

## **Counseling Corner**

### **Recognizing The Signs Of Problem Drinking**

from the American Counseling Association

There has been increased attention in recent years to the problems associated with excesses in alcohol consumption. From college binge drinking to the often tragic results of drunk driving incidents, the media, courts and general public have begun to recognize the serious implications that drinking to excess can have.

But as important as these stories are, for most of us the real issues are usually much more personal and closer to home. Statistics show that across the country, alcohol consumption has increased in recent years, yet most people have little understanding of the signs that point to a drinking problem, or they don't know what to do when such signs appear.

A simple and easy way to test yourself for a potential drinking problem is to answer a few questions. Ask yourself if you've ever felt annoyed about criticism of your drinking, or do you feel guilty about your drinking? Have you ever felt that you ought to cut down on your drinking? Do you find that you need an early morning drink to get going? Experts say answering yes to even two of these questions indicates a possible drinking problem.

A professional counselor working with someone facing possible alcohol abuse problems would conduct a much deeper evaluation. He or she would look for drinking related issues, such as the client being unable to remember a previous evening's drinking, a history of alcohol-related violent arguments or physical fights, evidence of neglecting family life or work-related problems. When alcohol has led to losing a job, arrests for drunken driving or the loss of friends, help is clearly needed.

For anyone even suspecting that there is a drinking problem, professional help should be sought quickly. A local hospital or mental health center can provide a list of professional counselors who specialize in substance abuse issues. You can also find professional counselors listed in your local yellow pages or through the American Counseling Association website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org). A professional counselor can provide both an in-depth evaluation of possible issues as well as assistance in combating the problem.

Taking that first step of admitting there might be a problem may be both difficult and painful, but it's an important one. Only by beginning the process of seeking help can someone can avoid the very serious and often tragic consequences that come with excessive drinking.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at counseling.org*

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390 words

*The American Counseling Association is the nation's largest organization of counseling professionals with more than 53,000 members in all 50 states and 80 other countries.*