



# THE EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE MANAGER/SUPERVISOR NEWSLETTER



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

JULY  
17

## About the Employee Advisory Service (EAS)

*Life Can Be Hectic. EAS Can Help You Find Your Balance.*

EAS is always available to you and your household members. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact EAS by calling the Helpline.

## July Manager/Supervisor Webinar

*How to Recognize and Handle 21st Century Stress - Theirs and Yours*

Successful leaders in the 21st century are sensitive to the stress and challenges that are confronting both them and their employees. This presentation takes a deeper look into the impact that today's stress levels are having on individual employees and the organization, and provides several stress management strategies that can improve health and productivity for individuals and teams.

Thursday, July 27th  
2:00 – 3:00 PM

Register here:

<https://attendeegotowebinar.com/register/542117890450618625>

## Take a Free Mental Health Screening

Stressed?

Take a free anonymous mental health screening at:

<http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NJEAS>

Phone: 866-327-9133  
Web: [www.state.nj.us/csc](http://www.state.nj.us/csc)  
Email: [EAS\\_help@csc.nj.gov](mailto:EAS_help@csc.nj.gov)

# 10 Management Tips for Managing Difficult People

Many managers and supervisors are promoted to management positions based on their hard skills. Yet few of them have had training in the area of managing people. Especially managing difficult people. In conducting seminars on managing people, one challenge I hear managers and supervisors face nowadays is how to manage a difficult employee. You can't control them, but you can control their environment in the hopes of coaching the employee to better performance.



Here are 10 Management Tips for Managing Difficult People:

1. *Document, document, document.* As far as the courts are concerned, if it isn't written down it's as if it didn't happen. Even if you have a prospective employee sign a form saying they know they can be terminated at any time, without cause, and without warning or reason. You never want to terminate without proper documentation. Terminating an employee without cause, reason, or prior warning, can make it easier for the difficult person to win a wrongful termination lawsuit.
2. *Document training and coaching.* Any type of training you provide for your difficult employee is considered coaching. In managing difficult people, many managers assume the documentation is to build a case for termination. It is not! It's really to show everything you did to try and salvage the difficult employee. This includes any and all training. Whether you trained the employee, someone else trained them, or you sent them to a seminar to be coached to better performance.
3. *Avoid the word "attitude."* In managing difficult people, why would you want to avoid saying something like, "Pat, I don't like your attitude?" Because it's too subjective. It's not specific enough.
4. *Focus instead on specific behaviors or the quality of their work.* For example, what should you do if every time you delegate a special project to the difficult person, they fold their arms, exhale loudly, roll their eyes, and sarcastically mutter under their breath, "Okay, whatever?!" You would want to say in a low controlled tone something like, "Pat, every time I delegate a special project to you, the arms are folded, you're rolling your eyes, muttering under your breath, 'Okay, whatever.' What seems to be the cause of this?" Notice I listed specific behaviors. So focus on facts.
5. *Be objective, not subjective.* As mentioned, when managing difficult people, be objective by mentioning specific behaviors, or specific declines in the quality of their work. For example, when documenting the employee's "attitude," you might document the following: "Every time I delegated a special project to Pat so-and-so, he/she would fold their arms, exhale loudly, roll their eyes, and mutter under their breath, "Okay, whatever!" Now, if this were ever read by a jury, or your Human Resources department if you have one, or your manager, they would have a clear picture of this person's attitude.

"When managing difficult people, it's imperative that you make their goals and objectives measurable, specific, quantifiable, and in writing for accountability."

6. *Provide specific examples of the behavior or quality of work you want.* Put it in writing for accountability. When managing difficult people, it's imperative that as their manager or supervisor, you're making their goals and objectives clear. For example, if they're doing clerical work, they are to, "Correct and proofread all required reports for the quality control department." Or if they're in customer service, an example of a measurable, quantifiable, specific goal would be that they are to, "Respond to all customer complaints within 48 hours of receiving them." If they're in manufacturing, they are to, "Produce 35% more wingbats by December 15 of this year." You get the idea.

7. *Be aware of how you present yourself.* When managing difficult people, remember, you are their role model. Be aware of your eye contact. Typically look at the person for two to five seconds. You don't want to stare at them bug eyed! But you also don't want to avoid looking at them because you'll come across as too passive, too wishy-washy. They'll sense you're fearful of confrontation.

Having lots of eye contact can be difficult for some people because in some cultures, children are brought up that it's disrespectful to have eye contact with their elders. It can be difficult to unlearn these habits. Also, watch your tone of voice. Use a low controlled tone. Be aware of your body language, too. Study after study shows that 93% of what people notice and believe about you in face-to-face communication is based on your tone and body language.

