

DHSTogether
Employee & Organizational Resilience Program
Department of Homeland Security

Discussion Guide

Instructions for facilitators: Use these questions and true/false statements and the scenarios to facilitate a discussion with the group. There are no right answers for section 2, and facilitators should not offer up one answer as the “right” answer. Facilitators should not bring up or solicit information about employees’ medical or psychological conditions.

Please make sure that all employees receive the Resource Guide.

Section 1: True or False

1) Using the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or an outside counselor will cause you to lose your security clearance.

FALSE

First, the EAP is a confidential service and does not report to security.

More broadly, while an employee’s psychological condition may be relevant to his or her eligibility for a security clearance, seeking professional care for mental health issues should not be perceived to jeopardize an individual’s security clearance. On the contrary, failure to seek care actually increases the likelihood that psychological distress could escalate to a more serious mental condition, which could preclude an individual from performing sensitive duties.

In terms of required disclosure, the SF-86 “Questionnaire for National Security Positions” exempts you from having to report any counseling related to “strictly marital, family, grief not related to violence by you; or strictly related to adjustments from service in a military combat environment.”

2) Personal business should be kept out of the workplace.

FALSE

Everyone should behave professionally while they’re on duty. But that doesn’t mean everyone should pretend they don’t have any responsibilities or interests outside of work. In fact, it’s in the best interests of the organization to acknowledge and support employees as whole people in order to promote engagement and balance. Side effects of ignoring employees’ life needs can include absenteeism, tardiness, poor performance, turnover, and low morale.

3) If you are having performance issues and you go to the EAP, your supervisor can't take disciplinary action against you.

FALSE

Your supervisor can continue the disciplinary process regardless of whether you use the EAP. Managers have the right and responsibility to manage employee performance. The role of the EAP is to help the employee determine what's impacting their performance and how to improve.

A manager or an employee relations specialist may refer an employee to the EAP in the course of a conversation about poor performance. EAP may even be referenced as a resource in warning letters. The choice of whether or not use the EAP is ultimately up to the employee. At the same time, the employee is responsible for improving his or her own performance; simply talking to the EAP is not sufficient.

Section 2: Joe and Sally

If you were Sally's co-worker and saw her crying in the bathroom, what would you do?

Do you think Joe's supervisor should have done anything differently? If so, what?

What could Joe have done to more effectively deal with his stress?

What resources does your component offer that would support someone like Sally? How about someone like Joe? (*see accompanying Resource Guide*)