

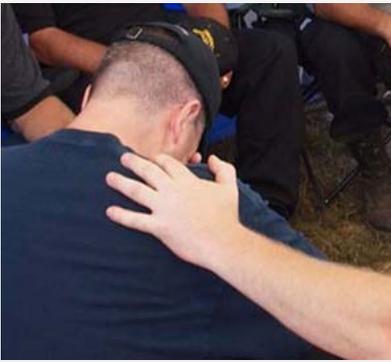
Supervisor/HR Supplement Newsletter

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Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

Responding to Critical Incidents

On September 10, 2001, Rudy Giuliani was seen as a pretty effective but abrasive Mayor of New York City who was going through a tabloid-nasty divorce as he neared the end of his time in office. A month later he was "America's Mayor," a possible presidential candidate and leadership role model. The difference was September 11 and Mayor Giuliani's response to that horrific event. It's the kind of event that public safety folks refer to as a "critical incident."



Critical incidents are incidents that don't happen often but have a big impact when they do. Once they hit, it's too late to plan. It's too late to plan because good planning requires you to think through, carefully and logically, what resources you need, what you need to do and what order you need to do things. That kind of planning takes time, but critical incidents don't allow you to have time. That's not all.

Remember that "fight or flight" reaction, the one where adrenaline fills your bloodstream? It's likely to happen when a critical incident hits. And when it does, it robs you of your ability to plan clearly. Your psychological system gets your body ready to fight or run away, by sending blood to all the major muscle groups. The large muscles of your arms and legs get lots of blood. Guess where it comes from?

Since your body can't make more blood for emergencies, it has to send blood to those muscles from someplace else. That someplace else is your brain. Normally the brain, which is just about two percent of body weight, gets about a fifth of the available blood. That's because the neurons that make up the brain need lots of oxygen-carrying blood to function effectively. As blood leaves your brain, bound for your arms and legs, you get less and less capable of rational thought.

You can't plan when a critical incident strikes because you don't have time and you don't have your usual brainpower. The only solution that works is to do your planning ahead of time. Make a list of possible critical incidents that might come calling. Some might be natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes or floods. Some will be things like a fire. Some will be organizational critical incidents, like the loss of a critical customer or shortage of a critical supply or the loss of power that runs critical equipment.

Once you've got your lists, figure what you need to do to handle each one. Get help. Two heads or even three can be better than one. Note what resources you'll need. If you can get some in advance, do it. Many folks likely to suffer weather disasters keep an emergency kit in the house with canned food, water, battery-powered radio and flashlights. Determine who should be notified. Decide what actions you should take. Then turn those things into an action list. Write the list down. You won't remember it. Your brain needs blood to remember, too. Then put the list where you can get at it quickly. When a critical incident strikes, get your list and start working down it.

Remember, first make a list of the critical incidents that are likely to befall you. List what you'll need to have and do in order to deal with each one. Take whatever preparatory actions you can. Then create an action list for each critical incident and put it where you can find it.

Your Employee Assistance Program has resources available to assist employees and supervisors through critical incidents. Group or one-on-one counseling is available as well as resources for disaster assistance, management consultations, and much more.

www.agreatsupervisor.com

Deer Oaks EAP Services, your Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks at:

1 (866) 327-2400

eap@deeroaks.com

www.deeroaks.com

The Walking Principles



Most of us take walking for granted, but it is really a fairly complex task. You've got to coordinate the movement of lots of muscles and direct their actions through your own personal guidance system.

You can learn a lot that will help your supervision from understanding how we learned to walk. Almost everyone who has got the proper physical equipment learns to walk. Complex task or not, daunting challenge to robotics researchers or not, we all seem to learn to do it. But not everyone becomes a world-class runner. That takes special skills and talent and development.

Learning to walk is like learning many of the tasks that you will be called upon to supervise. Most of them are things that almost anyone can learn to do. For just about any skill you can name, one or another of the people who work for you will show an exceptional talent for it. They will learn the task faster, and they will perform at higher levels with less effort than others.

