

Volume 6, Issue 4

Let's Talk

From your Employee Assistance Program

Alcohol Poisoning

A fatal threat for binge drinkers.

Most everyone is aware that drinking and driving can be fatal. But there's another way a person can die from drinking. It's called alcohol poisoning.

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, which means it slows down or depresses body functions, including a person's heart rate and breathing. The more someone drinks, the slower these functions become. Drinking too much too fast can cause unconsciousness, even death.

Researchers say those in high school or college are at greatest risk of alcohol poisoning. Research shows that these groups often binge drink, which is defined as having five or more drinks in a row at one time.

Here's how to tell if someone is experiencing a potentially fatal bout of alcohol poisoning.

- Unconsciousness or semiconsciousness.
- Slowed breathing (eight or fewer respirations per minute) or lapses in respiration of more than 10 seconds.
- Cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin.

If you observe these signs, get emergency help immediately.

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.

Heading Off Morning Madness

If morning madness is a daily routine at your home, consider these tips from the Rochester, Minn.-based Mayo Clinic.

- Make sure everyone gets enough sleep. Set realistic bedtimes for children and enforce them. Begin heading to bed 30 to 60 minutes before you actually want the lights out. If children still have trouble getting up, adjust the bedtime.
- Don't turn on the TV, it will only be a distraction. And don't make TV a reward for getting done early. Children might hurry themselves up just to watch it, skipping a good breakfast or a grooming habit.
- Give yourself the first 10 minutes of the morning. This quiet time will put you in good spirits, which can help sustain you through the morning.
- Keep everyone moving. Use a timer to get children in and out of the bathroom or finished eating breakfast.

To Go *Forward*, Try Stepping *Back*

Too bad we can't take the advice we so readily give others.

Take the example of the friend who asks for advice in dealing with her teenage daughter. You give her a list of things to try, but when you have trouble with your own daughter, you can't think of a thing to do that would help.

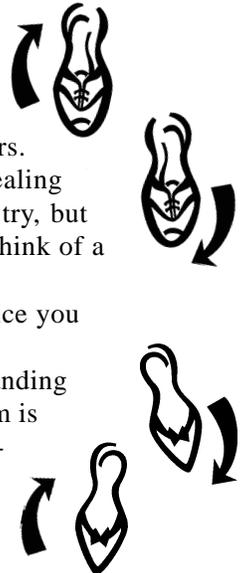
Take heart. There may be a way to give yourself the advice you need. Therapists call it "stepping back."

It's easy to do. Simply picture an image of yourself standing three feet away. Now, explain to this image what the problem is — that your daughter doesn't listen to you or doesn't appreciate all that you do for her. Now, imagine how this image of yourself would reply. What advice would you give yourself? What advice would you give to a friend in the same situation?

Therapists say this exercise helps because we're sometimes so immersed in a situation, stepping away from it may yield a solution.

Of course if it doesn't, the solution may be to turn to a trained professional. When faced with a difficult situation at work or at home, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

Adapted from D. Finney, The Solution-Focused Therapy Workbook (Troy, MI: Performance Resource Press, 1996).



TRULY GREAT EXPECTATIONS

To lessen disappointment in life, master your expectations.

Life is filled with disappointments. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to eliminate many of them or to at least lessen their impact?

We can if we learn new ways to manage our expectations, says Dr. David Brandt, author of *Is That All There Is? Balancing Expectation & Disappointment in Your Life* (San Luis Obispo, Calif.: Impact Publishers, 1998).

Expectations are natural, but they can sometimes get the better of us, such as when we expect too much from ourselves or from others or when our expectations are unrealistic. Brandt offers several ways to better manage expectation in our lives.

Assess more, wish less. There are two parts to an expectation — the assessment part, which is the knowledge that something can happen, and the wish part, which is the desire for that something to happen. Unfortunately, says Brandt, we don't spend nearly as much time assessing as we do wishing, which is one of the reasons for letdown. He uses playing the lottery as an example. If we considered the odds of winning, we probably wouldn't play. Yet people continue to play, wishing they would win. Spend more time assessing whether your expectations are achievable, and you'll be cutting back on future disappointments.



Trim your expectations. As a culture, we expect too much. Part of this can be traced to ads that tell us we deserve to be

satisfied, which leads us to want the best, fastest, brightest and biggest things imaginable. Trouble is, wanting and expecting so much leads to a sense of entitlement, which can lead to disappointment. We should trim our expectations, says Brandt, to those that we can realistically attain and manage.

Be flexible. Few expectations are matters of life or death, says Brandt. We should be prepared to change or give up expectations when it appears that what we want is impossible to have. Being flexible also means keeping perspective. While what we expect may be pleasurable — a new car or boat, a new addition to the house — we can't always get what we want.



Eliminate absolute expectations. To expect that your spouse will be happy to see you each time you come home from work or that an employee or co-worker will never make a mistake are examples of absolute expectations. Because things don't always happen as planned, this kind of expectation invites disappointment. Brandt advises doing away with absolute expectations and inviting more tolerant, less perfectionist expectations from ourselves and others.

Be realistic. Above all, says Brandt, our expectations must be realistic. Research on high-achieving individuals shows that while they may achieve more than others, they don't bite off more than they can chew. They dream long-term, as everyone else does, but their everyday behavior reflects a practical assessment of their skills.

And When the "D" Word Happens

It's impossible to live disappointment free. So expect to be let down once in a while, advises Dr. David Brandt, author of *Is That All There Is? Balancing Expectation & Disappointment in Your Life*. In addition to adjusting our expectations, he suggests ways to alleviate the impact of disappointments after they occur.

Learn from disappointment. Ask yourself why you became upset. Did you expect someone to do something and the person didn't? Did you expect too much from yourself? Were you let down because you were being a perfectionist? Learning what caused your disappointment can help you adjust your expectations for similar situations in the future.

Find inspiration in disappointment. Numerous world leaders and other successful types say disappointment inspired them to do great things. If you can similarly benefit from life's upsets, go for it, and turn the negative energy of disappointment into positive gain.

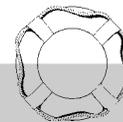


Get help if you're disappointment prone. If few things in life seem satisfying to you, if being happy or content seems like a dream, it may be a sign of something else. Talk to someone trained to assess and treat such conditions. Your Employee Assistance Program is a good place to start.

The Federal Consortium EAP provides assessment, counseling, referral, training and consultation to federal employees and agencies throughout the United States. For administrative details about the program, call Doug Mahy, Acting Vice President of EAP, Federal Occupational Health, at 214-767-3030. For assistance, call 800-222-0364, or visit us at www.foh.dhhs.gov.

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