8. *Be very clear and concise in spelling out the consequences of what could happen if they don't improve.* For example, if this is a verbal warning, you might say to the employee, "You know our policy here, and right now this is a verbal warning. As it says in our handbook, if there isn't sustainable and maintained improvement including and beyond the next thirty days, it could result in further disciplinary action. Or, it could even result in termination." In managing difficult people, one of the golden rules is you don't want the employee to ever be able to say that they "weren't warned." Or, "I didn't know. You didn't tell me that."

9. *Get at the root cause of what is causing the employee to be difficult in the first place.* For example, do they simply not like their job? Would they rather be in a different department? Are there personal issues going on with the difficult person that you need to know about? While it's not your business to know what they do outside of work, it is your business if it's something that's affecting their work performance.

You can simply say to the difficult person, "Is everything okay? Is there anything going on that I need to know about? Because this drop in performance just doesn't seem like you. As your manager/supervisor I want to see you succeed. And I've noticed a real decline in the quality of your work, for example...." Then, give very specific examples. Remember, be objective not subjective. Focus on facts. Attack the problem not the difficult person. Attack the behavior not the person.

In managing difficult people, a lot of this is common-sense. Yet, as mentioned earlier, most managers, supervisors and team leaders are promoted to leadership positions based on the fact that they were doing a great job. But that doesn't mean they know how to instinctively manage difficult people.

10. *In managing difficult people, have follow up performance-related meetings with the difficult employee.* For two reasons: First, it's what the courts want to see. Second, it does the employee a great disservice if they make a big turn-around and you don't acknowledge it. Have a date and a time in writing for when you and the difficult person are going to meet again. And do meet! According to research, one of the main reasons employee improvement plans fail is lack of follow-up on the part of the manager.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colleen Kettenhofen is a Phoenix, Arizona speaker, author and workplace expert. She is co-author of *The Masters of Success*, featured on NBC's *Today Show*. For free video clips, articles, e-newsletter visit <http://www.Colleenspeaks.com> Colleen is available for keynotes, breakout sessions and seminars by calling (800)323-0683. [colleen@colleenspeaks.com](mailto:colleen@colleenspeaks.com)

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# Ask EAS!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making referrals to EAS. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to EAS for a management consultation.

*Q. Documenting employees who participate in subtle abuse or bullying behaviors is sometimes difficult because one can't describe what's being witnessed, like tone of voice, for example. In the end, it just sounds like one's opinion!*

A. You are correct. Tone of voice is difficult to describe in documentation without being subjective, which may lead to its being dismissed by management as opinion. The way around this problem is to document reactions by the victim or others to the tone of voice. These effects are visible and therefore describable and measurable. Now you have something less refutable, not based on opinion. Several of these documented situations constitute a preponderance of evidence that supports the thrust of your documentation, which makes it useful for administrative purposes.

*Q. Should supervisors participate in conflict resolution sessions with employees, or refer these issues to EAS? It all seems a bit intimidating.*

A. Helping employees resolve differences is an important supervisory skill. Many resources for doing it exist. It is a myth that you must be formally trained to sit down with two warring workers and help them resolve differences. Find an approach that matches your work style and job setting. One effective model entails meeting with both employees together and having each explain their side of the conflict. Don't make judgments, just listen. Next, meet each employee separately and encourage a full venting. Listen empathically. Ask for ideas about resolution. After these three meetings, you will witness a dramatic temporary diminishment of tension. This comes from venting and anticipation of change that each employee experiences. Meet together, discuss ideas—theirs and yours—and write an agreement. Follow up in a week and again in four weeks. Reinforce positive change. Consult with EAS if needed along the way, but refer your employees to EAS upon any re-emergence of the conflict, and give a strong message of accountability and expectations for the conflict's resolution.

*Q. How can EAS help me as a supervisor in developing and improving my relationships with employees?*

A. The success of the supervisory role is largely dependent on the effectiveness of relationships that you have with employees. An effective relationship allows you to play an influential role in maximizing the job satisfaction and productivity of your workers. There is more to achieving these goals than most supervisors realize. EAS counselors have resources and counseling skills, and they understand relationship dynamics that can help. Developing and enhancing emotional intelligence is the path to success, and EAS can consult with you on ways to improve relationships and enhance them in specific ways—determining how to motivate employees, utilize their talents better, help them feel rewarded, and listen to and understand their needs. You want employees to be honest with you, open up, share their workplace struggles and their ideas, and tell you how they can best be utilized. All of this depends on your ability to be your authentic self, open up, exercise patience, and demonstrate vulnerability. These are relationship skills that EAS' expertise can help you attain and develop.

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