Know when to say when:
April is Alcohol Awareness Month

You’ve probably heard the expression, “It’s all fun and games until someone gets hurt.” The same is true of alcohol: A few drinks from time to time are one thing, but having a few too many – and too often – can be dangerous.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month and this year’s theme is “Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.” The focus is on drawing attention to the effect alcohol has on young people and those who care about them. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, more than 18 million Americans suffer from disorders related to alcohol use. What’s more, 25 percent of children in the United States have been exposed to alcohol-use disorders in their families.1

The effect of alcohol abuse in our nation is pervasive – and costly too. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the annual tab is about $234 billion, or $746 per person.2 The CDC attributes the costs to:

- Losses in workplace productivity (72 percent).
- Health care problems caused by excessive drinking (11 percent).
- Law enforcement and other criminal justice expenses related to too much alcohol consumption (9 percent).
- Motor vehicle crash costs stemming from impaired driving (6 percent).

The cost of drinking in the United States is just part of the problem. The higher toll is the effect it has on Americans of all ages. According to the NCADD1:

- About 75 percent of domestic abuse takes place when one or both members of the altercation are intoxicated.
- Up to 75 percent of crimes are caused by people under the influence of alcohol.
- Drinking and driving causes 16,000 deaths per year and thousands more injuries.

If you suspect you have a drinking problem, know you are not alone: According to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, about 28 percent of American adults drink at levels that put them at risk for alcohol dependence and alcohol-related problems.3 The first step toward recovery is taking a close look at your drinking habits and being honest with yourself about what you find. According to helpguide.org, denial is one of the biggest obstacles to getting help for alcohol abuse and alcoholism.4 The non-profit organization says to look for these warning signs:

- Feeling guilty or ashamed about your drinking.
- Lying to others or hiding your drinking habits.
- Friends or family members are worried about your drinking.
Drinking to relax or feel better.

“Blacking out” or forgetting what you did while drinking.

Regularly drinking more than you intended.

If you suspect you have a drinking problem, reach out for help. You’ll find a wealth of information and resources about alcohol and alcohol abuse, as well as contact information for support, at http://www.ncadd.org. Remember to examine workplace resources. Many companies have Employee Assistance Programs, or EAPs, in place. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, EAPs are the most common intervention used in the workplace to address alcohol problems.


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