

## Eli's Rehab Report

### Human Resources: Help Your Employees Deal With Their Baggage

**When one of your employees experiences a personal tragedy, it can affect the entire office.**

If you expect your employees to leave their personal issues at home, you could be making a grave mistake. As a supervisor, you need to work with them to pull through their issues and become better employees for your company.

Daniel Harkavy, author of "Becoming A Coaching Leader," offers this six-step plan to help get your employees on the right track:

1. "Acknowledge that there is a problem," says Harkavy. Perhaps one of your employees has been performing under par lately, even though she is normally a great worker. Or maybe she seems depressed or overly sensitive. These are all indications that something is wrong. As her supervisor, you cannot expect her to deal with these issues on her own and perform normally at work. You must sit down with her and tell her that you've noticed a problem and you want to help her work through it.

2. "Emphasize that you're here to help so she can return to performing for the company," Harkavy recommends. While you need to understand where she's coming from, she needs to understand that her performance has been slipping lately, and she needs to correct that. You can show her that you want to help and still let her know that she needs to make some changes before her career begins to suffer.

3. "Set realistic expectations and timelines," Harkavy advises. If your employee is suffering from a domestic dispute like a divorce, understand that she will need some time to adjust. The timeline you set up for her to get back on track should reflect that. Don't expect her to be back to normal by next week. Try setting more manageable deadlines or breaking things up into smaller projects for her at first, then gradually getting her back to her normal workload.

4. "Map out a strategy with your employee," Harkavy suggests. Develop solid, concise action plans based on your employee's life plan. A life plan includes the things that are most important to your employee, such as her children. Meeting business goals and plans cannot happen without a successful life plan, he asserts.

For example: Your employee may be distraught because her divorce is hurting her children emotionally, and that may be one of the biggest sources for her stress. Help her to decide how she can take time out of her day to spend more time with her children to help them adjust to the new situation.

5. "Follow up," says Harkavy. Don't just assume that your original conversation has completely improved her situation. You must continue meeting with her regularly to discuss her progress, both at getting her life back together at home and getting her back on track at work. Set up regular meeting times every two weeks, he suggests.

6. "Be flexible, but know where to put your foot down," Harkavy warns. While it's true that you do need to work with your employee to help her get back on her feet, you don't want to be a doormat either. If she cannot get herself back together within the reasonable amount of time you both agreed on, she must know there will be consequences.

Becoming a coaching leader and helping your employees work through their issues as they arise is a surefire way to improve your leadership skills and ultimately increase production and revenue for your company -- all while fostering and maintaining positive relationships with your employees.