



# Helping Hands

The Employee Assistance Program Newsletter

[www.iam141.org/eap](http://www.iam141.org/eap)

March 2010

## Sports Gambling and Your Job



Sports betting is popular and often peaks in the spring, with a flurry of wagers centered on the March

Madness National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball tournaments. Some companies view it as a morale booster. Others prohibit it—big time. Play it smart. Know your organization's policy or position on this activity. In any case, avoid allowing betting pools to interfere with your job. If you coordinate a betting pool, you can count on fellow employees wondering why or how you have all that free time. Caution: Sports betting has added to the risk of compulsive gambling and many experts considered it an entry point for young people into a lifelong gambling addiction.

## Food Portion Distortion



Increase your awareness of “food portion distortion.” Over the past several decades, the size of food portions has exploded. What was a tiny bag of French fries is now a box, a small drink is now a large, and a large drink is now a bucket! Even triple-patty hamburgers are now available. The ill effects on health have always existed, but, in addition, what we think of as a “portion” has increased! To avoid the potential impact on your health, consider interventions such as using smaller plates, sharing food, ordering only the appetizer if the entrée is huge, or simply asking for less.

Source: NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov).

## Weight Management and Children

Source: Ohio State, Research Communications, February 8, 2010.



Findings from a recent national study suggest that preschool-aged children have a 40 percent lower risk of obesity if they regularly engage in one or more of three specific household routines: eat dinner as a family five or more days per week; get adequate sleep (10.5 hours average); and limit weekday television viewing to two hours or less. The study is significant because it involved more than 8,000 children and the results held true for every socioeconomic and ethnic group studied—even for families in which there was a higher risk of obesity.

## Do Positive Affirmations Really Work?



The self-talk technique of repeating an affirming, positive message daily to improve your life can work wonders, say the goal achievement gurus. But there is a right way to do it if you want to increase your chances of success—*be specific*. Rather than repeating a general statement of self-improvement such as “I am becoming a better customer service representative every day,” rework your affirmation to be precise, targeting the goal you want to achieve. For example, “I am focused on acquiring new skills every day, and I will become proficient in all facets of CSR work within eighteen months.”

## College Spring Break Dangers



Spring break beach trips to Florida, Texas, and Mexico are coming up. Young people, especially women, should take measures to avoid “drug-facilitated sexual assault” while on these jaunts. Notorious drugs used for such crimes include Ketamine, Rohypnol, and GHB. Victim prevention information can be found at [www.JustThinkTwice.com](http://www.JustThinkTwice.com), a site recommended by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration for increasing education and awareness about drugs. Important rules of prevention: (1) Don’t drink alcoholic beverages if you are underage. (2) If you do drink, don’t drink beverages that you did not open, don’t take a drink from a punch bowl, and don’t drink from a container that is being passed around. (3) If someone offers you a drink from the bar, decline, and order your own drink. (4) Carry your own drink at all times. (5) Don’t leave your drink unattended. (6) If you accidentally leave your drink unattended, discard it.

## IAM-EAP Peer Coordinators

The mainstay of the District 141 EAP is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer much of their personal time to assist our brothers and sisters who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations. However, coordinators are trained to make a basic assessment of the situation and then refer to a professional resource for a more detailed evaluation and course of action. A complete listing of IAM EAP local and regional coordinators, including phone numbers, can be found on the District 141 website at [www.iam141.org/eap](http://www.iam141.org/eap).



## When Trauma Affects a Loved One Who Is ... Far Away



Distance compounds worry and fear when someone you love is in harm’s way. Such events can cause stress overload in four key ways: (1) incomplete information and worry about the whereabouts of your loved one, (2) inability to communicate, (3) feelings of helplessness, and (4) a repeating media “loop” of bad news. Be specific about the things your employer can do to help you cope (such as flexible hours and unscheduled time off); most employers are willing to help. Turn off the television as an information source, and turn to official Web sites/information sources that disseminate important details. Maintain routines, because familiarity and normalcy in everyday life provide a natural antidote to emotional upheaval. Keep up an exercise routine. Stick to a schedule. Focus on things that you can control, like cleaning and organizing your surroundings. To satisfy the need to “do something,” join forces with others organizing fund-raising events or working together to assemble care packages or to provide relief. Talk about what you’re feeling with someone you trust. Write or e-mail your loved one even if he or she can’t receive the message yet, because getting your thoughts on paper is a helpful emotional release. Don’t keep children in the dark, and instead provide appropriate information. Let younger ones express their feelings through art projects, writing, and play. Turn to your employee assistance program for support and advice, because doing so is a proven path to wellness.

## Calling in “Sick”



One national survey found that 20% of employees have called in “sick” just to get a day off at least once. The most common reason: “I felt stressed and wanted a day off.” Consider phoning the EAP the next time the unexpected desire to take off looms. It might be a signal that a personal difficulty or workplace issue needs to be resolved. For example, is it a conflict with a coworker or a supervisor, or an argument with a customer or some unfair workplace experience that you need to discuss? Instead of taking a day off for short-term relief, talk to the EAP. It may have a long-term cure.