

**Excellence = MC<sup>2</sup>**  
Your Employee Assistance Program  
**1-800-899-3926**

# HEALTHY

## EXCHANGE

ANOTHER BENEFIT OF YOUR  
**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**VOL. 4, NO. 2**

## For Your Information

### REDUCE STRESS

Recognize the things that upset you. If something is increasing your stress, ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do to change the situation?" If there is, figure out what you can do. If not, find ways to accept this lack of control. Important: Be sure to identify what really is the problem. For example, you may feel that the problem is work overload, but perhaps the real problem is your inability to say "no."



### COUPLE CARE

Ask for support. Your partner is not a "mind reader." Let your partner know how you want to be supported.

### RECOGNIZING CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

Do you or one of your family members have an alcohol or drug problem?

1. Each time you drink or use drugs, does it take more and more to get drunk or high?
2. Do you find yourself using alcohol or drugs to reduce anxiety?
3. Do you ever lose control over alcohol or drug use?
4. Do you ever drink or use drugs first thing in the morning to steady your nerves?



If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, you may have a problem with alcohol or drug addiction. If you need help, you can contact your EAP for confidential counseling, referrals or information.

## RELATIONSHIP IMPROVEMENT

# Signs of a Codependent Relationship

- Do you have difficulty developing or sustaining healthy and satisfying relationships?
- Do you become obsessed with fixing and rescuing needy people?
- Do you find yourself in relationships where you do all of the giving and the other person does all of the taking?
- Are you trying to control someone? Is someone trying to control you?
- Would you do anything, or tolerate almost anything, to hold on to a relationship? Do you fear being abandoned?

The questions above represent some of the signs of codependency. Codependency is an emotional and behavioral condition that affects a person's ability to have healthy, mutually-satisfying relationships. Also known as "relationship addiction," codependents often form or maintain relationships that are grounded in control and neediness rather than love and respect.

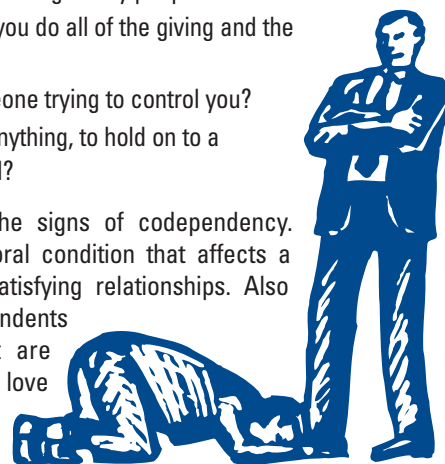
### Takers and caretakers

Codependent relationships are made up of "takers" and "caretakers." Takers have an excessive need to control the people around them, including their spouse, children and co-workers. The taker attempts to control getting love, attention, approval or sex from others with anger, blame, violence, criticism, irritation, righteousness, neediness, invasive touch, incessant talking and/or emotional drama.

Caretakers, on the other hand, give up their own needs and wants to satisfy the needs and wants of others. They live for and through others, not for the sake of giving itself, but because they want validation and love in return. Because it is nearly impossible for caretakers to say "no" to people, they may find themselves the victims in physically and emotionally abusive relationships. They believe that if they can be good enough, or loving enough, they can change the other person's behavior.

### Repressed emotions

Social scientists explain that codependent behavior is frequently caused by growing up in a dysfunctional family. A dysfunctional family is one in which the family members suffer from fear, anger, pain, or shame that is ignored or denied. The underlying problems may include alcohol or substance abuse, chronic mental illness, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, divorce, or a hypercritical or non-loving environment. Dysfunctional families, do not



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# Four Steps to a Longer Life

According to a recent study, four simple behaviors – being physically active, not smoking, drinking moderately and consuming fruits and vegetables – can increase longevity by as much as 14 years. The study surveyed 20,244 men and women (ages 45 to 79) in the United Kingdom between 1993 and 1997. The participants, none of whom had cardiovascular disease or cancer at the beginning of the study, were asked if they were nonsmokers, were physically active, had moderate alcohol consumption and ate at least five servings of fruits or vegetables a day. One point was assigned for each healthy behavior.



Participants were tracked until 2006 and researchers found that those with a score of zero were four times more likely to have died than those with a score of four. The research showed that each point increased longevity incrementally and that those who practiced all four behaviors on average lived longer by 14 years.

### Improving your health and longevity

To improve any of the four behaviors mentioned above, the following information can help.

