

Spring
2011

Frontline Employee

MIIA Employee Assistance Program

Confidential Counseling

- Addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Family Issues
- Grief/Loss

Resources & Referrals

- Legal
- Financial
- Child Care
- Elder Care
- Work/Life

Stress Management

- Personal Concerns
- Professional Issues

800.451.1834

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This issue:

- Practicing Relationship Wellness
- Putting the Brakes on Impulse Buying
- Getting Excited about Spring
- April Is National Alcohol Awareness Month
- Recommending Counseling to a Friend
- Suffering with Codependency

Practicing Relationship Wellness

No one gets an instruction book the day they enter into a long-term relationship with someone they love, but a chapter in such a book might be titled: "Practicing Relationship Wellness." Like physical



wellness - the putting forth of effort to stay physically fit - relationship wellness is achieved by a deliberate effort to stay "relationship fit." Are you practicing relationship wellness? Use the following "tone-up tips" to prevent relationship disintegration: 1) Recognize that a deliberate effort is normal and necessary to nurture a relationship. As time passes, this conscious preventive maintenance becomes more important. 2) Taking the time to be together - going away for a weekend, having breakfast at a restaurant before work, or finding other ways of stopping the rush to enjoy each other's company - can provide powerful inputs for relationship health. 3) Start saying "thank you" and "I love you," as you did in the past. Over time, it's easy to turn off these little gems, but they are mini-reinforcements. 4) Talk, listen, and share your wishes and dreams more frequently. Could you quickly write a list of your partner's hopes and dreams? Try it. Swap lists to discover how much you really know. 5) Practice "random acts of investment" in your relationship: picking up a special dessert on the way home, doing an ignored chore, or buying a greeting card for no occasion. Each of these acts is a deliberate effort that interrupts tedium and nurtures your relationship along life's path.

Putting the Brakes on Impulse Buying

Impulse buying means purchasing any unplanned item, whether or not you



need it. Even if you only buy a pack of gum at the checkout or are lured down a fascinating store aisle, you must control impulse buying if you are on a budget. Forget using willpower. Instead, be practical: 1) Create a shopping list and stick to it. 2) Take only the cash you need for a specific purpose. 3) When you approach a checkout counter, keep your eyes laser-focused on the clerk, and avoid displays on your right and left. 4) Never use a store to kill time—even for a minute while pumping gas. 5) And the best tip: accept the fact that pennies and dollars add up. If you need more help controlling impulsive purchases, talk to your EAP or a mental health professional.

Getting Excited about Spring

Are you getting excited about spring? Take advantage of this time of renewal and increased energy to plan events and participate in activities that cause you to look forward, create healthy distractions from work stress, and give you more balance in your life. Whether your activity is indoor germinating of garden seeds prior to planting, getting rid of stored junk in a weekend garage sale, or arranging short getaway trips to avoid last-minute planning and lost weekends that fly by, these spring "tune-up" activities will lift your mood and provide a feeling of accomplishment you will be thankful for later.



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April Is National Alcohol Awareness Month

Alcohol affects tens of millions of Americans on any given day. The person drinking is not the only one affected - coworkers, classmates, family members and friends are often impacted as well. Statistics show that teens, college students and adults are all susceptible to using and/or abusing alcohol.

- **Alcohol affects your brain.** Because alcohol circulates through your blood-stream, it impacts your brain functioning. Alcohol slows your reflexes, impairs your judgment, lowers your inhibitions, distorts your vision, affects your coordination, and may lead to memory lapses or blackouts.
- **Alcohol affects your body.** Numerous health problems are associated with alcohol; alcohol can cause damage to every organ in your body. Unintentional injuries, as well as chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis, cancers of the liver, mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus, and psychological disorders are caused and exacerbated by the use of alcohol.
- **Alcohol affects your life.** Decisions and choices made while using alcohol are not the same as those made while not under the influence. Careers, driving privileges, finances, relationships, mental and physical health are impacted in a variety of ways by a person's drinking.
- **Alcohol can hurt.** Even if you're not the one drinking, a loved one's drinking may negatively affect you. You may be involved in caring for someone who is out of control or ends up sick or injured because they are unable to take care of themselves. Women who are pregnant can harm the health and development of the fetus by drinking during the pregnancy.
- **Alcohol can kill.** Violence and accidents increase with the use of alcohol. Alcohol poisoning can occur if you consume alcohol rapidly or drink too much at once; this poisoning may cause a coma or death. Mixing alcohol with other drugs - including prescribed medications - can be a deadly combination.

Is the amount you drink harmful to your health? Take a screening at www.alcoholscreening.org to find out.

If you are concerned about your own or a loved one's drinking, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help! Call 800.451.1834 anytime to speak confidentially to a counselor, free of charge - get educated, get resources, get healthy!

Recommending Counseling to a Friend

If a friend approached you with a serious personal problem, would you know how to encourage him or her to get counseling? How you respond could affect whether your friend takes the steps to get help. The most important role you play is that of listener, not problem solver. If you quickly offer advice, you may frustrate the important need your friend has to feel heard. Listening and asking questions creates a natural pathway for exploring options. This is not professional counseling, and you are not trying to fix your friend's problems. Be careful not to encourage your friend to become dependent on you for ongoing "processing" of the problem. This can contribute to personal problems growing worse. You may feel gratified by your friend opening up to you, but avoid putting your need for feeling special ahead of your friend's need for a trusted source of help. Do you feel stuck with a friend who won't get help and with whom you have developed an "on-call" relationship? If so, speak with a professional counselor to learn how to step out of this role and facilitate your friend seeking effective help.

Suffering with Codependency

Codependency represents patterns of thinking and behaving that contribute to unhealthy communication, control and manipulation, and other types of dysfunctional interaction within relationships. Most people affected by codependency experienced dysfunctional communication in their childhood, and many report having lived with a person who was mentally ill or an alcoholic. Codependency interferes with one's ability to have an emotionally satisfying and mature relationship characterized by mutual positive regard and feelings of intimacy, safety, and security. Many professional counselors specialize in helping codependents. Treatment works. Awareness, changing behaviors, letting go, and increasing self-esteem are key. Could you be affected by codependency? You can obtain an extensive list of issues and behaviors that codependents often experience at <http://tiny.cc/codependent> or find out more from a mental health professional or your EAP.