

SPRING 2010

New Q&A Style

# Frontline Supervisor

**MIIA**  
Employee  
Assistance  
Program

**1.800.451.1834**

## Management Consultation

- Employee Performance
- Change Management
- Workplace Trauma
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## Employee Services

- Confidential Counseling
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- Resources & Referrals
  - \* Legal
  - \* Financial
  - \* Child Care
  - \* Elder Care



## In This Issue

- Upholding Drug-Free Workplace Policies
- Tackling the Angry Employee

## Do You Uphold Your Drug-Free Workplace Policies?

**Q. Why would some supervisors ignore a drug-free workplace policy, even after ample training in signs and symptoms? It appears that some people just can't let go of enabling behaviors, especially when it comes to ignoring alcohol on the breath. What explains this continued willingness to enable?**

A. Enabling is the act of protecting an impaired employee from experiencing the harmful consequences of his/her substance use and abuse. A Supervisor may enable his/her employee in these ways: ignoring on-going job performance problems; relieving the employee of stressful work; reassigning the employee to a less demanding position; making excuses for the employee with customers, upper management or other employees. All too often, a Supervisor finds ways to justify not taking necessary action with an employee.

Those reasons may include:

- I socialize with the employee
- It's none of my business
- I'd feel guilty for "ratting" the employee out
- I'd feel guilty if the employee loses his/her income/job
- I'm afraid of retaliation

## How to uphold the Drug-Free Workplace Policy

- Don't attempt to diagnose the cause of the poor performance; encourage employees to get help through the EAP to improve performance
- Annually educate employees about your organization's substance abuse policy
- Address all job performance concerns in timely manner
- Be fair, firm, and consistent with performance expectations
- Let employees know your role as Supervisor requires this intervention
- Respect the employee's confidentiality and dignity when addressing performance concerns
- Involve Human Resources as appropriate

***Not taking necessary action is doing your employees a disservice. Addressing your concerns with the employee may prevent accidents, injuries, or performance problems. The impaired employee, your department, and your organization will benefit from you following the policy to maintain a safe workplace.***

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## Tackling the Angry Employee

**Q.** I have a long-time employee who is chronically difficult to be around. She fumes when others don't meet her expectations and she complains to me that they're not doing their job. She believes she is right all the time and judges others as incompetent who don't agree with her. She sometimes blows up and makes disrespectful and hurtful comments. Her coworkers complain to me that she is so difficult to work with, they prefer to avoid her. Some have even requested to be transferred out of her department because they fear her next outburst. I've been her supervisor for years and have struggled to address this. Any suggestions?



**A.** This employee's anger is interfering with her work performance and the functioning of the workgroup and must be addressed. To hold her accountable to the performance standards, she needs feedback from you to recognize her impact on others. Despite possibly knowing personal reasons that could be causing her anger (i.e. divorce, layoff of a loved one, health issues), don't allow these to be used as explanations. Avoid any discussion of her personal issues; instead, inform her of specific examples of what will no longer be tolerated. Spell out the expected behaviors you need to see and the consequences for not meeting those expectations. Set a timeline to have these met, and schedule follow-up status checks to ensure progress.

***Consult your EAP for more management ideas specific to your circumstances.***

*Your EAP can assist you with managing these, and other, workplace concerns. In addition to our consultation services, on-site trainings are available to your organization. Call us to schedule seminars of your choice. Here are several to keep in mind.*

## Decreasing Danger in the Workplace: Drug and Alcohol Awareness

Addiction among employees is one of the most difficult issues that employers encounter. More money is lost in American industry from untreated addiction than from any other single source. This seminar will provide participants with knowledge about the disease of addiction, signs and symptoms of substance abuse in the workplace, and information about treatment options.

## Top Ten Manager Headaches

Every manager has an employee that requires more time, energy and focus. Managers face employees with negative attitudes, lots of baggage, endless needs, low performance, or those they must terminate. As employee situations escalate, tension (*maybe even a headache*) builds. This seminar provides practical tools, tips and techniques for managing these employees while minimizing their impact on the manager.

## Dealing with Difficult People: Enhancing Your Interpersonal Skills

From time to time we all have to deal with people and/or situations that are challenging. What we want to say, and what we should say, are often two very different things. The challenge is to control our own response and utilize strategies that help to diffuse and resolve the situation. Participants in this seminar will learn and practice specific techniques for dealing with difficult people and situations.