sometimes come in late to work. I have been lenient because I remember being young once and they do stay late when necessary to get the job done. Is there a problem with the way I'm managing this?

There are risks with your approach. If employees know you are lenient with their time, they are likely to continue with this pattern and allow it to get worse. Other drawbacks with this approach include an inability to plan the workday, to engage with them more effectively, or to enhance your work organization. Also, you will end up accommodating their less-than-satisfactory mental and physical state if they come to work hung over. Although intervening with substance abuse is not your job, a lack of structure will by default, enable an employee using these substances to continue their abuse of the system. If at some point you do need to intervene in a work performance issue having clear and consistent work expectations for all employees will be crucial in managing this fairly and effectively. By enabling this pattern of attendance it increases the risks to your whole organization.