



COUNSELORS & CONSULTANTS

# ERC

# FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

August 2020

***Many employees are now working remotely. Is it appropriate to offer tips and guidance on being productive at home, even if those ideas involve me telling the worker how to engage with family members to keep them from undermining productivity?***

Supervising remote workers may have suddenly become more commonplace throughout the world, but it is nothing new. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is unique in each circumstance, so the relationship and quality of communication established with your employee should guide your discussions and the degree to which you offer directive guidance in dealing with work problems at home that may be attributed to family members. The last thing you should do is offer guidance or tips that pit the worker against his or her family. This is one battle you won't win. When you sense family members are non-supportive or distracting to productivity, consider recommending ERC. Resist invitations to process the employee's frustrations and conflicts with family members. But general tips about workflow, meeting objectives, managing time, getting things done, and overcoming distractions are all fair-game topics for supervisors.

***Is it okay for supervisors to discuss techniques for feeling better when employees are having a bad day, or offer employees tips on coping with stress? What about sadness over a relationship breakup? Sometimes referring them to the EAP does not feel like the right response.***

Conversations with employees may broach personal challenges faced at work and at home, relationships issues, or internal personal struggles. Offering practical tips for coping with stress that you have personally found useful, or demonstrating empathy along with suggesting stress-relieving ideas, does not interfere with your role as a manager or cross boundaries that would impede your employee seeking help with a personal problem at ERC. Suggesting employees take a break, calm down, look at things a different way, or check out a book you have found valuable can be a helpful response. Along with your response or resources you can still recommend they seek help through the EAP. This will give the employee additional options if a more complex issue arises and can also help curb ongoing advising on problems. Never hesitate to contact ERC with a question about your role and what's appropriate, or for guidance on what to say or do next with an employee's concern.

***Can I refer an employee to the EAP for being too much of a perfectionist? He turns projects in late. I will admit they are of high quality, and in fact are better than most, but they are not worth the delays. He calls himself a perfectionist, but I think it's an excuse.***

Often times, the main motivation behind perfectionism is avoiding criticism. Perfectionist employees may spend inordinate amounts of time tweaking the last 10% of a project, thus causing delays in delivery. Of course, not all employees are motivated by the same goals, so avoid diagnosing them yourself. In practical terms, there are no true perfectionists who live up to their view of what they would like to achieve. Telling your employee that "done is better than perfect" may allow the worker to make the necessary behavioral shift. If not, you may consider referring your employee to ERC based upon performance issues, such as not meeting deadlines, not perfectionism. The EAP counselor will help your employee work through the issues that may be contributing to performance issues, such as fear of criticism or fear of vulnerability in work and personal relationships.