Talk with the EAP for guidance on this matter. If a release is signed for
you at the treatment program, discuss it with the counselor there. Other-
wise, allow employees to make their own decisions rather than advocate

Speak to your human resources advisor regarding your responsibility to
manage or intervene in matters of this type. Also, rely on your organiza-
tion for guidance when you are unsure of your role in any matter involv-
ing misconduct. Facebook is not necessarily the equivalent of a private
conversation or interaction between two people if the abusive behavior is
visible to a wider audience. So the question about what employers can do
depends on a multitude of factors. Are these individuals easily identified
as employees of your organization on their Facebook page or other post-
ings found there? A disciplinary doctrine called “conduct unbecoming”
is sometimes used in many matters associated with misconduct by li-
censed professionals, the military, law enforcement, and similarly regu-
lated employees who are visible to the public or representing their em-
ployers in situations where reputation and conduct must be beyond re-
proach. Regardless, if the behavior carries over to the workplace, your
intervention in that context would be appropriate. The EAP can also play
a role within this context and can consult with you, informing you re-
garding how its services can best used.

The EAP adage that employees do not leave their problems at the front
door when they come to work is a rallying cry for the growth of EAPs,
but another part of this reality is that employees must be appropriately
confronted when personal problems interfere with their productivity,
attendance, quality of work, availability, and attitude. No supervisor will
be able to prevent an employee from bringing his or her personal prob-
lems to work. However, supervisors can play a powerful role in helping
employees seek help earlier before interference occurs. This is what
drives EAP utilization up. The promotion of the EAP to supervisors is
crucial, allowing these managers to feel empowered in confronting em-
ployees and confident that the EAP is a viable resource. Avoiding any
delay in supervisor referrals is also key.

How can supervisors play a role in helping employees not bring their problems to work, and separating their home life from their work life so productivity is not affected?

We have an employee who has entered a drug and alcohol treatment program.

I have a couple of em-
ployees who are bullying
and harassing another
worker on Facebook. I
am not sure I can do
anything about this
problem because it is ob-
viously occurring outside
of work. Are my hands
tied? It’s causing tension
on the job, but the em-
ployees’ quality of work
remains unaffected.
Some employees may lose their jobs in the coming year — we are just not sure when. This is obviously stressful for employees. I told everyone to take advantage of the EAP’s services, but I am concerned about employees who won’t go. How else can I help them?

When fear of job loss looms, employees worry about bills, the future, and their survival. Fear can cause employees to lose sleep, spend less time preparing healthy meals, lose motivation for exercise, avoid leisure activities, become isolated, eat more comfort food, procrastinate on important chores, experience depression, and not exert themselves to participate in activities that they once found pleasurable. You may pick up on these reactions while someone is on the job. It is at this time that you should reinforce the value message of the EAP. A study recently showed that fear of job loss was linked to increased risk of diabetes. Researchers reviewed data from nearly 141,000 workers in the United States, Europe, and Australia. Investigators found that diabetes rates were 19 percent higher among those who felt their employment was at risk (job insecurity) compared to people who felt secure in their jobs. The study did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship, but you can see that some of these behaviors increase risk for the disease.

The most difficult shift in thinking for supervisors to make when a company is installing an EAP and training people to use it is adapting to the idea of making a referral when an employee looks perfectly well but their performance is not satisfactory. It is a counterintuitive behavior that most managers have not experienced. Why refer someone to get help when they look like a million dollars? This “paradigm shift,” as it is referred to, is also difficult because the employee resists in the same way the supervisor resists. Resistance from the employee concerning referral may be fierce for the same reasons. Although it is possible your fellow supervisors have not had the occasion to refer someone, this explanation is the most likely one.