



EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

May 2024



DEER OAKS PRESENTS

Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

Advanced Coaching Skills for Leaders

Date: Monday, July 29, 2024

Time: 1:00 PM-2:00 PM CST

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Table of Contents

Attitudinal Awareness • P. 2

Leading with Laughter • P. 3

Ask Your EAP! • P. 4

ATTITUDINAL AWARENESS

Often, the biggest barrier to workplace accessibility is not architectural in nature, but attitudinal. Employees may have misconceptions about people with disabilities and the work they can do.

Examples of such attitudinal barriers include:

- **Inferiority**—The employee is seen as a "second-class citizen."
- **Pity**—People feel sorry for the employee and are patronizing as a result.
- **Hero worship**—People consider a person with a disability living independently to be "special."
- **Ignorance**—The employee is dismissed as incapable because of their disability.
- **Multi-sensory affect**—People assume that the employee's disability affects their other senses.
- **Stereotypes**—People make both positive and negative generalizations about disabilities.
- **Backlash**—People believe the employee is being given an unfair advantage because of his or her disability.
- **Denial**—People may not believe that hidden disabilities are legitimate and therefore do not require accommodations.
- **Fear**—People are afraid they will offend an employee with a disability by doing or saying the wrong thing and, as a result, will avoid the employee.

Employers can help break down attitudinal barriers in the workplace by engaging employees in discussions about disability and providing training to increase employees' perspectives and understanding. Often, local disability service providers offer disability etiquette education and training.



Additional resources include the Job Accommodation Network's "Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFh9zdmC5jE>), an online training with handouts that can be used for individual or group training, and the Campaign for Disability Employment's public service announcement (PSA) toolkits (<https://www.youtube.com/user/thewhatcanyoudo>).

For more information, visit the Working Together page (<https://askearn.org/page/disability-etiquette>) or take the Working Together online training course (<https://askearn.org/learning-center/course/working-together>). The Creating Inclusive Workplaces page (<https://askearn.org/page/creating-inclusive-workplaces>) offers additional resources.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN). (n.d.). Attitudinal awareness. Retrieved November 14, 2023, from <https://askearn.org>

LEADING WITH LAUGHTER

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."

—Victor Borge

WHY CHOOSE LAUGHTER?

In this brave new world, it has become harder than ever to foster creativity, connection, and wellbeing among work colleagues. However, research has shown that laughter is an untapped force that leaders can use to build genuine human connection and wellbeing among coworkers.

When people laugh, the brain releases a cocktail of chemicals that makes you feel less stressed, slightly euphoric, and more trusting of others. As such, it makes people more primed for connection, more resilient to stress, and more creative and resourceful.

One reason humor is so beneficial is because you cannot experience two emotions. If you are laughing and feeling enjoyment, you cannot be feeling pressured or stressed. Hence, the use of humor to bring levity to challenges and pressure can be hugely beneficial.

BENEFITS FOR YOUR TEAM

The research on laughter in the workplace has revealed significant benefits:¹

- Leaders with a sense of humor are seen as 27 percent more motivating and admirable.
- Employees are 15 percent more engaged with teams led by a humorous leader.
- Such teams are twice as likely to solve a challenge that requires creativity.

Other benefits of laughter include less burnout among employees, higher probabilities of learning, more collaboration among team members, faster recovery from stressful situations, and an increase in overall work effectiveness.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT LAUGHTER IN YOUR LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES

To use it authentically, you need to understand your own humor and that of your team. However, in general, here are some ways you can implement laughter into your leadership:

- **Use self-deprecation.** By being able to laugh at yourself, especially when things go wrong, you set the tone for levity in your team. Being able to have a laugh at yourself signals to others that everything will be okay.



- **Be clever.** If you can't be "ha ha" funny and tell jokes or stories, cleverness actually goes a long way. This could involve simple wordplay, humorous observations, or witty remarks!
- **Facilitate a humorous working environment.** While you may not be a funny person, you can facilitate laughter by allowing appropriate humor to be expressed by members of your team. This could be done by including an appropriate cartoon in a weekly email, allowing members to start meetings with a G-rated joke or story, and allowing the office jester appropriate space to add a bit of levity from time to time.