This is really important for you to remember if you were one of those super-talented individual contributors. You may have a tendency to expect others to match your level of performance when that may not be possible, simply because they don't have the talent that you do. Which leads us to learning. Everybody falls down when they are learning to walk. Everybody fails when they are learning a task.

We praise babies just for trying to walk. In fact, if you have ever been around the new parents of a baby who is just starting to get up to the kneeling position, you will notice that we praise them well before they start to walk.

We praise them for trying to get up. Then we praise them for getting up. Then we praise them for trying to crawl and for crawling, when that happens. We take pictures of baby's first steps and shower the little darling with praise. Because we encourage them, babies work real hard to try to learn to walk. The same thing will work with most of your folks. If you encourage them, they are more likely to continue the behaviors you want. Remember: praise the things you want to continue.

Examples of Employee Motivation

- *Listen:* Many employees feel that they do not have a chance to voice their opinions, feelings or ideas to their supervisor often enough. Set a goal to spend a little face time with at least one employee per week.
- *Show Appreciation:* Set a goal to let at least one employee per week know how much you appreciate their efforts. Be specific with this feedback—allude to recent work or project in which the employee excelled
- *Professional Growth:* Strive to facilitate an environment in which your employees feel you support their goals of professional growth.

What is really important here is that we don't wait until a baby can do the walking task effectively before we praise the baby. We don't wait until that child is able to trot down to the store and pick up some groceries for us. Instead, we praise the efforts, we praise the small wins, and we get good performance. It works for walking and it works for just about everything your people need to learn.

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Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have related to their employees and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

- Q. What are the most common bullying behaviors in the workplace? I would like to know what they are so I am more likely to spot them or believe employees when they come to me with complaints.**
- A.** According to one study, the most common bullying behaviors in the workplace include: falsely accusing someone of errors; staring at, glaring at, and nonverbally intimidating the person; discounting the person's thoughts or feelings, such as by saying "Oh, I can tell you're new here," saying "Duh," or "Everyone knows that"; giving a coworker or subordinate the silent treatment; and making up rules on the fly. Other common bullying tactics include backstabbing, assigning undesirable work, and socially isolating the victim from coworkers. You can learn more about bullying behaviors from the EAP, but a comprehensive list is also available from the Workplace Bullying Institute. Educating employees about bullying has a major impact on preventing it. As you can see, some of these behaviors are difficult to measure, but you're right, knowing what they are will help you hear complaints with a more open mind and be less likely to minimize their significance.
- Q. I admit to micromanaging my employees, but is it always a bad thing? What if the project is really important? I admit to not being able to control this problem, but I can't let go of important things that I delegate to employees. How do I find a balance?**
- A.** It appears you have doubts about the competence of the employees to whom you are delegating. You may have realistic concerns. Issues like micromanaging are not all black and white. Your task is to step back, identify the pattern of over managing, and experiment with pulling back to develop more balance in your approach. The EAP can support and coach you to be more successful. The hard costs of micromanaging are many; the most notable, of course, is being resented by your employees. That's a big price to pay for the problem. The primary issues that drive micromanagement are usually mostly psychological. Either you don't trust employees, are too caught up and overtaken by the details, live in fear of mistakes, or struggle with self-doubt. EA Professionals have a high success rate with solving this problem.
- Q. I think I write excellent documentation and correction memos. It's my primary way of communicating with employees regarding performance issues. Personal meetings are difficult to arrange and often must be rescheduled. Should I make a greater effort to meet, even if I feel that I am efficient already?**
- A.** Effective documentation is an important skill for supervisors; however, good communication is an even more important skill to master. When you discover problems with employees, your most important goal is to resolve them. It's a common mistake among supervisors to remain at a distance from employees, send emails and documents, and call that communication. You can discuss problems this way, but solving them requires much more. A performance problem is a discrepancy between what you want from your employee and what you get. Typically there are many issues associated with performance discrepancies that written communication will not uncover. These include employee attitudes, skills, interference from others, organizational issues, and ineffective teamwork. Rolling up your sleeves and diving into the issues to improve productivity is what is really needed. Resisting the temptation to communicate primarily within a digital world is your challenge.

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