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I am a new supervisor. I have never had training, and I can tell that this new position will be me learning everything the hard way. I bought a few books and I found some courses online, but what mistakes will I most likely make?

Most managers learn by doing and by the mistakes they make. But there are important things to remember: 1) Keep employees informed, let them know what the intentions are for the work unit, and do what you say you are going to do; 2) Keep information flowing. Workplace communication is the number one complaint of employees and managers alike. You can't overstate its importance; 3) Put more time into knowing and engaging with your employees than remaining busy in your office; 4) Use your expertise to solve group problems, not to show how much you know. Develop your employees as the experts; 5) Don't seek acceptance by becoming friends with employees but by having effective workplace relationships; 6) Learn the art of feedback and timely praise and how to make it meaningful, and create change with it; and 7) Consult with mentors on any of the above, and use the EAP when the going gets tough.

Is it helpful for supervisors to discuss their personal problems with subordinates as a way of appearing more "human" and building rapport? The idea seems sound because showing oneself to be vulnerable allows employees to feel more at ease, right?

Management and supervisory skill development authors have debated the merits of supervisors sharing personal information with subordinates, and in particular, information related to personal problems or shortcomings. Employees may feel more at ease with such supervisors, but research does not show this translates to increased productivity. In fact, participating in this type of relationship can undermine the employment dynamic, which naturally includes a healthy sense of urgency to focus on one's essential job functions with due regard to the manager to whom one is accountable. When supervisors have personal problems, the best source of support and focused help is, of course, the EAP. Build rapport with employees by identifying needs, developing their talents, and helping them find meaning in their jobs.  
[www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com) [keywords search: "self-disclosing weaknesses"]

I am referring my employee to the EAP. He is very cooperative and anxious to see the EA professional. I am impressed that he is so open about his problems with cocaine. With such motivation, should I still send documentation about his performance issues?

Yes, pass along information related to job performance to the EAP. Your employee should also possess the same information. Also, phone the EAP to discuss the referral, because there are typically nuances associated with any troubled employee's communication and relationship style that are easier to understand when discussed. Note that employees with illicit drug addiction problems survive by lying and manipulation. It is part of the lifestyle. Your employee may be sincere; however, addicts are fearful of giving up drug use, and statements or behaviors that appear sincere are frequently deceptions. Your employee may only be planning the next step of evading treatment. All of this is quite normal, and the addiction treatment community is aware of these behaviors. Treatment can work, even for the most deceptive addict, because a combination of unabated real-life consequences and accurate information about addiction treatment and recovery combine to produce an individual truly dedicated to recovery and sobriety.