**1. To become a nonsmoker** – Check out [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov), a website created by the National Cancer Institute for those trying to quit smoking. The website includes:

- An online self-help guide to quitting
- Support from smoking cessation counselors via telephone or real time instant messaging
- Access to printed resources for all smokers interested in quitting; for smokers over 50; for smokers who have recently quit; for pregnant smokers who have recently quit; for African American smokers

**2. To increase your physical activity** – Try fast walking. Fast walking burns the same amount of calories per mile as running and builds endurance, enhances muscle tone, strengthens bones and reduces stress. Aim for 30 minutes or 10,000 steps per day. Walking has several advantages over other exercises:

- It does not require special equipment or other people
- It has a low rate of injury for participants
- It is easier to work into your day than many other types of activities

**3. To monitor your drinking** – Follow the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' definition of moderate drinking, which is defined as having no more than one drink per day for most women and no more than two drinks per day for most men. This definition is referring to the amount consumed on any single day and is not intended as an average over several days.

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## SIGNS OF A CODEPENDENT...

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acknowledge that problems exist. They don't talk about them or confront them. As a result, family members learn to repress emotions and disregard their own needs. The codependent's obsessive need to control or "help" others – their fixation on others – is the codependent's learned way to avoid or "not feel" the emotional pain, emptiness or low self-esteem they have from childhood.

### Unsatisfying relationships

As adults, codependent people have a greater tendency to get involved in relationships with people who are unreliable, emotionally unavailable, controlling and needy. Looking to receive the love and validation they want from others who are themselves controlling or needy, codependent people often create relationships that leave them feeling angry, resentful, trapped, unappreciated, lonely, helpless, victimized or unloved.

### Characteristics of Codependent People

According to Mental Health America, the characteristics of a codependent person may include:

- An exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others
- A tendency to confuse love and pity, with the tendency to "love" people they can pity and rescue
- A tendency to do more than their share, all of the time
- A tendency to become hurt when people don't recognize their efforts
- An unhealthy dependence on relationships. The co-dependent will do anything to hold on to a relationship; to avoid the feeling of abandonment
- An extreme need for approval and recognition
- A sense of guilt when asserting themselves
- A compelling need to control others
- Lack of trust in self and/or others
- Fear of being abandoned or alone
- Difficulty identifying feelings
- Rigidity/difficulty adjusting to change
- Problems with intimacy/boundaries
- Chronic anger
- Lying/dishonesty
- Poor communications
- Difficulty making decisions



### What to do

If you identify with several of the characteristics above or are dissatisfied with yourself or your relationships, begin by learning more about codependency. The more you understand codependency the better you can cope with its effects. Consider seeking the help of a professional counselor experienced in helping people with

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## SIGNS OF A CODEPENDENT...

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codependency. A professional counselor can help you learn how to take responsibility for your own feelings and well-being, help you become aware of non-helpful behaviors, help you develop new and healthier ways of coping, and help you create healthier and more satisfying relationships. Self-help groups for codependency can also be an invaluable source of learning and support.

### Contact your EAP

For help and support with issues related to codependency, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help you.

### Additional Resources

#### Co-Dependents Anonymous (CODA)

(602) 277-7991

[www.codependents.org](http://www.codependents.org)

Makes referrals to local CODA groups which are support groups of men and women searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas and conflicts in their relationships and childhood. CODA groups provide support and learning for those who wish to develop healthy relationships.

#### Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters (Al-Anon)

(888) 425-2666

[www.Al-Anon-Alateen.org](http://www.Al-Anon-Alateen.org)

Makes referrals to local Al-Anon groups, which are support groups for spouses and other significant adults in an alcoholic or drug abuser's life. Also makes referrals to Alateen groups, which offer support to children of alcoholics or drug addicts. Al-Anon and Alateen groups can be an invaluable source of support, hope and learning for those living with an alcoholic or drug abuser.

# Managing Stress About Money and the Economy

According to data from the American Psychological Association (APA), when asked about the recent financial crisis, almost half of Americans say that they are increasingly stressed about their ability to provide for their family's basic needs. Eighty-two percent say that the economy is a significant cause of stress.

How can you protect yourself from the health consequences of financial stress? Below are tips from the APA for managing stress during tough economic times:

- ◆ **Be mindful of your stress level and symptoms.** Don't ignore the physical and emotional symptoms of too much stress, which may include the following: irritability, problems sleeping, changes in appetite, headaches, stomach aches, intestinal problems, nervousness, excessive worry, or feeling sad and depressed.
- ◆ **Pay attention, but don't panic.** There has been a constant stream of negative stories in newspapers and on television about the state of the economy. Pay attention to what's happening – particularly as it directly relates to you – but refrain from getting caught up in doom-and-gloom hype, which can lead to higher levels of anxiety and bad decision making.
- ◆ **Identify your financial stressors and make a plan.** Take stock of your particular financial situation and what causes you stress. Write down specific ways you and your family can reduce expenses or manage your finances more efficiently. Then commit to a specific plan and review it regularly.
- ◆ **Recognize how you deal with stress related to money.** Determine if you are using unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling or over/under eating) to cope with financial stress. Be alert to these behaviors – if they are causing you trouble, consider seeking professional help before the problem gets worse.
- ◆ **Find healthy ways to manage stress.** Consider healthy, stress-reducing activities such as exercise, yoga, meditation or talking things out with friends, family or trusted advisors.

