

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by **DOR**

Helping you to manage your company's most valuable resource -- your employees.

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CASE 1 Broken hearted and still working

➤ **Q. One of my employees broke up with his girlfriend and he's despondent. He tells anyone who will listen how unhappy and confused he feels.**

A. His "work" may be acceptable, but his performance is problematic if you are documenting his distraction. Consider that performance includes attitude, attendance, and conduct on the job, as well as the quality of work. Although you can't focus on his plight as a supervisor, a referral is appropriate because distraction can be documented. People handle despondency in different ways. Some internalize it and try to mask their pain. Others, like your employee, want to discuss their experience. Doing some of this at work is quite normal, but if a worker repeatedly shares his unhappiness and confusion with his coworkers, it can become a workplace distraction. There's also the danger that his sadness will prove contagious and adversely affect everyone's attitude. In short, the present behavior is hardly the best way for your employee to work through a difficult break-up. By referring him to the EAP for support during this rocky period, you give him a safe, confidential environment to gain perspective and develop coping tools under the guidance of a trained professional.

CASE 2 Perception is not everything

➤ **Q. After putting an employee on 90-day probation, I asked him to sign a form summarizing what we discussed in our disciplinary meeting. He refused and threw the pen against the wall. If I refer him to the EAP, won't he perceive it as my punishing him?**

A. Rather than trying to predict his perception, focus on what you can control. Explain in plain language why you're referring him to the EAP: to help him manage his workplace behavior so that it falls within acceptable boundaries. Tell him that throwing a pen against a wall was not an acceptable response. Suggest that he use the EAP to draft an action plan to address the performance issues that led to his probation. By stressing the possibility of a positive outcome--salvaging his job by meeting certain performance standards--you can direct his attention toward taking steps to meet and exceed your expectations and the job requirements, not whether he is being punished.

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