

January 2019

In the 23 years that I have been a supervisor, I have never seen an employee with depression. Aren't they supposed to look sad, dejected, down in the dumps? I've read there are millions of adults with depression. So what am I missing?

About 17 million adults nationwide suffer with major depression; and often do not appear sad, weepy, or slumped at a desk. More typically, those with major depression experience feelings of emptiness that don't go away. They may exhibit extreme irritability over seemingly minor things, suffer with anxiety, restlessness, or anger management issues, or may simply not want to participate in activities others leap to enjoy. They may focus on past unsettling events, things that have gone wrong, and their failures. The good news is that major depression is highly treatable. The medical community has worked hard to help the general public understand that depression is not something people can snap out of with encouragement from friends to cheer up. *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

An employee took her life a few weeks ago. Everyone was in total shock. There was no warning, yet many of us believe some clue could have been missed. The EAP was great, met with us, and offered guidance. Is there anything left for me to do now?

The death of a coworker is always a shock, and it's worse when it is unexpected. "Grief leadership" describes the role of anyone who leads with organizing, communicating, memorializing the employee, and interacting with the family. Every employee is different in how he or she will manage grief, and none of it is predictable. Be direct, and let employees know you recognize this fact, and encourage them to use the EAP, at any time. Listen for complaints of sleeplessness, diminished appetite, and intrusive thoughts about the deceased. Allow some freedom for employees to gather and process the deceased when you see these groups spontaneously appear. No matter what, you are a role model to your employees. What you do and say will be remembered and will influence how they decide to cope with the loss.

I know about emotional intelligence, and its importance in workplace communication and in maintaining productive relationships, but how do I know if I have issues or gaps in this soft skill? Is there a test? Can the EAP help improve my EI?

There are many resources online that discuss emotional intelligence, test it, and promote various resources for improving it. A simple quiz and discussion about emotional intelligence for supervisors is found at the resource links below. Use the information to test your emotional intelligence and learn how to improve it. Your desire to know more about your emotional intelligence shows your appreciation for self-awareness. Self-awareness is the most important skill to consider when examining emotional intelligence. If your EQ test points to areas where you think you need help, bring this information to the EAP for a discussion.

Sources: www.hbr.org/2015/06/quiz-yourself-do-you-lead-with-emotional-intelligence. You will find a good discussion about how supervisors can improve emotional intelligence at <https://www.workforce.com/2018/12/07/leaders-improve-emotional-intelligence>.