

Conversation Scripts for EAP & Supervisors

Guidance for EAP Professionals – Bridging the Gaps

Introduction

Difficult conversations about employee performance, stress, or potential substance use can be challenging. This guide provides **structured scripts and strategies** to help EAP professionals and supervisors approach these discussions confidently, respectfully, and effectively.

These scripts are **not prescriptive**—adapt language to fit your organizational culture and the unique needs of the employee while following confidentiality and compliance policies.

1. Preparing for the Conversation

Before initiating a discussion:

- Review employee behavior or performance documentation objectively.
 - Identify the **purpose of the conversation** (support, clarification, referral, coaching).
 - Choose a **private, confidential location** for discussion.
 - Gather relevant resources (EAP contacts, wellness tools, referral options).
 - Set a **time limit** (30–45 minutes) and plan for follow-up.
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2. Opening the Conversation

Goal: Establish a supportive tone and demonstrate concern.

Script Example:

“Thank you for meeting with me today. I want to check in with you about some observations and see how you’re doing. My goal is to ensure you have the support you need to succeed.”

Tips:

- Keep language **neutral and empathetic**.
 - Avoid assumptions or judgmental statements.
 - Allow the employee to speak first if they wish.
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3. Discussing Observed Behaviors or Performance

Goal: Focus on observable behaviors and patterns without labeling or diagnosing.

Script Example:

“I’ve noticed that over the past few weeks, there have been several missed deadlines and changes in your engagement with the team. I wanted to check in and understand if there’s anything affecting your work.”

Tips:

- Use **specific examples** rather than generalizations.
 - Avoid stigmatizing or personal language (e.g., “You seem like you have a problem”).
 - Frame the discussion around **support and solutions**.
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4. Offering Support & Resources

Goal: Provide options for help and emphasize voluntary participation.

Script Example:

“We have resources available through our Employee Assistance Program that many employees find helpful, including confidential counseling and wellness tools. Would you like me to share more information?”

Tips:

- Highlight confidentiality and voluntary nature of EAP services.
 - Offer multiple support options (internal and external).
 - Be prepared to provide written resources or links.
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5. Collaborating on Next Steps

Goal: Empower the employee to take an active role in their well-being and workplace performance.

Script Example:

“Let’s work together on a plan. We can schedule check-ins, discuss accommodations if needed, and review resources that may help. What would feel most helpful to you?”

Tips:

- Encourage open dialogue and employee input.
 - Set clear follow-up expectations (dates, responsibilities).
 - Document the plan and share with relevant parties while maintaining confidentiality.
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6. Handling Resistance or Denial

Goal: Maintain professionalism and support even if the employee is defensive.

Script Example:

“I understand this may feel unexpected. My role is to ensure you have access to support if you want it. We can take this one step at a time and review options together.”

Tips:

- Remain calm, patient, and non-confrontational.
 - Avoid arguing or trying to force disclosure.
 - Reaffirm that resources are available whenever the employee is ready.
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7. Closing the Conversation

Goal: End on a supportive, forward-looking note.

Script Example:

“Thank you for taking the time to discuss this today. I’ll follow up with you on [date] to see how things are going, and remember, you have access to confidential support anytime.”

Tips:

- Summarize next steps clearly.
 - Reinforce the availability of EAP resources.
 - Document the conversation for compliance and follow-up.
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8. Quick Reference Table: Sample Scripts by Scenario

Scenario	Opening	Key Points	Support Offer
Performance decline	"I've noticed X and want to check in."	Focus on behaviors, avoid assumptions	EAP services, wellness tools
Stress / burnout	"I see you're under pressure and want to support you."	Normalize stress, ask about needs	EAP counseling, workload review
Suspected substance use	"I've observed changes and want to ensure you're safe and supported."	Do not diagnose, document facts	EAP referral, confidential resources
Conflict with coworkers	"I understand there's been tension and want to discuss solutions."	Encourage employee input	Mediation, EAP coaching

Contact & Support

For further guidance or training:

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