Knowledge of the employee’s personal problem by the supervisor is not needed to manage performance, quality of work, attendance, or conduct on the job. This principle is why EAPs easily fit with personnel management models of organizations. Overarching reasons exist for not disclosing personal problems. They relate to confidentiality and perceived confidentiality of the EAP. The EAP’s acceptance by the workforce depends on positive word-of-mouth promotion almost entirely related to confidentiality. This is referred to as a “program of attraction.” It is a fragile dynamic easily damaged by any perception, false or otherwise, that personal problems are disclosed to management. False perceptions are easily created, but extremely difficult to tamp down. Strict procedures that support confidentiality help businesses avoid them.

When an organizational crisis exists, what can supervisors do to take charge and influence a large group of employees to remain calm and in control? I’ve had this experience a couple of times, and frankly I’ve felt caught off guard and not sure where to start or how to take charge.

Right! Inspiring employees is a supervisory function, but contrary to popular belief it is not just about giving a speech, praising an employee, or acting optimistic. Inspiring people is about creating an urge for them to do something, especially something creative. The best way to do this is by modeling behavior that inspires. Consider, which would inspire...
around catching employees doing something right, right?

you more: Listening to a motivational speaker give a speech or watching them perform what they preach all day? It would be the latter, of course. So, to inspire employees, consider modeling the following behaviors along with the attitudes that accompany them: passion for work, commitment, effort, integrity, teamwork, good communication, and vision. Show these positive behaviors consistently and you will be an inspiring leader.

Wait until an issue exhibits itself before you step in. Being supervised by a younger employee can raise difficult feelings, but behavior is everything in the workplace, so monitor it. Many older workers, “bothered” by an age difference at first, readily cope in healthy ways and see the upside. Can your employees cooperate and demonstrate mutual respect? If so, view the age difference as a nonissue. For many older workers, a younger supervisor can be an exciting opportunity to learn about different ways of doing things, perhaps better, and more about technology, experiencing the wonders of more efficiency. Some older workers may see a young supervisor as a representation of what they did not accomplish, but most will adapt successfully and this awareness may never turn to conflict. If conflict occurs, address it. If it does not subside, then involve the EAP. Problems you may see could include parenting-like behaviors on the part of the older worker, insubordination, disrespectful tone, arguing, or other forms of disrespect, even bullying.

The best argument for increasing one’s level of cultural sensitivity is to improve engagement of workers and their job satisfaction. Gallup polling organization has maintained a rolling seven-day average of this index since first reporting on it several years ago. It stood at only 31% recently for workers in general, but if you add discrimination and lack of cultural sensitivity to the mix of reasons normally cited, this problem is compounded. Improving cultural sensitivity is a professional responsibility, although larger organizations with training and education budgets can go about the task with more ease. To enhance your cultural competence (also referred to as cultural intelligence or “CQ,”) consider books such as David Livermore’s The Cultural Intelligence Difference. Another helpful resource is ExecutivePlanet.com. This website describes virtually every aspect of business communication, family values, and the social customs of every country in the world. Want to know what not to talk about when you meet someone from Paraguay? You’ll find it here.