

Leading Well – August 2026

Practical Questions & Answers for Frontline Leaders

Q: One of my employees seems overwhelmed. She frequently mentions having too much on her plate and appears stressed, but when I ask how I can help, she insists she's fine. What should I do?

A: Employees don't always ask for help when they need it. Some worry about appearing weak, burdening others, or creating concerns about their performance. Rather than repeatedly asking if they're okay, focus on what you've observed.

Try saying, "I've noticed you've seemed to be stretched pretty thin lately. Is there anything getting in the way of your work that we should discuss?" This keeps the conversation focused on workplace observations rather than personal assumptions.

While leaders cannot solve every challenge an employee faces, they can create opportunities for support. Sometimes simply knowing someone noticed can make a meaningful difference.

If concerns continue or you're unsure how to approach the situation, consider consulting the EAP for guidance.

Q: I often find myself jumping in to solve problems for my employees. Isn't that part of being a good leader?

A: Supporting employees is an important part of leadership, but constantly rescuing employees from challenges can unintentionally create dependency. Strong leaders provide guidance, resources, and coaching while encouraging employees to develop their own problem-solving abilities.

Before providing the answer, try asking questions such as, "What options have you considered?" or "What do you think the next step should be?" These conversations help employees build confidence and ownership.

The goal is not to remove every obstacle. The goal is to help employees become more capable of navigating challenges on their own.

Q: Several employees have complained that workloads are not distributed fairly across the team. How should I respond?

A: Perceptions of fairness can be just as important as fairness itself. Employees may not always see the full picture of assignments, responsibilities, or competing priorities.

Begin by evaluating whether the concern has merit. If workloads truly are uneven, address the imbalance. If workloads are appropriate, communicate the rationale behind decisions whenever possible.

Avoid becoming defensive. Employees are more likely to accept difficult decisions when they understand how those decisions were made. Transparency helps build trust, even when employees don't receive the outcome they hoped for.

Many workplace frustrations grow in environments where communication is limited. Clear expectations and consistent communication remain two of the most effective leadership tools available.

Q: An employee recently shared that she cares for an aging parent while also raising teenagers. She seems exhausted and frequently worries about balancing everything. Is this something the EAP can help with?

A: Absolutely. Many employees associate EAP services solely with counseling, but employee assistance programs often provide support for a wide range of life challenges, including caregiver stress, family concerns, eldercare resources, work-life balance issues, and emotional wellbeing.

As a leader, your role is not to become the employee's counselor or case manager. Instead, you can remind employees of available resources and encourage them to seek support when appropriate.

Employees who feel overwhelmed by competing demands often benefit from discussing their situation with a professional who can help them identify resources, evaluate options, and develop practical strategies for managing stress.

Sometimes the most helpful thing a leader can do is connect employees with resources designed to support them.