

# Ethics and the impaired employee

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



It is often the reaction of people with chemical dependencies to attempt to under-emphasize the severity of their addiction situation. The supervisor in this case study attempted to reinforce that Beverly's actions were strictly against policy, and seemed to use policy and expectations for compliance as a means to create a proper punishment. The methods used by the supervisor were very authoritative and did not take into consideration the importance of using a human resources-focused approach to handling the situation.

Instead, the supervisor should have considered issues of personal emotional intelligence and also the basic psychological needs of Beverly prior to launching into such a dramatic punishment program.

After Beverly states that she had four young children at home and had no other provider in the household to assist, the supervisor should have realized that Beverly's drinking problems were likely a product of a stresses involved with single parenthood and the constant financial struggle which being a sole provider can create. For example, there are many psychological theories of motivation which suggest that an individual must have a sense of security as well as a sense of belonging within an organization in order to achieve maximum workforce performance on the job. Beverly is likely experiencing lowered security because of her financial situation and likely feels that her long-term sense of importance within the organization is being threatened by such a strict focus on policy and compliance. By highlighting all of her problems, rather than discussing the reasons behind the problems, the supervisor in the case study is isolating Beverly from the rest of the organizational staff and sending the message that she is deeply troubled.

What Beverly required was for the supervisor to be more empathic to Beverly's needs and attempt to find out what might be creating the psychological motivation to drink. Addressing the issue from a different angle would likely have prevented Beverly from committing suicide. For example, the supervisor could have asked whether there were problems with colleagues or with the organizational structure itself, creating the opportunity for Beverly to be more open and honest about what was really going on with her impairment issues. The supervisor should have set a positive interpersonal environment right from the beginning where it was illustrated that the supervisor and the organization is concerned about the well-being of Beverly.

Though Beverly was given an opportunity to offer explanations about the research findings on her behaviors, she was likely embarrassed by being addressed as a person who has a drinking problem and is in need of help. An emotionally-aware supervisor would have realized that society often paints a negative picture of the chemically-dependent individual and tried different tactics to draw out discussion about the issue. The key would have been for the supervisor to respect the difficult emotions surrounding Beverly's drinking issues and addressed the issue more as a concerned colleague than a rigid, authoritarian manager looking to set policy compliance precedents. It could be that Beverly was severely distressed over having a chemical dependency, or perceived dependency, and could have used encouragement at this time.