

What to Say When You Refer to the EAP

It's not a supervisor's job to provide counseling to employees who are experiencing personal problems outside of work. A supervisor's job is to ensure performance from his or her employees. Crossing the fine line between being supportive and becoming the counselor would create a significant conflict of roles.

Everyone is better served when the employee gets professional help through the employee assistance program (EAP).

If an employee asks for advice

You might say:

"Recognizing that you are having a problem is an important first step in fixing it. I am flattered that you would ask for my help/advice. In situations like this I always recommend the employee assistance program. It's free and it's confidential. It has helped a lot of people. An EAP coach can offer real solutions to any personal issue, whenever and wherever you want—by phone, on the Web or in person."

If performance is an issue

When job performance becomes a concern that must be addressed by the supervisor or manager, the best approach is to focus only on job performance and offer help through the EAP.

You might say:

"Sometimes job problems like these are the result of things going on outside the workplace. It may not be true in your case, and it's really none of my business. However, because it is true sometimes, the company does have an employee assistance program. It's free and it's confidential. It has helped a lot of people. I urge you to contact the EAP—it's available whenever and wherever you want—by phone, on the Web or in person. Because your contributions to your work, your family and your community are important, don't let anything get in the way."

At this point, the employee may ask what action will occur if he does not contact the EAP. Plan your response by consulting, in advance of the employee meeting, with your human resources department on company specific policy on the progressive disciplinary process.

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