

Handle moody employees

Everyone has bad days. But a moody person may brood so much that it brings the whole team down.

If your employee's mood swings are extreme, propose professional counseling. For more routine behavior, try these management techniques:

Remain neutral. Maintain a pleasant, professional demeanor even when you're dealing with an irritable or downcast employee. Don't allow a staffer's gloominess to influence how you behave—or assume you should mirror it to show you understand. Your consistent response to even the most inconsistent personalities will bring stability to the workplace.

Observe, don't advise. To show your sensitivity, respond to a moody employee with a simple observation such as, "You seem down." Then keep quiet and see if the individual wants to open up. That's better than playing amateur shrink and dishing out unsolicited advice.

Introduce change. Moody employees may welcome a change in scenery or a new challenge. Assign them to visit a field office, give a speech or take a seminar. By forcing them to break out of their safe, predictable routines, you might invigorate them.

Control your expectations. You may get used to a worker's shifting moods and grow to expect certain behaviors at certain times. That's dangerous. If you anticipate someone will be moody on Monday mornings, for instance, you may look for evidence of such an attitude even when it's not there.