

My employee constantly complains about being overloaded, but others with the same workload seem to manage fine. How do I tell whether this is a legitimate workload problem or an attitude issue?

First, resist the urge to assume — investigate. Compare this employee's actual workload against peers, looking beyond the number of tasks to factors like complexity, deadlines, quality standards, and error rates. The picture may be different than it appears. Then sit down with the employee. Share what you've observed and genuinely invite their perspective. You may learn something that reframes the situation entirely, as sometimes complaints about workload signal something else: a skill gap, unclear expectations, or personal stressors spilling into work. If your review confirms the workload is comparable and performance issues persist, address them directly through your normal supervisory process. Don't let the complaints become a reason to delay accountability. When concerns go deeper than workload, a formal supervisory referral to the EAP or PAP is a strong next step. The EAP/PAP can help uncover underlying issues and provide support, while you stay focused on clear expectations and performance improvement.

One of my employees has become visibly frustrated and dismissive lately. I find it disrespectful, and it's starting to affect how I interact with her. How do I handle this professionally?

Your reaction is understandable, as dismissive behavior feels personal, even when it may not be. But effective supervision means addressing what you can observe and document, not what you interpret or feel. Start with a calm, private conversation focused on specific behaviors: interrupting, eye-rolling, sarcastic remarks, dismissive body language, failing to acknowledge directions. These are concrete, describable actions; and that specificity matters. Avoid framing it as a "bad attitude." Attitudes are subjective and hard to pin down; behaviors give both of you something tangible to work with. Keep in mind that visible frustration usually has a source. A respectful, curious conversation may surface something you weren't aware of — a miscommunication, a stressor, or a concern the employee hasn't felt safe raising. That doesn't excuse the behavior, but it may explain it and point toward a resolution. If the behavior continues after clear feedback and coaching, don't let it drift. Consult with the EAP/PAP about next steps or consider a formal supervisory referral. The EAP/PAP can help assess what's driving the behavior and support the employee while you maintain clear expectations for professional conduct.

I've referred many employees to the EAP/PAP over the years, but lately I've been feeling burned out, disengaged, and low on energy. I know supervisors can use the EAP or PAP, and I don't fear counseling, but what's keeping me from making the call?

The fact that you're asking the question suggests good self-awareness. Supervisors often spend so much time helping others that it can feel unfamiliar, or even uncomfortable, to become the person asking for help. Many leaders quietly believe their problems are not serious enough to warrant professional support, or that they should be able to handle things on their own. Others worry that acknowledging stress or burnout somehow reflects weakness or loss of control. In reality, these are common barriers, not signs that support isn't needed. The same advice supervisors give employees applies to themselves: address concerns early rather than waiting for a crisis. The EAP/PAP is confidential, professional, and designed for exactly these situations. Reaching out isn't a sign of weakness. It's the same kind of early, proactive thinking that makes someone a good leader in the first place.





I have an employee whose performance has slipped, but I am hesitant to refer her to the EAP or PAP because she seems emotionally fragile. She has mentioned past trauma and becomes tearful easily. I worry that an EAP/PAP referral could overwhelm her or trigger an unusually strong reaction?

Your concern for this employee is genuine, but it may be working against her. Waiting until someone seems "ready" for support often means waiting too long. It's also worth gently reframing your role here: determining whether an employee is emotionally prepared for a referral isn't your job, and it's not something you're trained to assess. That's exactly what EAP/PAP professionals are for. They're experienced in working with people navigating trauma, grief, emotional distress, and crisis — and they know how to meet people where they are. A referral isn't a confrontation or a judgment. Framed well, it's an expression of support: I've noticed you're going through something, and I want to make sure you have access to real help. If you're uncertain how to approach the conversation given what you know about her history, call the EAP/PAP first for a telephone consultation. They can help you think through the timing, the language, and how to present the referral in a way that feels supportive rather than alarming. That's a way your EAP/PAP supports you as a supervisor.



Some employees believe an EAP or PAP referral is a precursor to being fired — a box a supervisor checks after they've already decided to let someone go. How do I address that perception?

Head-on. Tell the employee directly: "A referral isn't a step toward termination — it's the opposite. It means I want to keep you, and I'm committed to using every available resource to help you succeed." Unfortunately, this perception sometimes exists because employees have seen EAP/PAP referrals occur late in the disciplinary process, making the referral feel more procedural than supportive. When that happens, trust in the program can suffer. The antidote isn't a single conversation. It's culture. Employees form their impressions of the EAP/PAP long before they're ever referred, based on what they hear from coworkers and observe in how supervisors talk about it. If the EAP/PAP only surfaces during performance problems, it will always feel like a warning sign. Be an advocate among your peers. Talk openly about using the EAP/PAP early and genuinely; not as a last resort. The supervisors around you shape the program's reputation as much as the program itself does.

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!



Employee Assistance of the Pacific
1600 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1610 Honolulu, HI 96814

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