



# The Frontline Supervisor

January 2024

**Q. Can the EAP help me address some issues I have with anger without having to visit the program in person? Also, I don't want to go to counseling. Perhaps the EAP could give me practical exercises or other resources?**

A. There is no requirement to physically visit the EAP to get help for your anger management issue, although an in-person assessment might help the EA professional conduct a more thorough evaluation to help offer the right resources. In-person interviewing allows for the observation of nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures, which can provide additional insights into emotions and thoughts. These cues can be vital in understanding a person's feelings and concerns. Face-to-face interactions often facilitate the building of rapport and trust, and this might result in your feeling comfortable enough to share additional information that you might otherwise be hesitant to mention. While in-person counseling has these advantages, phone counseling can also be effective and has its own set of benefits, like accessibility, convenience, and honoring your personal preference.

**Q. Some employees want easy access to me while others want challenging assignments, but my most recent hire wants to be mentored. What does this entail?**

A. As a mentor, your goal is to be a trusted and experienced boss who offers guidance, support, and advice to facilitate the personal and professional growth of your employees. It can be challenging to be both a mentor and an evaluating supervisor, but with awareness, it's possible. In this instance, be clear with your employee about the two roles you hold under these circumstances. Encourage your employee to discuss career aspirations, concerns, and educational/skills goals in a confidential and supportive setting. As a helpful technique, you might want to meet in your office when playing the supervisory role and another location when mentoring your employee. This separation may aid in building trust and rapport. Be sure to discuss short- and long-term goals and have a focus when you meet. Don't simply ask how it's going or focus on issues of the day. When your employee experiences a challenge, reflect on your experiences, insights, and knowledge as you offer guidance. Have scheduled "check-ins" and refine the mentorship process so it remains effective and doesn't fade or tail off. Encourage learning opportunities and celebrate your employee's achievements and milestones. Here is a new resource you should consider reading: "Ultimate Guide to Great Mentorship: 13 Roles to Making a True Impact" (2023) by Scott Jeffrey Miller.

**Q. I am new supervisor and do not want to become a pushy boss. How can I avoid the common traits of a boss who makes employees feel stressed, anxious, and pressured?**

A. Avoid the following behaviors and you will be seen as a supportive leader. Talk to the EAP if you have trouble giving any of them up. 1) Constantly monitoring and micromanaging as well as excessively checking up; 2) Setting unrealistic deadlines; 3) Demanding an immediate response to issues and problems; 4) Overloading employees with work that can't reasonably be completed in a specific time frame; 5) Ignoring employee input and ideas; 6) Pressuring employees for answers, as if trying to prevent Armageddon; 7) Taking credit—even a little—for your employee's work, or failing to acknowledge the team's contributions; 8) Showing lack of empathy for an employee's personal problem or crisis at home, and instead focusing only on the work; 9) Using "or else!" or other intimidation tactics to get compliance with your demands; 10) Ignoring personal boundaries by expecting employees always to be available; 11) Nitpicking about small stuff, like within a report, without acknowledging the greater effort.

**Q. It gets very stressful in my position during the day. I can't take a 30-minute break or go to a gym to work out. What stress management techniques are the most effective for supervisors who can't take a long break?**

A. When only five minutes are available for stress management, there are some quick and effective techniques; the more you practice them, the more effective they will become and the faster they will produce results. Deep-Breathing Exercises: Take slow, deep breaths to calm the nervous system. Inhale deeply while counting slowly to four, hold your breath for a few seconds, and then release it slowly over the course of few seconds (repeat 3-4 times). Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and release different muscle groups in your body. Start with your toes, tensing them for a few seconds and then relaxing them. Gradually work your way up through your legs, abdomen, arms, and neck, releasing tension as you go. Meditation: This short mental break involves closing your eyes and relaxing. Daydream about anything unrelated to work. Do this for a few minutes. There are many other techniques than just these three. Contact your EAP for more ideas.

**Q. I know supervisors who don't believe in counseling. Call them "old school" or whatever, but they are quick to discourage any use of the program. Can you offer responses to common myths about counseling in general that I can use as a comeback to negativity when I hear it? I'd like to advocate more for the EAP.**

A. Here are a few of the most common myths and responses to consider if you hear them. Myth: Going to counseling means you have severe mental health issues. Rebuttal: Most people who turn to professional counseling are problem-solving everyday stress, relationship challenges, work-related issues, and personal growth. Myth: Once you start counseling, you are in it forever! Rebuttal: One large study showed 75% of clients met their goals within six months. Myth: Seeking counseling means you're weak or unable to handle problems on your own. Rebuttal: It takes strength to seek help and work on personal growth, and counseling can be a fast track to learning coping strategies, gaining insights, and developing skills to better manage challenges rather than suffering for years. Source: [www.apa.org/topics/psychotherapy/understanding](http://www.apa.org/topics/psychotherapy/understanding)

**Questions? Call during business hours 815.748.8334, or after hours at 800.373.3327**