

Enabling Poor Performance In The Workplace

Supervisor

- Ignoring job performance problems, hoping they will go away, or are temporary.
- Threatening disciplinary action without following through on such threats.
- Avoiding confrontation of employees who are considered friends.
- Avoiding confrontation because you do have similar behavior patterns to the employee with performance concerns.
- Accepting excuses for ongoing job performance problems.
- Accepting employee's request to avoid use of the EAP in favor of other helping options.
- Ignoring the return of job performance problems after an EAP referral until the problems reach an intolerable level.
- Not acting to arrange a reasonable suspicion breath test when the odor of alcohol exists—accepting excuses (medicine, etc.) for it.
- Protecting the employee from personnel actions while increasing personal involvement to assist the employee.

Work/Organization

- Transferring the employee to another division or department to “get rid of” the problem. Using transfers as disciplinary actions.
- Failing to take action when promised in response to performance problems.
- Alcohol/drug policy lacks effectiveness or is applied inconsistently.
- Ignoring repeated complaints of coworkers affected by behavior of the problem employee.
- Failing to insist on compliance with EAP recommendations after a performance referral has been made to the EAP.
- Ignoring behavior of executive level employees with obvious drinking or behavior problems or the inability to intervene.
- Viewing employee as “indispensable” despite problems, perhaps because of job skills, knowledge, longevity with the organization, etc.

Coworker

- Accepting apologies and assurances for the temporary nature of problems.
- Failing to confront problems caused by absenteeism and tardiness.
- Doing the job of coworker. Feeling sorry for coworker. Caring and understanding “too much.”
- Failing to confront drinking or drugging practices for fear of losing a friend.
- Considering coworker a “functional alcoholic” who doesn't affect you (yet.)
- Protecting a coworker from management.
- Promising to confront coworker if problems get worse, and then adapting to “worse”, and not confronting coworker.
- “Working around” the behaviors of a under-performing coworker in order to maintain a functional relationship (i.e., anticipating mood swings, irritability in work interactions, covering for missed assignments.)
- Loaning large amounts of money.

High Risk Jobs Where Drug/Alcohol Use May Be Excused

- High value placed on social activity with frequent use of alcohol, use of alcohol at lunch, etc. (e.g. lawyers are more likely to drink at lunch than school teachers. High male demographic work groups with strong social ties consume more alcohol.)
- Official rest breaks that allow for alcohol use.
- Industries characterized by frequent opportunity to use alcohol (or drugs.) For example, organizations with higher rates of business travel, sales travel, evening work shifts with after-hours socializing with alcohol; isolated employees without direct supervision (e.g. non-office-like environments); exposure to served alcoholic beverages (airlines, hotel, restaurants); accessibility to addictive drugs – pharmaceutical, medical, and nursing occupations.
- Self-employed persons.
- Alcohol/drug policy lacks effectiveness or fear encourages cover-up.

