
Supporting Employee Wellbeing

Adult Friendships and EAP Resources

Supervisors play an important role in supporting employee well-being by recognizing factors that may affect performance, attendance, and overall morale. While workplace demands are often the most visible sources of stress, personal relationship challenges—including changes in adult friendships—can also have a meaningful impact on employees.

Adult friendships provide connection, emotional support, and opportunities to manage stress. When these relationships are strong, they can help employees maintain resilience and overall well-being. When friendships become strained, change, or end, the emotional impact may carry into the workplace and affect focus, engagement, and behavior.

The Importance of Adult Friendships

As employees take on increasing responsibilities—both at work and at home—maintaining friendships can become more difficult. Changes in schedules, caregiving roles, health, and life transitions can all affect how relationships function over time. Despite these challenges, strong social connections remain an important protective factor for mental health and well-being.

Employees experiencing challenges in their friendships may show signs such as:

- Increased stress or emotional fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawal or irritability
- Decreased morale

While these changes may be subtle, they can influence workplace performance and team dynamics over time.

Boundaries in Adult Relationships

Healthy adult friendships often depend on clear and appropriate boundaries. Boundaries allow individuals to manage their time, energy, and emotional capacity while maintaining respectful connections.

Employees who are navigating boundary-related challenges may experience stress, guilt, or conflict—particularly as they balance personal and work responsibilities. It is important to recognize that setting boundaries is not a sign of disengagement. Instead, it can help prevent burnout, reduce interpersonal strain, and support long-term well-being.

Friendship Loss as an Emotional Stressor

Friendships may change or end due to conflict, relocation, shifting priorities, or other life transitions. Unlike other forms of loss, friendship changes are not always openly acknowledged, even though they can involve significant emotional impact.

Employees experiencing friendship loss may report:

- Sadness or loneliness
- Confusion or self-doubt
- Emotional distraction or ongoing stress

Because these experiences are often private, employees may not readily seek support or discuss their challenges.

Encouraging Healthy Workplace Connections

While maintaining professionalism is essential, positive and respectful workplace relationships can support engagement, teamwork, and morale. Supervisors can encourage a supportive environment by:

- Modeling respectful communication and healthy boundaries
- Promoting inclusion and teamwork across groups
- Reinforcing a culture of respect and psychological safety
- Being mindful of team dynamics and interpersonal interactions

Creating an environment where employees feel connected and supported can contribute to both well-being and performance.

The Supervisor's Role

Supervisors are not expected to manage personal relationship issues or provide counseling. However, maintaining awareness of how personal stress can impact work performance allows supervisors to respond appropriately and supportively.

Effective practices include:

- Recognizing that personal stressors can influence workplace behavior
- Maintaining a consistent, respectful, and professional approach
- Encouraging awareness of available support resources
- Sharing EAP information during routine communications

Maintaining professional boundaries while reinforcing available resources supports both employee well-being and operational effectiveness.

EAP as a Support Resource

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential support for a wide range of personal concerns, including relationship challenges. EAP services are not limited to crisis situations and can help employees manage everyday stressors.

EAP support may include:

- Assistance with relationship concerns and communication challenges
- Support for processing friendship changes or loss
- Guidance on setting healthy personal boundaries
- Coping strategies for stress, loneliness, or life transitions

EAP services are voluntary, free, and confidential*. Participation does not affect employment status or performance evaluations.

When supervisors actively reinforce the availability of support resources and acknowledge the connection between personal well-being and job performance, employees are more likely to feel supported and engaged.

Promoting awareness of EAP and encouraging respectful, professional connections in the workplace helps foster a culture of care, accountability, and resilience—benefiting both employees and the organization as a whole.

Encouraging employees to reach out—early and proactively—can help support their well-being and promote a more resilient workforce.

**EAP counselors have master's degrees and are licensed professionals. Your privacy is protected by strict federal and state confidentiality laws and regulations and by professional ethical standards for counselors. Information you share with the EAP may not be released to anyone without your prior written consent, except as required by law (e.g. when a person's emotional condition is a threat to him or herself or others, or there is suspected child or elder abuse) or the issuance of a court order upon a showing of good cause.*