How can a supervisor become less fearful of confronting an employee whose performance is unsatisfactory? I think many of us live in denial, rationalize, or avoid this unpleasant task. We want to be leaders, but this responsibility is the most distasteful. How can the EAO help?

Most supervisors temporarily get away with ignoring employees who are not performing satisfactorily. Unfortunately, however, such problems grow worse, as do the risks they present. Helping supervisors understand the chronic nature of unresolved personnel issues can create an urgency to act sooner, before a crisis makes confrontation unavoidable. Conflict-avoidant supervisors usually are unaware of the secondary problems associated with poor performance. Failure by employees to follow work rules and disregard for one’s professional development are examples. Supervisors’ reluctance to confront employees is often based on fear. This might be fear of being lashed out at by the employee, disliked, or labeled unfair. The reticent supervisor’s goal is to avoid an undeserved reputation as an oppressor. If this sounds familiar, contact the EAO for consultation and support, and practice some realistic role-plays with the EA professional. You may be astonished at how such exercises can enhance one’s fortitude to act.

I do not want to be the cause of my employees burning out, but there is no way I can distribute less work to them. Can you offer tips for how to balance these issues? Any hard data to back up those tips?

When discussing burnout, it is important to describe what the term means, given the context of the work situation. A report from the National Institute of Health in 2017 reminds us that burnout is not an official mental health diagnosis, that the definitions are drastically nonuniform across research studies, and that many symptoms included in these definitions are also associated with depression. So, who is burned out and who is not is not easy to determine. A recent Gallup survey of German workers may have discovered an answer that will help you in considering how to engage with your workers. Those who received regular praise and recognition for good work, had proper materials and equipment to deliver quality work, and felt their opinion counted had lower feelings of burnout. How much control do you have over these factors? It appears that most supervisors have quite a bit. If you’re not sure where to start, contact the EAO. Source: www.gallup.com [search: “German Workforce Stress”].

I have an employee who behaves as if he “knows” everything. Other

It is difficult for some supervisors to imagine that a very smart employee with significant skills and major contributions could also be a problem employee. This is an example of the “halo effect.” This can make it a
employees suppress their opinions around him, so I miss their input on issues that need to be resolved. The tricky part is that he really is smart, but how do I address a problem like this?

One of my employees is resigning from the organization. I am glad because this person has been slow moving and under-performing for a long time. I blame myself because I adapted to the performance issues rather than intervene. How can I prevent this happening in the future?

What is the most important thing a manager can do to help prevent workplace violence?

The easy answer is, start earlier in confronting employees with performance issues; but this may be too simplistic to inspire you to change. To help you act sooner, ask yourself what parts of your current job you dislike the most and if those things are related to employee and performance issues. Do you dislike dealing with angry people? Do you dread meetings with your boss to explain unmet deadlines? Do you work extra hours away from your family to catch up? Are other workers upset over the leniency you’ve shown? These are only a few outcomes from this type of neglect. Some managers believe that if they can cope with an employee’s poor performance, then nothing needs to be done about it. They forget the overall impact it has on work such as mass departure of high-performing employees and the consequences of allowing poor performers to continue. The issues snowball. Talk to the employee assistance office to learn more and to overcome your reluctance to confront employees.

Instructing supervisors in detecting signs and symptoms of potential violence, promoting fair work practices, and resolving conflicts are strong “to dos” in helping managers prevent workplace violence. However, the most effective overarching piece of advice is “get to know your employees.” This requires possessing or developing a natural sense of curiosity, aided by a strong belief that employees are your most valuable resource. If you discover employees being bullied, feeling treated unfairly, facing domestic conflict, not bonding with coworkers, suffering from depression, or even showing signs of being under the influence, you have numerous opportunities and many campus resources to assist you in addressing concerns early to maintain a supportive and healthy workplace. And, of course, the EAO is always there as a resource you can encourage employees to use.