

What's the difference between micromanaging and "micro-coaching"?

Most employees dislike micromanagement, but supervisors sometimes fall into it without realizing it. The idea of micro-coaching helps clarify the difference between controlling employees and developing them. Micromanaging happens when a supervisor closely controls how work is done. For example, after assigning a task you might ask, "Did you do it the way I told you?" You may repeatedly check in, correct small details, hover over the work, or redo it yourself. Over time, this approach discourages initiative and creates employees who focus more on avoiding mistakes than on doing their best work. Micro-coaching takes a different approach. Instead of controlling the process, you guide the employee's thinking. Questions such as "What's your plan?" "What did you learn from that?" or "What might make this even better?" help employees analyze their work, build confidence, and improve their skills. When supervisors use micro-coaching, employees are more likely to take ownership, adapt, and grow. If you want additional ideas for strengthening your supervisory skills, the EAP is available to provide confidential consultation and coaching.

I've been a supervisor for 17 years and feel I'm attuned to my employees' needs. Still, I often hear that emotional intelligence is a challenge for supervisors, even experienced ones like me. Why is that?

Emotional intelligence is widely recognized as an important leadership skill, yet many supervisors underestimate its impact or misunderstand what it means. Some view it as a "soft" or overly sensitive concept meant mainly to benefit others. In reality, emotional intelligence is a practical skill that improves decision-making, communication, and team performance. One example is the ability to "read the room." A supervisor who pauses briefly when entering a meeting to observe the tone, mood, and energy of the group gains useful information. Instead of immediately launching into business topics, they can adjust their communication style, ask better questions, and respond more thoughtfully. These small moments of awareness often lead to more productive discussions, stronger engagement, and less tension among team members. Emotional intelligence is not simply about being considerate. It is about recognizing how emotions influence workplace dynamics and using that awareness to lead more effectively.

My truck driver asked me if he could take a nap every day at 1 p.m. after lunch. He says it's a safety issue because he recently had a close call and worries about falling asleep on the highway. Am I being misled, or is this something I should consider?

Take the concern seriously, but do not try to resolve it on your own. Because the employee has mentioned a safety risk and experienced a close call, consult with the EAP for guidance and consider referring the employee for a confidential assessment through a Supervisor Referral. The EAP can help determine whether further evaluation is needed, such as screening for sleep apnea or other sleep-related conditions. You should also involve Human Resources and follow your organization's policies, especially if the position is safety-sensitive. Questions may need to be explored, including whether the fatigue reported is related to diet, sleep habits, a medical condition, or another factor that affects fitness for duty. Avoid granting a standing request to nap during work hours without appropriate review and documentation. Any accommodation related to fatigue or medical concerns should be supported by proper evaluation and aligned with company policy. Addressing the issue thoughtfully protects the employee, the public, and the organization.





A lunchroom gossip circle sometimes includes talk about coworkers' private business, rumors, and personal matters behind their backs. Most of the chatter is harmless, but negativity and mocking occasionally creep in. How should I intervene?

Informal gatherings can help employees relax and connect, but they should not damage morale or trust. When gossip or mocking appears, address it early so it does not become part of the workplace culture. One helpful concept to introduce is psychological safety. In a healthy workplace, employees feel confident they will not be mocked, targeted by rumors, or made to feel excluded. Supervisors can reinforce this expectation by reminding employees that everyone shares responsibility for maintaining a respectful environment. Model the behavior you expect. Use respectful language, redirect conversations that drift into gossip, and encourage discussions that are constructive rather than personal. Over time, consistent modeling and gentle redirection can shift the tone of these interactions. If the pattern continues, consider brief training or discussion about respectful communication and workplace culture. The EAP can also provide education or guidance to help teams build a more respectful and supportive environment.



I recently had a casual conversation with an employee who mentioned that several weeks ago he seriously thought about ending his life after his spouse left him. He says he is past that now and denies having those thoughts anymore. I suggested the EAP, but he says the crisis has passed. Should I still consult with the EAP?

Yes. Consulting with the EAP is appropriate and your conversation will remain confidential. When an employee mentions recent suicidal thoughts, even if they say the crisis has passed, it is important to seek professional guidance rather than trying to assess the situation yourself. Employees sometimes minimize or dismiss earlier thoughts once they begin to feel better, but a consultation with the EAP can help you determine reasonable next steps. The EAP can coach you on how to check in with the employee, how to encourage him to contact the program, and what warning signs to watch for if stress increases again. Reaching out to the EAP also supports your responsibility as a supervisor to respond thoughtfully when a potential safety concern arises. It helps ensure your actions are consistent with workplace policies and gives you a clearer plan for supporting the employee while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Finally, consulting with the EAP can reduce the uncertainty supervisors often feel in situations like this. Instead of worrying about whether you are doing the right thing, you will have guidance from professionals trained to respond to these concerns.

Continued EAP Challenge for the top Supervisors, Managers, and HR Professionals:

Your organization has received new EAP brochures with a Company Passcode to access **My Stress Tools** – a new suite of helpful tools on our website to manage stress. **Your homework:**

- (1) Go to the EAP website either by scanning the QR code on the new brochure or going to <https://eapacific.com/employees/my-stress-tools.html>;
- (2) Register for My Stress Tools (call us if you need your organization's Passcode, it's also on the new brochure);
- (3) Take the Stress Profiler and discover what small thing(s) you could do to reduce your stress this year;
- (4) Start doing that; and
- (5) Promote this to your employees so they reduce their stress and burnout and have a better year!

Your stressed employees probably won't do much if you don't believe it will help. Using **one small free tool** to reduce YOUR stress will help them be much more likely to take advantage of your experience and recommendations!



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