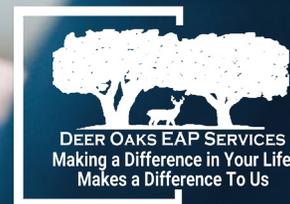


# THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER



HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

OCT.  
2021

## OCTOBER ONLINE SEMINAR

### *Embracing Diversity and Differences*

Learn about how to live and work in a way that is respectful, kind, and embraces diversity in all walks of life.

Available on-demand starting  
October 19th at  
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## UPCOMING WEBINARS

### 2021 Pandemic Support Webinar Series

#### *Preventing & Overcoming Burnout*

The World Health Organization defines burnout as a syndrome of “chronic workplace stress that hasn’t been successfully managed.” During these current stressful times, many employees are at an even higher risk of burnout. This important session will discuss several strategies for more effectively managing stress and keeping our lives in balance to reduce the risk of burnout.

Date/Time: October 11, 2021, 1:00-2:00 PM CT

[REGISTER NOW](#)

### 2021 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

#### *Building a Culture of Respect; The Keys to Creating a Collaborative & Engaged Work Team*

This important session focuses on building awareness in managers of the attitudes, emotions, and behaviors that create barriers to a respectful and engaging workplace culture. The presentation will also provide self-management and interpersonal skills training that will lead to more openness, effective communication, greater collaboration, and better resolution of differences at the office.

Date/Time: November 1, 2021 1:00-2:00 PM CT

[REGISTER NOW](#)

# A Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace

## Part 4

### Longer-Term, Reconstructing Phase

#### **Honor: Prepare for reactions to anniversaries, events, and milestones.**

For those most deeply affected by the suicide, anniversary or milestone reactions might emerge. Because of the complicated nature of suicide, a small subset of the workforce may be still struggling with the experience months after most others have moved on. For example, for many people, the death anniversary might bring up sad or traumatic memories; or milestone events like the completion of a big work project, or the annual work picnic or holiday event, might remind people of the "empty chair." In preparation for this, managers might consider pulling together those who are directly impacted to decide if there is way to honor the loss and celebrate the life that was lived while following safe memorialization practices (e.g., not glamorizing or romanticizing the death, not erecting a permanent structure, giving people safe space to remember but not relive). This may be done privately for those who wish to participate and should be considered for the full workforce only if this would be a common practice for other forms of loss.

#### **Sustain: Transition from postvention to prevention.**

After a workplace has been affected by a suicide, managers sometimes think that their work is finished once the crisis has passed. Instead, one of the most important things managers can do is transition the team from suicide postvention to suicide prevention strategies. Suicide prevention strategies are usually employed before suicidal behavior emerges and are often offered to all employees (e.g., promotion of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255) or to a group of employees that might be at higher risk (e.g., a group that might be facing relocation or downsizing). Suicide intervention usually occurs when suicidal thoughts or behavior have emerged and someone is linking an individual to care. A comprehensive approach looks beyond one or two strategies and uses a multipronged, coordinated system of strategies that addresses suicide risk from proactive prevention to intervention to postvention.

In addition, several low-cost, high-impact tactics are accessible to managers. For example, employees can be trained in suicide prevention gatekeeper models that teach them how to recognize and respond to signs of suicide risk in their coworkers. In addition, an annual depression screening can be employed as part of ongoing health and wellness initiatives. Other employees might be motivated to make meaning out of their loss by volunteering for suicide prevention efforts or participating in suicide awareness community events.

*Source: Carson J Spencer Foundation, Crisis Care Network, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, & American Association of Suicidology. (2013). A manager's guide to suicide postvention in the workplace: 10 action steps for dealing with the aftermath of suicide. Denver, CO: Carson J Spencer Foundation. Retrieved July 16, 2021, from the Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention website: <https://theactionalliance.org/>*

# What is Employee Burnout?

Burnout strikes employees when they have exhausted their physical or emotional strength. This usually occurs as a result of prolonged stress or frustration. Sometimes the cause is the work environment. Stressful jobs, lack of support and resources, and tight deadlines can all contribute to burnout. Other times, burnout has more to do with employees' expectations of themselves or their personal circumstances.

