

 I've always considered myself a driven, hardworking supervisor. Sometimes people kid or joke about it, but I really like what I do. I'll admit for the first time that lately I wonder if I've crossed into burnout territory. How can I tell the difference?

Good news first: if being driven still feels energizing, you're probably fine. Tiring days, even exhaustion, are normal as long as the work still feels meaningful and rest still restores you. But you're not immune to burnout, a real and recognized occupational hazard. The key difference is what your effort produces. Engagement leaves you tired but satisfied. Burnout leaves you depleted no matter how much you accomplish. Sleep stops helping. A weekend off doesn't recharge you the way it used to. Right now you wake up energized and ready to go, but burnout creeps in by quietly replacing that urgency with dread. As a manager, you're smart to pay attention. Recent research found 71% of middle managers report symptoms of burnout, higher than any other group ([high5test.com/leadership-burnout-statistics](https://www.high5test.com/leadership-burnout-statistics)). You're carrying pressure from both directions, your team and your own leadership, which makes this worth watching closely. Burnout is treatable, and it's easier to manage the earlier you catch it. You may not be there yet, but a quick check-in with your EAP or PAP now can help you recognize the warning signs before they become a bigger problem.

 I feel like I spend half my day managing communication — email, Slack, texts, calls — instead of getting any work done. Is there a better app out there? I'm not alone with this complaint. I also think it's getting worse, and I fear it will be a health issue some day. What's the answer?

For most people, the fix isn't a new tool, it's fewer of them. Start with an honest audit. On a quiet day off, list every channel you check: email, Slack, texts, calls. Notice the overlap and consolidate where you can. Next, set specific check-in times for email and chat instead of reacting to every notification. Be honest with yourself here too. If part of you enjoys checking messages as a mini escape from harder work, batching still helps. It reduces fragmented attention and lowers stress even when the urge to check is real. Turn off nonessential alerts. You're unlikely to miss anything that truly matters. Before reaching for a channel, pause and match the medium to the message: does this need a meeting, a quick thread, a call, or nothing at all? That single habit saves more time than any app switch. Declutter ruthlessly. Unsubscribe, unfollow, and mute what no longer serves you. Protect your after-hours boundaries by deciding when you're actually reachable, and tell people clearly so they know what to expect. One more that matters most: consolidate to one inbox and one to-do list. Fewer places means fewer things fall through the cracks, and far less mental overhead keeping track of them all.

 One of my employees seems distracted and on edge lately. I found out from others it's because her child is being bullied at school. Is this something I should be involved in?

Stay out of it directly, at least for now. Even a situation that seems clear-cut, like a child being bullied, can have other factors underneath that you're not positioned to see. The reported cause may be accurate, or it may be one piece of a larger picture, or even a separate performance issue that happens to coincide with it. This is why supervisors should avoid diagnosing the "real" problem from secondhand information. EAP/PAP professionals frequently find that the presenting issue isn't the full story once they look closer. Here's how to proceed instead: document what you can observe and measure in objective specific terms—missed deadlines, distraction, absences. You can still be compassionate. Treat this the way you'd treat any personal stressor affecting someone's work: acknowledge it briefly, then keep the conversation focused on performance. Let her know the EAP/PAP is available and confidential, and encourage her to reach out. If the issues continue, formalize the referral and share your documentation with the EAP/PAP so they have the full picture.





One of my employees goes to the restroom at least 20 times a day. I know my job is to document the behavior, discuss performance issues, and refer to the EAP/PAP if appropriate. But out of curiosity, what kinds of problems could possibly explain this behavior?

This question is a good chance to show just how wide the range of explanations can be, and how little an outside observer can actually determine. Jumping to conclusions comes naturally, and both peers and managers often assume the worst-case explanation first. But that instinct is usually wrong, or at least incomplete. Frequent bathroom trips could reflect an undisclosed medical condition: diabetes, a bladder or gastrointestinal issue, or a medication side effect. They could point to disordered eating involving purging. They could involve substance use, whether prescription or illicit. They could be anxiety, since stress commonly shows up this way. Or the explanation could be entirely mundane: personal calls, or simply avoiding work. That range is the whole point. Without more information, no explanation is more likely than any other, which is exactly why speculation isn't useful and diagnosis was never a supervisor's job in the first place. One more thing worth accepting: you may never find out the reason, and that's fine. Your role is to address the performance impact, not solve the mystery behind it.



I have a tough referral coming up — an employee with a history of anger issues, and honestly, I'm a little afraid of how he'll react. I'm talking to the EAP/PAP first because I want to handle this the right way. Does this show my inexperience, or is this a good idea for any supervisor?

This is a smart move, not a sign of inexperience. In fact, it's what experienced supervisors do differently. The underlying principle is that a supervisor who shows up confident and supportive is far less likely to trigger a defensive reaction than one who seems uncertain or apologetic. That matters even more in a difficult case involving someone with a history of anger issues. Calling the EAP/PAP beforehand is exactly the right plan. Describe the situation in detail: the employee's history, your specific concerns, and what you're worried might happen. Ask for guidance on how to frame the conversation. This consultation is confidential and doesn't require the employee's knowledge or involvement. EAPs and PAPs exist precisely for situations like this, and using them this way is one of the most underused tools available to supervisors. Going in prepared changes how you show up in the room. Employees pick up on hesitation, and uncertainty can be interpreted as suspicion or accusation, which only raises tension. Even without a history of violence, it's worth getting EAP/PAP and HR input on precautions, who should be present, and how to structure the meeting itself.

Continued EAP/PAP Challenge for the top Supervisors, Managers, and HR Professionals:

Your organization has received new EAP/PAP brochures with a Company Passcode to access **My Stress Tools** – a new suite of helpful tools on our website to manage stress. **Your homework:**

- (1) Go to the EAP website either by scanning the QR code on the new brochure or going to <https://eapacific.com/employees/my-stress-tools.html>;
- (2) Register for My Stress Tools (call us if you need your organization's Passcode, it's also on the new brochure);
- (3) Take the Stress Profiler and discover what small thing(s) you could do to reduce your stress this year;
- (4) Start doing that; and (5) Promote this so your team reduces their stress and burnout and has a better year!

Your stressed employees probably won't do much if you don't believe it will help. Using **one small free tool** to reduce YOUR stress will help them be much more likely to take advantage of your experience and recommendations!



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