However, like with any joke, context is important. Ensure you read the room and make sure your attempts at laughter or humor are appropriate. Avoid using sarcasm, as it sends mixed messages, and never "punch down."

Reference

1. McKinsey. (2021, April 15). Laugh more, lead better [Video]. Retrieved January 30, 2024, from <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/laugh-more-lead-better>

Source: Veretis. (Revised 2024 [Ed.]). *Leading with laughter* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).

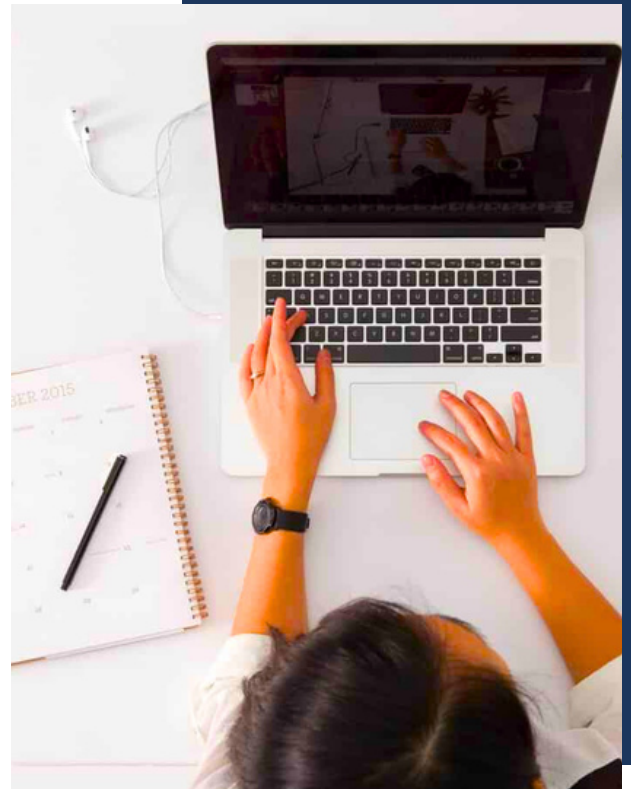
ASK YOUR EAP!

Q. Allegedly, an employee I directed to the EAP a year ago who was treated for a severe cannabis addiction is now drinking. Alcohol abstinence was part of his post-discharge treatment plan. Job performance remains satisfactory, so I have not taken any action. What is the guidance for this scenario?

A. Your primary concerns should remain attendance, behavior, conduct, and the quality of work, but this does not preclude your contacting the EAP to share your concerns. Your confronting the employee would not be proper and would likely be ineffective. Although you do not need a signed consent for the release of confidential information to speak with the EAP, the reverse is not true. The EAP may or may not be aware of the issues you describe, an older release may have expired, or other issues may exist associated with your employee's treatment or the EAP's management of the case. There are obviously a lot of possibilities; however, you can rely on the EAP to make the best decision about how it should proceed. Note that you will likely not have the privilege of learning what the EAP decides. Some supervisors find these unknowns to be frustrating, but the easy answer is to focus on performance. Hence, the advice is to focus on performance, standards, work rules, and guidance from HR as needed.

Q. Will the EAP give me advice on the management of an employee's performance, specifically the type of discipline that would be appropriate, given the worker's temperament, psychiatric issues, or other considerations?

A. The EAP is a resource for the organization's employees and management, but it will not provide guidance on how you should proceed regarding performance management and disciplinary matters specific to an employee. This is beyond the scope of what an employee assistance program does or was designed to do. Turn to your manager or HR advisor regarding this sort of guidance. Supervisors are primarily accountable for the performance and conduct of their employees. Supervisors must exercise leadership and judgment in determining appropriate disciplinary measures based on their knowledge of the situation and organizational policies. Furthermore, HR advisors are professionals who can advise on actions that comply with legal and regulatory requirements, such as labor laws, employment contracts, and union agreements. EAPs cannot comment authoritatively on these matters, and trust in the program would be seriously undermined if any legal issues or considerations were overlooked and the organization faced potential liability as a result.



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