



Q. What are the best ways to help employees feel appreciated and motivated if there is no extra money to improve pay? Unfortunately, I need every employee to pull their weight, even if we don't have one extra dime.

A. More money would not have a lasting impact, but the following will: 1) Periodically, praise an employee in front of others, especially if the audience are people the employee looks up to or feels are important. 2) Keep the employee out of the dark and included or involved in organizational matters that concern his or her job. 3) Keep your eyes open for things the employee does well and make a positive comment about it. (This is called "catching the employee doing something right.") Use the same moment to ask your employee how things are going, and whether he or she needs anything from you to do their job. 4) Give an assignment or project that by its nature shows how much you trust the employee with something important or significant. These four strategies will add significant job satisfaction in most instances.

Q. I have a personality clash with my employee. I am trying practice detachment emotionally, but I think supervisors must be careful with personality clashes. I can see how tempting it is to show bias against such persons on the job.

A. Not every supervisor will enjoy the personality style of each employee. You are right about the need to be cautious and avoid something called "social undermining." This refers to any behavior or attitude toward your employee with the goal sabotaging and curtailing a person from advancing, achieving, or being recognized for what they accomplish. Social undermining is not necessarily bullying. It may be completely covert. Hindering success is the distinguishing feature of the behavior. Use CONCERN to objectively assess your attitude. You may discover certain elements of your employee's work style or personality that create anxiety for you. This may be attributed to feelings like envy, jealousy, fear, and perhaps disappointment in your own achievements. These sorts of issues are usually quickly overcome with short-term counseling. CONCERN is an excellent resource for such a purpose.

Q. I don't think I should reject an employee who brings a personal problem to me. There needs to be some recognition and processing of the problem for a few minutes. I think this increases the chance of the employee accepting a CONCERN referral later when it is recommended.

A. You are absolutely right. You should not reject an employee who musters the courage to come to you with a personal problem - to do so would decrease the likelihood of accepting a CONCERN referral. Here's an approach: Listen and give some indication that you understand what is being shared. Then, 1) Praise the employee for coming to you, (i.e., "Mary, I am glad you felt comfortable coming to let me know about this.") 2) Reflect what you heard or summarize. (i.e., "So, the bottom line is that your landlord is forcing you to leave and you have nowhere to go?") 3) Set the stage for referral and this logic path: (i.e. "Mary there is a lot of personal information needed to help solve this problem. As your supervisor, I am not the best one to hear and retain this information, but CONCERN is ideal. Can I help you make the connection with them? 4) Allow the employee to phone without delay while motivation is high.

Q. I'm a bit irritated at CONCERN for being unable to give me any information about an employee who I referred. I feel pretty handicapped not knowing more about the problem and progress. How can I do my job if I am completely in the dark?

A. Privacy laws like HIPAA and federal alcohol and drug confidentiality laws (which are even stricter) govern EAP information. Without these provisions, EAPs would become extinct. Your organization would then have no practical avenue for intervening with troubled employees in the early stages of their problems. When EAPs were first established in the mid-1970s, noninterference with management and administrative processes was considered key. This still holds true. If your employee does not sign a release, he or she is not undermining your ability to function – your focus stays on performance expectations. On the contrary, the client may be undermining their ability to be accommodated by the work organization. Many supervisors struggle to understand this principle. Your hands are not tied with lack of personal information because management decisions are based upon observable and documented performance and conduct issues. CONCERN does urge employees to sign releases when appropriate, but work organizations are not handicapped if they refuse.

Q. We hear a lot about how much employees experience anxiety because of work demands, technology, resource constraints, and our culture. Supervisors aren't experts on anxiety, but what can we do to help?

A. Anxiety encompasses an array of mental health conditions, but supervisors are most likely to encounter mixed mild depression and anxiety disorders that, although distressing, aren't rigid conditions requiring long-term treatment. These include employees who are worried, fearful for their future, facing domestic work-life and caregiver challenges, financial stress, and the effects of poor sleep, strain in personal relationships, and the ability to concentrate at work. Dependability issues may exist. You may see low mood, sadness, and hear about poor sleep and appetite. You witness fits of irritability, poor concentration, and forgetfulness. Headaches may be common and aches and pains may be voiced.

Heart palpitations, restless, and being keyed up" and "on edge" may also be problems. As these emerge, encourage use of CONCERN. The new CONCERN Resilience Hub™ is a great place to find quick and accessible tools. Go to www.concern-eap.com and click on "Enter the Resilience Hub" to check it out. Always talk up confidentiality, and forget trying to talk employees out of anxiety. It doesn't work.

Remember: CONCERN: EAP teams with Human Resources to provide another resource for managers and supervisors to consult about how to manage issues with individuals, within and between work groups, and across departments. When you call CONCERN: EAP, ask for a Management Consultation or request to speak to a Clinical Manager.

Here are some quotes from HR Managers who recently called on CONCERN for a Management Consultation:

"I found the counselor to be very helpful and understanding. She was very professional and her expertise in the subject matter clearly shows. She is refreshing to work with."

"Although the counselor did not have the opportunity to speak with anyone, we appreciated his availability and willingness to be there in case an employee needed to talk with him."

"We found the Clinical Manager to be very thoughtful and concise in the messaging. The CM provided extremely relevant information in a professional manner. He was compassionate and very responsive."

CONCERN: EAP
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