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How can supervisors play a role in helping employees not bring their personal problems to work? The need to separate their home life from their work life so productivity is not affected?

The EAP adage that employees do not leave their problems at the front door when they come to work is a rallying cry for the growth of EAPs. Another part of this reality is that employees must be appropriately confronted when personal problems interfere with their productivity, attendance, quality of work, and attitude. No supervisor can prevent an employee from bringing his or her personal problems to work. However, supervisors can play a powerful role in helping employees seek help earlier, before interference occurs. This is what drives EAP utilization: The promotion of the EAP to supervisors is crucial, allowing these managers to feel empowered to confront employees' performance issues and confident that the EAP is a viable resource. Avoiding any delay in supervisor referrals is also key to this strategy.

I don't hesitate to refer employees to the EAP; however, I have supervisor peers who have never made an EAP referral. They are fully supportive of the EAP — they simply claim that they do not need it yet. How is this possible?

An important shift in thinking for supervisors to make when a company is installing an EAP is embracing the idea of referring an employee to the EAP who is struggling with job performance or attendance issues. Most often they may show no visible signs of personal struggles or stressors and they are usually unknown to the employer; however, these personal challenges can be negatively affecting their work. Training supervisors on when and how to refer an employee to the EAP and becoming a champion of the EAP can benefit both the employee and the company. The EAP can help your employees get back to their peak performance by helping them manage stressors they may be experiencing outside of work.

I have a couple of employees who are bullying and harassing another worker on Facebook. I am not sure I can do anything about this problem because it is obviously occurring outside of work. Are my hands tied? It's causing tension on the job, but the employees' quality of work remains unaffected.

Speak to your human resources leader regarding your responsibility to manage or intervene in matters of this type. Rely on your organization for guidance and support when you are unsure of your role in any matter involving misconduct. Regardless, when the behavior carries over to the workplace, your intervention is usually appropriate. The EAP can also play a role in these matters and can consult with you, on how its services can best be used.