■ **The EAO presented a seminar on substance abuse to field supervisors. There was a lively discussion and argument among participants concerning alcoholism, its definition, and signs and symptoms. Are the defensive people at this meeting the ones with alcohol problems?**

Not necessarily. Although some employees affected by alcoholism may react defensively, employees with alcoholic family members or family histories of alcoholism may be just as adamant in their views about the illness. Strong views about alcoholism may be held especially by those with personal traumas associated with alcohol. Beliefs about alcoholism result from centuries-old cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews. Medicine, religion, psychology, and philosophy have all contributed heavily. Rigid viewpoints, even if faulty, are not easily relinquished by people because they may be relied upon to reconcile or explain one's past experience or present life circumstances. Despite rigorous research, alcoholism is still frequently mistreated, mismanaged, and misunderstood. Presenting to any group of employees on the topic of substance abuse generates a lot of disagreement and emotion. Ultimately this is helpful in allowing people to gain an appreciation for the disease and a willingness to understand it.

■ **Over the years, I have seen articles that reinforce the generally accepted principle that money is not a good long-term motivator for employees. What works instead is praise, recognition, and commendation. It sounds pretty simple. Why don't all supervisors understand this?**

A 2009 survey by *McKinsey Quarterly* asked which incentives were the most effective in motivating employees. The top two responses were: "Praise and commendation from my immediate manager" (67 percent) and "Attention from leaders" (62 percent). This is strong evidence that development of praise and commendation skills can have an impact on the bottom line. Of course, there is more to it than simply telling supervisors to praise employees more. Giving praise comes easily for some supervisors but not others. In most instances, it is not that supervisors don't want to give effective praise; instead, the issue is that they don't know how or don't feel comfortable doing so. Common statements heard from supervisors who struggle with giving praise are that it takes too much time, it feels insincere, or even that it doesn't match their brusque personality. These statements of resistance have solutions, and the EAO is an excellent resource for supervisors to discover those solutions. Source: tiny.cc/morale-boost

■ **I don't want to diagnose employees, but I would like to know what behaviors strongly indicate**

You do have a role in maintaining a safe and healthy work environment, so keeping an eye open for behavior or conduct that interferes with productivity is a good idea. These can be stress symptoms. You're right. You should not diagnose employees, but you can be attuned to the obvious. Visible

that employees are too stressed. I figure if I know the behavioral issues and spot them, I can then suggest use of the EAO based upon what I am seeing. Make sense?

behaviors or conduct issues may include anxiety, indecisiveness, irritability, complaints, forgetfulness, loss of self-confidence, customer conflicts, complaints of insomnia, sleeping on the job, coming back late from lunch because of oversleeping on breaks, argumentativeness, moodiness, crying and mood swings, and leaving early with complaints of physical exhaustion.

■ **I think my employee has a passive-aggressive personality. What are the signs and symptoms of this condition? I see a lot of resistance to assignments and complaining about workload, co-workers, and management decisions. Everything seems to be "wrong" all the time.**

It is better to identify problematic behaviors that you are trying to change rather than the entire constellation of symptoms that constitute a personality disorder. You don't need a checklist for passive-aggressive personality to manage your employee and make a referral to the EAO. Even a single, problematic behavior should be addressed if it interferes with productivity or your workplace. Be specific about the behaviors your employee exhibits. Do not use the term "passive-aggressive" in your documentation. You may see passive-aggressive behavior but do not label it as such or try to diagnose this psychiatric condition. Instead, document obstructionist behaviors, missing of deadlines, the impact of behavior on morale, forgetting, procrastination, or other behaviors that chronically interfere with productivity.

■ **Not all of our supervisors are "approachable" or easy to talk to. It concerns me. There is risk when employees don't feel comfortable coming forward with problems or concerns that could potentially have serious consequences. How can this problem be addressed?**

Both supervisor and employee have roles to play in making communication work, but frequently a disproportionate burden of this responsibility is put on subordinates. Outstanding work units require that employees bring issues to management unencumbered by second thoughts and anxiety. It's helpful to recognize that employees naturally respond differently to those in authority. While some are intimidated, others are bold and direct. Regardless, every supervisor should learn the skill of projecting approachability. Approachability is not just being friendly or telling everyone in the room that there is an "open door policy." Instead, a supervisor uses his or her power of authority to help an individual *feel important to that supervisor*. The natural response is an employee who feels valued and safe. This causes the manager to appear approachable. A manager can demonstrate approachability with listening, asking questions, sharing time, valuing the opinion of a subordinate, and being receptive to what he or she can learn from employees. Many of these things are quickly communicated within minutes or seconds as a manager interacts with others during his or her day.

NOTES