Burnout can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Frustration or indifference toward work
- Persistent irritability
- Anger, sarcasm, or being argumentative
- Exhaustion
- Absenteeism

All of these things can drain an organization's morale—as well as its wallet. Burned-out employees can be costly in terms of productivity, and if burned-out employees quit, there are the costs of replacement searches and training.

While burnout can't always be prevented, it can be managed. In order to effectively manage employee burnout, people need to:

- Understand the reasons for burnout
- Find mutually agreeable solutions
- Rekindle employee motivation

## **Only people with repetitive, low-paying, and low-prestige jobs burn out, right?**

This is not true. People with well-paying, high-profile jobs with interesting assignments can burn out as well. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health offers some ways for an employer to find out if there is too much stress placed on employees.

- Hold group discussions with employees.
- Design an employee survey.
- Measure employees' perceptions of job conditions, stress, health, and satisfaction.
- Collect and analyze data to identify problems and stressful conditions.

After you identify the sources of stress and form a plan for your company you can prioritize your solutions. Hold an all-organization meeting and talk about possible solutions. Then follow through.

## **Besides employee retention, here are some good reasons to work towards preventing employee burnout:**

- Healthcare expenditures may increase for workers who report high levels of stress.
- Stressful working conditions may interfere with safe work practices and set the stage for work-related injuries.
- Increased absenteeism and tardiness, both signs of burnout, hurt the bottom line.

*Source: Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2018). What is employee burnout? Raleigh, NC: Author.*

# Ask Your EAP!

**The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.**

*Q. I formally referred my employee to the EAP, but it was on the Friday before the employee took a two-week vacation. Should I have waited? And should I meet with the employee again when he returns, contact the EAP, or just expect that follow-through will happen?*

A. You've made the formal referral, but in the interest of good communication and to ensure follow-through, meet with your employee upon his return from vacation and inquire about the status of the referral. Presumably, you had contact with the EAP in the process of making the referral, so you could also start by inquiring whether a release has been signed and confirming his participation. Generally, when a formal referral to an EAP is needed and appropriate, making it in a timely manner is important. True, your timing in this instance is not advantageous for follow-through, but you did the right thing, as waiting allows a potentially serious problem to get worse and increases risks to others and the organization. Also in this case, waiting a couple weeks could have allowed your own sense of the importance of the referral to diminish, which would also be just as problematic. Following up now to ensure follow-through takes place is what's important here.

*Q. Documenting an employee's performance issues is sometimes difficult for me because I am a supervisor who quickly addresses problems when I see them, gets a situation fixed, and then moves on. So, documentation seems unnecessary and a hassle. What am I missing?*

A. Not every performance issue has to be documented. But there are risks associated with not creating documentation frequently enough. One risk is not developing an aptitude for knowing when something is important enough to be documented. Poor quality of documentation is another. Supervisors who don't document effectively can also undermine the work of human resource managers who are attempting to execute job actions requiring written justification. Documentation is a learned skill. You can get rusty at it. A serious matter to which some supervisors fall victim is suddenly discovering the need for documentation that does not exist, prompting them to quickly attempt to produce it from memory. This is sometimes called "papering the file." When documentation that should have been produced weeks, months, or years ago is suddenly generated for a disciplinary purpose, it can create liability when it is not viewed as being "contemporaneous." Accusations of retaliation or employment claims can then follow, undermining supervisor credibility. Do you need to brush up on documentation skills? Contact the EAP—the professionals there can help you.

*Q. What does it mean when EAPs are described as "non-disciplinary"? Does this simply mean the EAP does not institute disciplinary actions?*

A. Non-disciplinary means that the EAP is not used by the organization for disciplinary purposes; referral to it is not a punitive step. It also means that participation in the EAP can't stain an employee's performance record or be used against him or her in promotion, hiring, or decisions regarding work assignments. These are all foundational principles of EAP application within work organizations. Non-disciplinary also means that EAPs do not recommend for or against disciplinary actions, or interfere with or thwart management's deliberations on how to manage job actions with troubled employees. On another note, EAPs don't protect employees from disciplinary actions by way of their participation; an employee can't claim "safe harbor" as a way to block disciplinary actions.

*Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.*