

Bannock County

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THIS MONTH'S NEWS

The Lows of Using
(Drug and Alcohol Abuse)

Did You Know?

For the New Year

Life's Lighter Side

Beat the Winter Blues



I don't understand why Cupid was chosen to represent Valentine's Day. When I think about romance, the last thing on my mind is a short, chubby toddler coming at me with a weapon!

~Unknown

NEWS BYTES

THE LOWS OF USING

We see the impact of drug and alcohol abuse almost daily in entertainment news media. In fact, most people are touched in some way by drug and alcohol abuse, whether by themselves, family, friends, children, or co-workers...and, in some cases, never know it.

Drug addiction is a complex disease, and quitting takes more than good intentions. No single factor can predict whether a person will become addicted to drugs, including alcohol, nicotine, and prescription drug abuse.

Addiction and the Brain

Addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences to the addicted individual and to those around them. Although the initial decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people, the brain changes that occur over time challenge a person's self-control and ability to resist intense impulses urging them to take drugs.

The Brain on Drugs

- **NICOTINE** is an addictive stimulant found in cigarettes and other forms of tobacco. Tobacco smoke increase a user's risk of cancer, emphysema, bronchial disorders, and cardiovascular disease. The mortality rate associated with tobacco addiction is shocking. Tobacco use killed approximately 100 million people during the 20th century and, if current smoking trends continue, the cumulative death toll for this century has been projected to reach 1 billion.
- **ALCOHOL** consumption can damage the brain and most body organs. Areas of the brain that are especially vulnerable to alcohol-related damage are the cerebral cortex (largely responsible for our higher brain functions, including problem-solving and decision-making), the hippocampus (important for memory and learning), and the cerebellum (important for movement coordination). Excessive alcohol consumption is responsible for over 79,000 deaths and 2.3 million years of potential life lost in the U. S. each year.
- **MARIJUANA** is the most commonly abused illicit substance. This drug impairs short-term memory and learning, the ability to focus attention, and coordination. It also increases heart rate, can harm the lungs, and can increase the risk of psychosis in those with an underlying vulnerability.
- **INHALANTS** are volatile substances found in many household products, such as oven cleaners, gasoline, spray paints, and other aerosols, that induce mind-altering effects. Inhalants are extremely toxic and can damage the heart, kidneys, lungs, and brain. Even a healthy person can suffer heart failure and death within minutes of a single session of prolonged sniffing of an inhalant.
- **COCAINE** is a short-acting stimulant, which can lead abusers to "binge" (to take the drug many times in a single session). Cocaine abuse can lead to severe medical consequences related to the heart and the respiratory, nervous, and digestive systems.

Did You Know?

- **FACT:** Most people who start smoking in their teens become regular smokers before they're 18.
- **FACT:** Prescription pain medications are involved in more overdose deaths than heroin and cocaine combined.
- **FACT:** Repeated drug use can reset the brain's pleasure meter, so that without the drug, you feel hopeless and sad. Eventually, everyday things that you enjoy, like spending time with family or participating in a hobby, don't make you happy anymore.
- **FACT:** Binge drinking (consuming 4 or more drinks per occasion for women; 5 or more drinks per occasion for men) is responsible for over half of the deaths and two-thirds of the years of potential life lost due to excessive drinking, and is associated with many health and social problems, including alcohol-impaired driving, interpersonal violence, and risky sexual activity.
- **FACT:** One out of every 10 people in the U.S. has a drinking problem, and 68% are full-time workers. One in five workers has covered for fellow employee's drinking at one time.

Abuse of alcohol, nicotine, and drugs have negative costs for individuals, families, workplaces, and society. Estimates of the total overall costs of substance abuse in the U.S., including medical, economic, criminal, and social impact, exceed half a trillion dollars a year. This includes approximately \$181 billion for illicit drugs, \$193 billion for tobacco and \$235 billion for alcohol. As staggering as these numbers are, they do not fully describe the scope of destructive public health and safety implications of drug abuse and addiction, like family disintegration, loss of employment, failure in school, domestic violence, and child abuse (NIDA, 2011).

People of all ages suffer the harmful consequences of drug abuse and addiction.

If you are thinking of celebrating with friends, it is good to know the following facts: Alcohol acts quickly. Alcohol interferes with people's coordination, driving skills and judgment well before physical signs of drunkenness appear. Continued alcohol consumption can prolong reaction time and can cause people to lose control and become aggressive, making driving safely much more difficult. Alcohol's effects last. Alcohol continues to enter the bloodstream and affect the brain and body for hours after consumption. Driving late at night compounds the sedative effects of alcohol because people are naturally more tired at night. Driving abilities may continue to be impaired the morning after a night of drinking. Coffee doesn't help. Caffeine does not help reduce the effects of alcohol on people's coordination or ability to make good decisions. Only time will allow the body to metabolize or break down alcohol and return to normal. Drink responsibly!

Where to Turn for Help:

If you are a full time employee of Bannock County with GemPlan Benefits, you can contact the Rocky Mountain EAP (Employee Assistance Program). Call 1(866) 260-9490 or (208) 227-0152. All visits are confidential.

