

March 2018

EAPs see self-referred employees for any type of personal problem. If the problem is primarily about the supervisor, will the EAP urge the employee to sign a release so the other side of the story can be obtained from the supervisor?

Do employees self-refer to EAPs for help with alcoholism, or is this the type of problem that will ultimately require a formal referral?

I think supervisors who share information about their lives, personal foibles, and the real problems they face at home and at work are less mysterious. Does this help elicit more cooperation from troubled workers and motivate them to feel closer and perform better?

EAPs work with the information provided by employees to guide them toward a workable solution. Complaints about supervisors are common, but EAPs do not need “the other side of the story” from the supervisor to help employees navigate their way to a better relationship. If such information is needed, the employee can supply it or the EAP can request it.

You may feel uncomfortable imagining your employees’ at the EAP office talking about you; please understand that EAPs are hosted by organizations. This means EAPs seek healthful and productive resolutions that benefit employees in their roles as workers without dismissing the priority of the organization or undermining your role or position as supervisor.

Self-referrals do occur, most frequently as the result from drinking-related incidents, such as a DUI, the fear of divorce, or a “close call”. Like other illnesses with behavioral aspects to them, enabling and denial make self-diagnosis and referral difficult. Sometimes a formal referral will be necessary. At times an alcoholic will seek help for their “drinking problem,” in the stated situations; in part, as an attempt to regain control over their drinking. They often have ruled out the possibility of alcoholism based on their own unique definition which excludes them. This is where expertise is crucial in the assessment process. The EA professional will help the employee understand the nature of what they are dealing with, encouraging them to take the important next step(s) on their journey to recovery.

No, oversharing personal information does not always elicit cooperation and improve employee performance. While demonstrating vulnerability tends to improve relationships in personal lives; it can undermine a supervisory role especially in situations where correcting worker performance is concerned. The reasons are not mysterious. The natural differences in status that exist between workers and those who supervise them ensures productivity and workflow. Self-disclosure may cause employees to view you as a friend, rather than a boss. This shift in perspective could undermine your authority making it difficult to express concerns, correct issues, guide employees, judge performance and provide rewards.