



Perspectives®

NEWS ON THE NET:

Helping organizations and individuals maximize their human assets.

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

“Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need.”

-Kahlil Gibran

IN THIS ISSUE:

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

Alcohol represents the biggest part of the nation’s substance abuse struggle. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), nearly 14 million Americans— 7.4% of the population— meet criteria for alcohol abuse or alcoholism. Several million more adults engage in risky drinking behaviors that could lead to problems. [MORE...](#)

Mental Disorders are on the Rise Among Afghanistan, Iraq Veterans

As many as one out of four veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq treated at Veterans Affairs hospitals in the past 16 months were diagnosed with mental disorders, a number that has been steadily rising, according to a report in the New England Journal of Medicine. Records show that 20% of eligible ex-soldiers came to VA hospitals seeking medical treatment between October 2003 and February 2005. Overall, 26% of them were diagnosed with mental disorders, say Han Kang and Kenneth Hyams of the VA. [MORE...](#)

Courtesy of Deployment Health News

Tax Preparer Fraud

Tax Return Preparer Fraud generally involves the preparation and filing of false income tax returns by preparers who claim inflated personal or business expenses, false deductions, unallowable credits or excessive exemptions on returns prepared for their clients. Preparers may also manipulate income figures to obtain fraudulent tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. [MORE...](#)

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April is Alcohol Awareness Month continued...

Reducing your drinking is a win-win situation. Whatever you think you may be giving up, you'll gain much more. Your health will benefit enormously. The calories you'll save may help you lose some extra weight. And you'll reduce your risk of the many health problems associated with alcohol use. You'll also find that in social situations you can have just as much fun, maybe even more, without the crutch of liquor. Plus, you'll save money and lead a more productive life.

What You Can Do

The best way to cut down on drinking is to have a plan for each situation in which you might drink too much. Establish a clear idea of how much you want to drink and how you will handle things once you've reached your limit. It helps to give yourself a time limit for staying at social functions.

Some specific suggestions on ways you can reduce your alcohol consumption include:

- Always stick to your limit. Don't drink alone.
- Drink slowly; don't gulp your beverage; and don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Don't drink every day. Don't start drinking the moment you arrive home or at an event. Wait awhile.
- Add water or soda water to your drink to extend it without adding more alcohol.
- Change your routine. For instance, if you normally have a drink at home after work, eat dinner or work out instead. Plan other activities to occupy your time.

One or more of these indicates a problem with alcohol.

- Craving: The person has a strong desire to drink.
- Impaired control: The person cannot control his or her drinking.
- Physical dependence: The person experiences withdrawal symptoms when he or she stops drinking for any period of time.
- Tolerance: The person needs more and more alcohol over time to feel its effects.

Avoiding Adolescent Alcohol Abuse An Open, Trusting Line of Communication Is Key

You've tamed the tantrums, prevailed through Pampers® and potty training, and took on the role of tooth fairy many times, but that was a few years ago. Now you're faced with a new challenge: dealing with your child's early adolescence (ages 10-14) and the possibility that he or she might begin using alcohol. Dramatic physical and emotional changes affect most 10- to 14-year-olds, and often lead to feelings of awkwardness and self-consciousness. Add the effects of peer pressure and this becomes a very impressionable time, a period where children are likely to experiment with alcohol and other harmful substances. But take heart: Study after study has shown that even during the teen years, parents have enormous influence on their children's behavior.

The best way to influence your adolescent to avoid drinking is to have a strong, trusting relationship with him or her. It is especially important to let your child know that in your eyes, he or she does measure up and that you care for him or her very deeply. When children have a strong bond with a parent, they are more likely to feel good about themselves and less prone to cave in to peer pressure. Having a positive relationship with you may also

influence your child to live up to your expectations because he or she wants to keep a close tie with you.

Talking with your child is the best way to help him or her avoid the risks of dangerous behavior. Many parents may feel uneasy bringing up the subject of alcohol, and your young teen may try to dodge the discussion. You should take the time to think about the issues you want to discuss before your talk, as well as how you will answer any questions your child may have. This discussion should be just the first part of an ongoing, comfortable, and open conversation.

Always remember: You can make a difference in the choices your child makes, and now is the time to act. You can get good practical tips on how to help your child make the right decisions in a new booklet, *Make a Difference - Talk to Your Child About Alcohol*. It is from the experts at the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Tax Preparer Fraud continued...

In some situations, the client (taxpayer) may not have knowledge of the false expenses, deductions, exemptions and/or credits shown on their tax returns. However, when the IRS detects the false return, the taxpayer must pay the additional taxes and interest and may be subject to penalties and criminal prosecution.

The IRS Return Preparer Program focuses on enhancing compliance in the return-preparer community by investigating and referring criminal activity by return preparers to the Department of Justice for prosecution and/or asserting appropriate civil penalties against unscrupulous return preparers.

While most preparers provide excellent service to their clients, the IRS urges taxpayers to be very careful when choosing a tax preparer. You should be as careful as you would in choosing a doctor or a lawyer. It is important to know that even if someone else prepares your return, you are ultimately responsible for all the information on the tax return.

Criminal Investigation Statistical Information

	<u>FY 2002</u>	<u>FY 2003</u>	<u>FY 2004</u>
<u>Investigations Initiated</u>	254	229	206
<u>Prosecution Recommendations</u>	89	169	167
<u>Indictments/Information</u>	69	129	101
<u>Convictions</u>	64	67	117
<u>Incarceration Rate*</u>	86.8%	83.7%	84.4%
<u>Avg. Months to Serve</u>	23	19	19

*Incarceration may include prison time, home confinement, electronic monitoring, or a combination.

Where Do You Report Suspected Tax Fraud Activity?

If you suspect tax fraud or know of an abusive return preparer, you should report this activity to your nearest IRS office. This information can be communicated in writing or by phone. You can contact the IRS by phone at 1-800-829-0433.

Source: Internal Revenue Service. (January 2005). Tax preparer fraud. (FS-2005-8). Retrieved 2/25/05 at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=134094,00.html>

What If You Haven't Filed?

Even if you can't pay the tax you owe, it is still better to file a return. It is a crime not to file a tax return if taxes are owed. According to the IRS a "willful failure to file" a tax return is a misdemeanor that can get you up to a year in jail and a \$25,000 fine for each year of non-filing. There is no criminal penalty if you file, but withhold paying the taxes. You will owe interest and penalties, but you can't be criminally fined or sent to jail.

What If You Can't Pay What You Owe?

Pay as much as you can and immediately contact the IRS to explain your circumstances. The IRS offers an Installment Agreement plan to those who owe taxes but do not have the funds to pay in full. Interest and possibly penalty fees will be added to your balance, as well as a one-time user fee of \$43. To apply, complete Form 9465, Installment Agreement Request.

Offer in Compromise - When the facts support the likelihood that the IRS will be unable to collect the debt in full, the IRS may accept an Offer in Compromise to settle unpaid tax accounts for less than the full amount. The amount you offer must reflect your maximum ability to pay, taking into account all your assets and future income. You can get Form 656, Offer in Compromise, and Form 433A, Collection Information Statement for Individuals, plus additional information regarding the filing procedure from the IRS website or at any IRS office.

Source: Balance Financial Fitness Program. (n.d.). Tax Troubles. Retrieved <http://www.balancepro.net/eapeducation/taxtroubles.html>