



April 2019

Publication of Wayne Corporation - Employee Assistance Program

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**Q. I don't want to ignore my gut if I think an employee is struggling with a serious personal problem. I know I can't probe, diagnose, or cross boundaries, but what compromise can be made so I don't ignore signals of what might be a significant unaddressed need?**

A. Supervisors may naturally come to know their employees quite well as they discover their work goals, ambitions, personality styles, and whatever personal information they choose to share about their lives. It follows that the same supervisors will notice when things are not quite right. It is then appropriate to ask—and supervisors should ask—how employees are doing. These meaningful conversations with supervisors may lead to employees getting help for personal problems. Seeing an employee at his or her desk all day, not interacting with others, should concern you if it is uncharacteristic. Showing concern could lead to the discovery of a serious matter and referral to the EAP. Domestic abuse issues are sometimes spotted this way.

**Q. I think most companies suffer with gossip and backbiting in the workplace, and few are completely successful at eliminating this problem. I am certain it erodes morale. What can supervisors do to effect change in this area?**

A. Organizational psychologist Glenn D. Rolfen, Ph.D., discovered through working with over 200 companies that gossip and backbiting are indeed stubborn problems. And he documented that eliminating these problems will increase productivity, reduce absenteeism, and improve morale. The tactic he discovered, after failing in other attempts, was to change behavior associated with gossip, which helped employees acquire new habits of personal awareness to change the behavior. Beyond being personally aware, he calls this "new consciousness." He did three things that produced the result he wanted. One was to educate employees about gossip's toxic effects, and two was to get everyone to sign a commitment to eliminating it. Third, and perhaps the most important, he discovered a way to keep that goal in front of everyone effectively to achieve "top of mind awareness." It worked. See his TEDx presentation on this achievement and consider what may fit with your situation. Ask the EAP to team with you on projects to improve morale and develop a positive workplace. Source: YouTube.com (search for "Glenn D. Rolfen, TEDxOslo")

**Q. My employee thinks he is being followed by "foreign agents." He brought a video to work to prove it, but no one could see anything unusual in it. Some employees are scared he could be violent. He's been a great worker, with five years of service. What is this? What should I do?**

**A.** What underlies the behavior with your employee can't be determined without an evaluation, but one possibility is a mental disorder that causes delusions (beliefs that are not true). Consult with your HR advisor regarding whether a fitness for duty evaluation is appropriate. Referral for a fitness for duty would be based on behavior and its effect on the work situation. You will need clear documentation linked to job performance, effect on coworkers, and/or disruption of the work environment. Note that some medical-behavioral illnesses such as schizophrenia typically emerge in young adulthood, which would explain why there were few or no symptoms five years ago. HR may wish to coordinate with the EAP, so both should be consulted. EAPs are familiar with resources to support the needs of your employee. Unusual behavior caused by unmanaged schizophrenia can be upsetting to observers, but violence is rare. Still, the chronic nature of many illnesses means it is prudent to avoid delay.

**Q.** We had an employee experience a major heart attack. It was dramatic and frightening, but the hard part for me was the next day. As the boss, I was unsure what action to take other than responding like everyone else to the shock and processing it. What should a manager do?

**A.** When tragedies like the one you describe strike the workplace, the immediate response is usually obvious—engaging first responders and immediate needs. Days later, supervisors wonder, “What’s my role in helping everyone? What do I say? How do I act?” You will make a huge impact on employees with the simplest things: being more available, being empathetic, engaging the EAP, modeling your own need to process and share feelings, being a good communicator, making it easier for others to spend time discussing or processing their reactions, finding ways to lighten the load, and being flexible with work demands. You will be surprised how employees will thank you later. You may think to yourself, “Wow, I didn’t do much.” But in fact, you really did all that was needed. Supervisors represent the organization, and tragic events are always remembered in terms of how “the organization responded.” That’s you.

**Q.** I’ve read that the biggest complaint employees have about supervisors is lack of communication—that supervisors are inconsistent with rules or don’t praise workers enough. So, let’s hear what most bosses are doing right or at least what is complained about the least.

