



Management Partners

A newsletter from your Employee Assistance Program to help you manage your most valuable resources – your employees.

June 2010

My employee does not drink on the job, but I know by appearance this person is suffering from a hangover a couple of times a month. I cannot say that job performance is affected, but there must be something I can do to intervene formally. What approach should I use?

Talk to the EAP first. Because you are having difficulty identifying performance issues associated with what appears to be a hangover, a consult is warranted. A confidential discussion with the EA professional will make it easier to develop a plan or approach that includes specific performance issues you could be overlooking. On the other hand, you may need tips on how to better spot these issues as they occur. The goal is to help you make an effective supervisor referral. Employees with hangovers do not function at optimal levels, and spotting these work-related deficiencies is therefore the key. Some of them will be obvious, but others will be more subtle. What most people don't realize is that many symptoms of hangovers create cognitive and psychomotor dysfunction as much as intoxication does, so helping your employee stop this behavior is a safety issue as much as it is a productivity concern.

When being confronted on a specific matter, my employee glared saying, "You know, I am *really* about to get into someone's face!" The employee stormed off. This employee often has a hostile tone, but my supervisor and I debated whether this was a threat. What do you think?

There is an old saying that goes, "The meaning of your communication is the response that you get." In this instance, at least one of you perceived this statement as a threat. Most employees know that they can't openly make threats at work. So what you may be witnessing is belligerence cloaked with an offhand, cryptic expression. You got the message this employee intended to send. You do not need to split hairs and debate what was meant, or the precise meaning of his or her statement. Feeling threatened is enough to confront and correct this behavior. Your employee may have issues with boundaries, anger management, self-control, and respect. Behavior of this sort tends to get worse and is reinforced by those who experience it, minimize its meaning, and then do not take steps to address it.

We have a very diverse workplace, and I sometimes correct employees when I see them demonstrating poor tolerance of coworkers' differences. I am not an expert on tolerance and bias, so can you offer some language, tips, or "phrases" helpful in educating employees?

Education does help alter bias, but the bottom line is that employee behavior must conform to what is civil and supportive of your organization's work goals. Let employees know that the goal of tolerance is a respectful workplace and that without it, the interests of the work organization are not served. When correcting employee behavior in the context of supervisory meetings, your goal should be to educate, not counsel or investigate the psychological influences of employee bias. Given that, the following can help your discussions be more effective. Key tolerance principles: 1) Look past differences of opinion, orientation, ethnic, or racial backgrounds and, instead, focus on understanding a colleague's views and perspective. 2) Avoid the trap of tuning out simply because someone talks or looks different. 3) Avoid labels. Monitor your speech patterns—and thinking style—to check whether you label others. 4) If you disagree with someone's views, react with curiosity rather than defensiveness. Ask at least one earnest, nonthreatening question to dig for more information. Be willing to change your mind and withhold judgment to expand your frame of reference. 5) Speak up when hurtful comments are overheard. 6) Reject intolerance when you see it demonstrated.

For more information or consultation regarding a management issue call us at 800-327-7272.

LYTLE EAP PARTNERS
Navigating Work...Life...Health