### Your EAP is here to help

Remember, your EAP is available to help you or your immediate family members with most-any type of personal, family or work-related concern, including financial difficulties. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.



## Improving Family Communication

Your family can provide a safe environment for family members to share feelings, thoughts, frustrations, fears, hopes and dreams. What's the single-best thing you can do to improve family communication? Make a daily effort to talk with each family member alone and together as a family. Other suggestions:

### 1. Become a better listener

Listening is as important as talking. When you listen well to family members, you encourage them to talk about what is most important to them. Sometimes a person can

find a solution to a problem or discover the source of stress just by talking. For more effective listening you should:

**Listen to the whole story.** Give your family member the opportunity to communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs or desires without interrupting. Listen for understanding. Put aside your opinions, thoughts or conclusions until after you've heard what they have to say.

### 2. Improve your talking skills

Negative talking skills can stifle communication. To express yourself more effectively

you should:

**Learn to speak without attacking or blaming.** Avoid starting a sentence with "you." It sounds like an accusation or an invitation to fight (which it often is). Instead, describe how a behavior or situation affects you. Say "I think..." or "I want..." or "I feel..." For example, "I am upset because you two are fighting a lot these days. I want to have a more pleasant atmosphere in the house." To express yourself clearly use "feeling" words like "sad," "happy," "excited," "angry," "worried," etc.

## LONGER LIFE

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**4. To increase your consumption of fruits and vegetables...** Visit the new [www.FruitsandVeggiesMatter.gov](http://www.FruitsandVeggiesMatter.gov) website to get tools and information to help you eat more fruits and vegetables each day. The new website includes the following:

- A calculator to find out how many fruits and vegetables you need each day, based on your daily calorie needs
- Tips on how to include fruits and vegetables in your daily diet
- Delicious recipes

### Your EAP is here to help

If you need help with any personal, family or work-related concern, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). We can provide you or your dependents with short-term counseling, referrals or information to help you face life's challenges.

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Your Employee Assistance Program

**1-800-899-3926**

## Did you know?

Your EAP Website offers:

- Employee/Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Administrator Satisfaction Surveys
- Articles & Newsletters
- Quizzes & Self Assessment Instruments
- Tips on Stress Reduction
- Management and Human Resource Tips

Forgot your password? Ask your Human Resource specialist for the password or call the EAP at 1-800-899-3926.

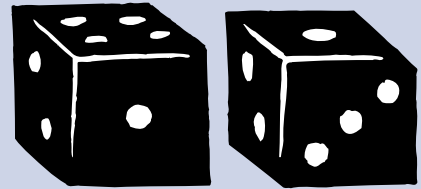
[www.theemployeeassistanceprogram.com](http://www.theemployeeassistanceprogram.com)

# What is Problem Gambling?

Just as some people become addicted to drugs or alcohol, it is possible for a person to become obsessed with an uncontrollable urge to gamble. A person has a problem with gambling if he or she continues to gamble despite evidence that their gambling is causing personal, family, financial, work or legal problems.

### Warning signs of problem gambling

Review the warning signs below. If you or someone you know answers "Yes" to any of the questions below, consider seeking help from a professional who is experienced in treating problem gambling:



1. You have often gambled longer than you had planned.
2. You have often gambled until your last dollar was gone.
3. Thoughts of gambling have caused you to lose sleep.
4. You have used your income or savings to gamble while letting bills go unpaid.
5. You have made repeated, unsuccessful attempts to stop gambling.
6. You have broken the law or considered breaking the law to finance your gambling.
7. You have borrowed money to finance your gambling.
8. You have felt depressed or suicidal because of your gambling losses.
9. You have been remorseful after gambling.
10. You have gambled to get money to meet your financial obligations.

### Getting help

There are specific behavior patterns associated with problem gambling. Gamblers who recognize these patterns can cope with the problem and learn to live free of gambling. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can provide you or your dependents with CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals and/or information to help you recover a life free of gambling. Why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

## Employee Assistance Program 1-800-899-3926

- Personal / Work Stress
- Marital / Family Concerns
- Alcohol / Drug Concerns
- Frustration / Anger / Sadness

**CALL FOR FREE  
CONFIDENTIAL  
HELP**

All of us experience personal, family or work related problems now and then. Sometimes, even ordinary problems can become overwhelming. It is at these times, your **EAP** can provide free confidential assistance. Employees or family members can call to receive telephone consultation and/or to schedule an appointment with an **EAP** specialist.

Read Healthy Exchange online: [theemployeeassistanceprogram.com](http://theemployeeassistanceprogram.com)  
Newsletter comments welcome at: Managed Care Concepts  
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