



Exercise: Eliciting Opinions

When trying to manage distressed workers, and negative workplace emotions in general, it can be challenging to know exactly what to say, suggest, or do to “fix” a situation. An important thing to keep in mind is that most of us are experts when it comes to our own lives. It sounds obvious, but each of us has lived our whole life with our self, we have seen ourselves through good times and bad times, and we often have a good sense of what makes us feel better and what makes us feel worse. When someone is distressed, it can be useful for a manager to ask them “*What could I do that would be helpful to you?*”

Make a point of touching base with each person who works under your supervision. Ask them if there is anything you could do that could be helpful to them or improve the way they are able to do their job. Be aware of the number of times you receive a suggestion that may be small and simple, but that you may not have thought of on your own.

Doing this exercise routinely with each worker can help prepare you to act when one of them may be emotionally distressed. Rather than trying to gather all this information during a stressful time, you will have built a base of knowledge in advance, and it should be much easier to understand and communicate with a worker in an emotionally charged situation.