**A.** In one study of over 2,000 employees surveyed about complaints regarding their boss, one of the least-mentioned complaints was sexism. It appeared as No. 49 on the list, just above “bores people with vacation photos.” So, on this front, sexism in the workplace on the part of supervisors appears to be less frequent than many people may believe, or perhaps awareness in the media has had a major impact in reducing it. On the other hand, one common and significant complaint that appeared to be overlooked by the survey was “being called by my supervisor when not at work.” This complaint appeared in many variations: being called on vacation, on weekends, after hours, etc. See the full list at <https://spana.org/blog/bossing-it/>

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## Balanced Living – April 2019

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### Less Is More: How to Simplify Your Life



Life today is complicated. Most Americans are pulled in multiple directions every day by commitments to their families, workplaces and communities.

Many people have responded to the pressures of modern life by seeking ways to consciously simplify their routines and attitudes at home and work.

"The goal of living a more simple life isn't to arrive at a static point in your life but to become skilled at balancing your personal relationships, workplace issues, finances and other demands," says Heather G. Mitchener, coauthor of *The 50 Best Ways to Simplify Your Life*.

### Being in the moment

One way to simplify your life is to practice mindfulness -- to slow down and recognize and appreciate the

simple things in life. To be mindful instead of mindless, stay in the moment and be conscious of what you're doing. Don't think ahead or look back.

"When we look ahead constantly, we not only rush through the less pleasant tasks, we also tend to hurry through the things we love to do, because we're always thinking or worrying about what we have to do next," says Ms. Mitchener.

A good way to practice being in the moment is to follow your breath, a technique that doesn't require any special training or self-consciousness. To breathe mindfully, take notice of your breaths and try to make them as calm and even as possible. Your breaths should be long and slow and should come from your diaphragm rather than your upper chest. Pay attention to each breath, letting thoughts fall away.

"You can do this exercise any time you think of it," says Ms. Mitchener. "Make it a goal to be mindful, in general, but also set aside short periods to practice. This will improve your ability to make mindfulness a habit. As you learn to live this way, you'll feel more centered."

## Slow down

If you feel like you have too much information in your life, stop subscriptions to magazines, newspapers or e-mail newsletters you rarely have time to read. Leave the radio and TV off unless you're really listening to something that matters to you. Turn off your cell phone unless you're making a call or waiting for one that's important.

To reduce the amount of "stuff" in your home, ask yourself these questions before you buy something: Do I really need it? How often will I wear or use it? Where will I store it? Is there a reason why I must buy it?

## Get organized

Begin by sizing up the problem areas in your home or workplace and making a plan of attack. If you're easily discouraged, start with a small, confined area, such as a single drawer. Otherwise, target an area that gives you the most grief. Your goal should be to clear out clutter that causes you to waste time -- a hall closet that has become a catchall for everything from clothes to sports equipment.

Learn to focus at work. Multitasking can be an asset, but often the lack of focus it requires means you actually get less done in a day, or less done well. To increase your focus and break free from distractions:

- Begin each day by setting priorities on what you want to accomplish.
- Check e-mail at set times, rather than letting each new message interrupt you.
- Set aside a time to retrieve voice mail and return calls.
- Keep a calendar of your deadlines and obligations.

## 100+ Common Legal Forms

Did you know you have access to more than 100 common legal forms? From a simple will to an identity theft worksheet, we have you covered.

[Why not check one out today?](#)

## Signs of Alcohol Addiction (Alcoholism)

Do you want to have more fun, to fit in, to cope better with your problems? It's as easy as taking a drink—if you believe what you see on television. But if you think that alcohol will improve your life, you're fooling yourself. The more you regularly rely on alcohol to relax you or get you "up," the closer you move toward addiction. If you decide you are on the path to addiction, you can take action to keep it under control or find caring people to help you.

### Check Your Addiction Level

You may drink alcohol to feel charming. But instead, it can lead to impaired speech and to inappropriate or dangerous behavior, such as driving while drunk. Alcohol can also lead to liver and heart disease. Read the following statements and check "yes" or "no." Answering "yes" to three or more questions may be a signal that alcohol is taking over your life.

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you think a party or social gathering isn't fun unless alcohol is served?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have family members, friends, or coworkers ever commented on your drinking?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have friends you drink with?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you look forward to your next drink?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you only drink after work or on weekends, do you think you couldn't have a problem?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are family members or friends beginning to avoid you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you unsuccessfully tried to cut down or quit using alcohol?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you hide your use from other people?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you beginning to distrust and avoid some people?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you get up the day after drinking and not remember what happened the night before?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have health problems as a result of your drinking?

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