FOR THE NEW YEAR:

There's no surefire way to stay young, but plenty of regular exercise may be the closest way. Nonetheless, you can over-exercise or work out incorrectly, increasing your chances of injury. Here are some suggestions for proper exercise:

- Take a few minutes to warm up with some light cardio exercise (walking or jogging) and gentle stretching before you begin your workout.
- Always cool down after you're finished exercising.
- Exercise consistently in a balanced way, instead of doing too much too infrequently.
- Take lessons before you try a new exercise or sport, and make sure you have the proper equipment that fits well.
- Pay attention to your body's warning signs, and adjust your workout accordingly. Don't just exercise "through the pain." Don't increase your workout by more than 10 percent each week.

If you're the type of person who is always doing things for others, you need to find time for yourself.

Here is some advice:

- Try to maintain a healthy balance between work and your personal life.
- Find the time to foster important relationships.
- Don't be afraid to seek help from others when you need it.
- Exercise and practice relaxation techniques, which will help lower stress.
- Keep an open mind, and be willing to try new hobbies and activities.
- Ask your family doctor for help when it's needed.



When your stomach growls, it's often hunger that's talking. Hunger is your body's way of saying it needs to be nourished. But there are other things that may prompt you to seek a snack, even when you're not hungry. "False hunger" signals:

- Being thirsty. Satisfy this by simply drinking a glass of water.
- Craving or having an urge to eat a certain food.
- Feeling emotional, including angry, lonely or sad.
- Being at a social event.
- Noticing that it's your normal meal time.

LIFE'S LIGHTER SIDE

When Jim walked in the office, he knew something was up. There was a message on the desk that the boss wanted to see him as soon as he arrived. The boss didn't look very happy when Jim reported to his office. The older man didn't say anything, he just pointed at the newspaper on his desk. It was opened to the sports page, and there was a picture of a smiling Jim, holding up the trophy for winning the local golf tournament the day before. "I just checked. You called in sick yesterday", the boss said. "What if everybody just claimed to be sick and took off whenever they wanted to? What do you have to say for yourself?" There was a moment of silence in the big corner office, until Jim finally spoke up. "I was really surprised to win the tournament, sir, I have never played that well. Think of the score I could have had if I hadn't been sick!"

A photographer for a national news magazine was assigned to get photos of a big forest fire. Smoke at the scene was too thick to get any good shots, so he frantically called his home office to hire a plane. "It will be waiting for you at the airport!" he was assured by the editor. As soon as he got to the small, rural airport, sure enough, a plane was warming up near the runway. He jumped in with his equipment and yelled, "Let's go! Let's go!" The pilot swung the plane into the wind and soon they were in the air. "Fly over the north side of the fire," said the photographer, "and make three or four low level passes."

"Why?" asked the pilot. "Because I'm going to take pictures! I'm a photographer and photographers take pictures!" said the photographer with great exasperation and impatience. After a long pause, the pilot said, "You mean you're not the instructor?"

Two bright, young engineers applied for the same position at a computer company. Since they had identical qualifications, the company asked the two applicants to take a ten-question test. At the conclusion of the test, one of the applicants was called into the manager's office. "I have graded the test, and you both scored nine correct answers and got one answer wrong. Thank you for your interest, but we've decided to give the job to the other applicant. "And why would you choose him if we both got nine answers correct?" asked the rejected applicant. "We have based our decision not on the correct answers, but on the question you missed," said the Department Manager. "And just how would one incorrect answer be better than the other?" the rejected applicant inquired. "Simple," said the Department Manager, "The other gentleman answered Question #5, 'I don't know'. "Your answer to Question #5 was, 'Neither do I.'"



Beat the Winter Blues

During the winter it can be easy to get so busy with work and your kids' activities that by the time you go to bed you've barely seen the sun. The lack of exposure to the sun, shorter days and colder weather can cause some people to feel the winter blues, known medically as seasonal affective disorder.

If you think you suffer from a major attitude change during the winter months, use these tips from USA.gov to learn the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder and possible treatment options.

Recognize the symptoms:

Some of the most common symptoms of seasonal affective disorder are feelings of sadness or emptiness, hopelessness or extreme pessimism. Fatigue, difficulty concentrating and changes in weight could also be possible signs of the winter blues.

When It's Not Just a Bad Day:

Everyone has bad days from time to time and may feel sad and depressed or even extremely pessimistic. It's normal for these feelings to come and go. However, if your mood doesn't change over a period of two weeks, it's time to talk to your doctor to see if you're suffering from depression or seasonal affective disorder.

Treatment Options:

There are several different treatment options for seasonal affective disorder. Your doctor may want you to try light therapy. Being exposed to sunlight or a fluorescent light box for an extended period of time could help to improve your mood. However, for many people, light therapy isn't enough.

In that case there are many different medicines you and your doctor could discuss. Before your appointment learn about all your different options and possible side effects so you can make an informed decision.

Don't let the winter blues keep you down. Use this information to help you take the steps you need to begin to feel better.

