

Ways to Avoid ARMCHAIR DIAGNOSIS

When these rules are broken, obvious or subtle forms of diagnostic thinking on the part of the supervisor probably exist.



1 **Avoid discussions with** employees about the nature of their personal problems. A listening ear is okay, but use it as a precursor to suggesting use of the EAP.

2 **Avoid the temptation** to give advice about what to do with regard to the employee's personal problem. Follow the "80/20" rule – you'll never know more than 80% of the nature of the true problem.

3 **Never assume** the employee has diagnosed their own problem accurately when it is offered as an explanation to explain job performance deficiencies. Still suggest the EAP.

4 **Never assume** that evidence of seeking help for a personal problem means the personal problem is being properly treated, particularly if performance problems persist.

5 **Never assume** that because an employee is experiencing a personal problem similar to a problem you once experienced that you can provide guidance and advice to the employee.

6 **Avoid trying to** determine the nature of a personal problem. Do not believe that you must determine whether a personal problem exists before you can refer an employee to the EAP. Supervisor referrals are based upon job performance problems, not personal problems—even if known, or believed known.

7 **Always base** supervisor referrals on documentation of job performance problems or incidents. Do not base a supervisor referral on your judgment that the employee will benefit from it.

8 **Never assume** an alcohol or drug problem is properly treated simply because the employee reports having quit. There is a difference between self-imposed abstinence and understanding how to manage addictive disease properly using an applied daily program of recovery recommended by addiction specialists.

9 **Ask your employee** what is causing job performance problems. This is not a diagnostic question. If the response is a personal problem—refer to the EAP. Further discussion of the personal problem, and what to do about it will usually diminish motivation to use the EAP.

10 **Do not ask employees** if they have personal problems interfering with job performance. Employees will usually deny it, or give an "acceptable answer". Instead, suggest that your employee call the EAP in the event a personal problem is interfering with job performance.

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your health care provider or EAP for advice about a personal concern or medical condition.