



# Management Partners

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

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Some of my employees' spouses lost jobs during the recession. Should I remind my employees about help from the EAP, support for a spouse or partner, help for affected children, etc.? I believe some employees don't make the connection that children can be affected by a recession.

Yes, remind employees during staff meetings or other occasions that the EAP is available to assist them with the distress associated with an unemployed spouse or partner at home. Many employees forget how the EAP can help them. Children can be especially affected by a recession and half the children in homes with an unemployed parent can be expected to experience behavioral changes, according to a recent New York Times/CBS poll. Currently, about one in seven children nationwide has an unemployed parent. Stress and depression may appear as difficult behaviors or poor school performance. Unexplained anger might be a problem that results from anxiety experienced in the home. You're right, it's appropriate to mention why the EAP can help because some parents may not associate child behavioral issues with the recession. Be cautious and avoid analyzing individual employee issues.

I keep struggling with documentation. When an employee is slow, appears tired, and acts sad, I call it "depressed." It seems more to the point and descriptive. As a result, my documentation has been criticized. Not using labels is difficult. Can the EAP help me?

An important part of employee assistance work is helping supervisors learn the skills of documentation. Documentation can be tricky because you must convey what you see and hear but omit what you feel and conclude. This takes practice because it is tempting to focus on other factors that are subjective and emotional. The key is to avoid drawing conclusions about personal problems, stating how you feel about the employee's behavior, conveying diagnostic impressions, or filling your documentation with drama. These things sabotage the usefulness of your documentation for administrative purposes. To improve your documentation, consider whether it describes what is measurable or observable. Depression (a medical term to avoid using in documentation) can't be "seen", but slow talking, days missed, lack of work progress, crying, and sad looks are observable.

I am a new supervisor and one of my responsibilities is teambuilding. Is teambuilding used to simply improve or reinforce the closeness that team members feel with each other? Is that the goal?

Teambuilding is an activity designed to improve team performance, but it is often underutilized as a productivity tool. With this in mind, observe your team during the year to identify areas that represent opportunities for improvement. Once these goals are identified, target them with teambuilding. Avoid doing teambuilding only for "teambuilding's sake" because in the end, inspiration gained from it will not last. How well do employees work together, problem-solve together, and participate in give-and-take behaviors? Is there a lot of bickering or bitterness? Do small cliques gang up on others? Is the retort "that's not my job!" frequently heard? Do employees withhold information to gain power rather than share it with those who need to know? Are e-mail communications problematic? Do employees trust each other? The resolution of problems in these and other areas is a great target for teambuilding.

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

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