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A Hall Ambulance Periodical Dedicated to Your Wellness, Well-Being, and the HAS Employee Experience

First Responders and Alcohol Awareness

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

It's become such a cliché. The firefighter unwinding after a rough day by knocking back a few beers. The police officer stopping at the local "cop bar" to take the edge off after a critical incident. EMTs and paramedics pouring a drink to help them relax after a difficult shift. We see it in movies and on television, and we see it in our own departments and agencies.

Alcohol and First Responders

According to the Yale School of Medicine, some of the major risk factors for developing an alcohol use disorder include: a family history of alcohol abuse; starting drinking at an early age; and mental health issues including depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

That last point may be the key. It is recognized that up to 80% of all first responders regularly experience on-the-job trauma and public safety workers develop PTSD at higher-than-average rates. However, being at risk for PTSD, or even an actual diagnosis, does not determine if a person will develop an alcohol use disorder.

Do I Have a Problem with Alcohol?

This simple self-assessment can help determine if you might be developing an issue with alcohol. In the previous 12 months, have you:

- Been unable to stop or reduce your drinking?
- Experienced physical illness after a period of drinking?
- Felt strong cravings that compelled you to drink?
- Found your drinking interfered with your participation in family, work or school activities?
- Found yourself engaging in physically dangerous activities (driving under the influence or having unsafe sex) while drinking?
- Had periods of time you don't remember

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(blackouts) due to alcohol?

- Found yourself drinking to "numb" emotions?
- Consumed more alcohol than usual to get the same buzz?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may consider further evaluating your alcohol consumption.

Getting Help

If you find yourself needing help, you have multiple avenues for support. Reaching out to Hall Ambulance's Employee Assistance Program, Alcoholics Anonymous (www.aa.org), a therapist or counselor, your doctor, a trusted confidante, or a loved one is the most important, albeit probably the hardest step to take. The only other requirement is a willingness to get better – for yourself and your future.

(Adapted from: <https://www.ems1.com/wellness-week/articles/first-responders-and-alcohol-how-much-is-too-much-i34z4jKQHLvdkh12/>)

Stress Busters

Stress Awareness Month

All the stress-relief activities in the world won't help you if you aren't practicing good self-care routines. Meditation every single day won't help if you aren't getting adequate sleep and hitting the gym won't help if you are only intaking junk food as fuel. So, let's start with the basics and consciously start taking action to promote your health in the five key domains of your life. If you answer "no" to any of the questions below, it is probably time to reevaluate your priorities and make some changes!

Physical – Are you getting adequate sleep? Is your diet fueling your body well? Are you taking charge of your health? Are you getting enough exercise? If you answered "no" to any of them, maybe it is time to re-evaluate.

Social – Are you getting enough face-to-face time with friends and loved ones? What are you doing to nurture your relationships?

Mental – Are you making enough time for activities that mentally stimulate you? Are you doing proactive things that help you stay mentally healthy?

Spiritual – What questions do you ask yourself about your life and experiences? Are you engaging in spiritual practices that you find fulfilling?

Emotional – Do you process emotions in healthy ways? Do you incorporate activities into your life that help you feel recharged?

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Do Something Different

The challenge of 2025 is to do something new and different EACH WEEK! Here are your ten options for April – choose four (one a week)!

1. Spend a day in bed watching movies or reading.
2. Plant seeds and grow something.
3. Eat lunch outdoors.
4. Go roller-skating.
5. Let someone else order for you in a restaurant.
6. Attend an open mic night – poetry, comedy, karaoke.
7. Make homemade bread.
8. Take pictures all day long.
9. Take a day-long road trip to nowhere in particular.
10. Take a yoga class.

When In Doubt - Ask Your Counselor!!

April is Counseling Awareness Month

The counseling setting is designed to create a safe, comforting place where a person can understand and explore painful experiences...but therapy is work! While a professional counselor guides and prompts a client to talk about difficult things, the client is challenged with new perspectives and approaches to life, thoughts, and circumstances. Outside of the counseling session, it is up to the client to practice new skills and thinking patterns to influence change in habits and behaviours.

Steps of Therapy

First, the counselor completes an initial evaluation or assessment to gain a background and understanding of the present situation. Next, the goals of therapy are discussed between client and clinician. After this, the client shares feelings and experiences that prompted them to seek counseling. The therapist will help the client gain perspective and insight into their actions, reactions, behaviours, and emotions. Exercises are used by the client outside of therapy to augment session-based ideas, revelations, and processes.

Types of Mental Health Professionals

- Psychiatrist – Medical doctor (MD) who specializes in preventing, diagnosing, and treating mental illnesses; can prescribe medications
- Psychologist – PhD, PsyD, or EdD in psychology; evaluates, diagnoses, and treats mental and emotional disorders.
- Licensed Mental Health Counselor/Therapist – MS or MA in psychology, counseling, or related field; evaluates, diagnoses, and treats mental and

emotional disorders.

- Clinical Social Worker – MS or MA in social work (MSW) with training to evaluate and treat mental illnesses

How to Choose a Mental Health Clinician

It is imperative that a counselor working with first responders be culturally competent with the public safety community and have the following qualities:

- Offers flexible appointments to accommodate shift work/irregular schedules
- Respectful (not inquisitive) questions regarding work
- Recognizes cumulative stress and its impact
- Understands the hesitancy of “letting go” (loss of control)
- Explains confidentiality explicitly

Questions to Ask When Evaluating a Counselor's Cultural/General Competence

- How long have you been working with first responders?
- What is your exposure to law enforcement/fire/EMS culture?
- How is working with first responders different from/similar to working with civilians?
- How long have you been practicing as a mental health provider?
- What kind of training and/or specialties do you have?
- If you need to break confidentiality, how do you handle the situation?
- What can I expect from counseling with you?



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APRIL AWARENESS

911 Education Month
Alcohol Awareness Month (RED)
Counseling Awareness Month (TEAL)
Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (TEAL)
Donate Life Month (GREEN)
Stress Awareness Month (LAVENDER)
7: World Health Day
11: Day of Silence (RAINBOW or RED)
13-19: National Animal Control Officer Appreciation Week
13-19: National Public Safety Telecommunications Week (THIN GOLD LINE)
22: Earth Day (GREEN)
28: World Day for Safety and Health at Work (YELLOW)
30: Wear Denim Day (Sexual Assault Awareness) (TEAL)

APRIL COMMUNITY EVENTS

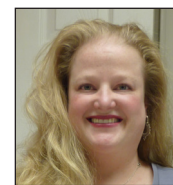
5: Stockdale High 29th Annual Comic Book & Collectible Show @ 2800 Buena Vista Road
5: Haggard Boxcar Festival @ KC Museum
7: Cults & Classics – “Clueless” @ Fox Theatre
9: Rock Orchestra by Candlelight @ Fox Theatre
12: Autism on the Run @ The Park at Riverwalk
21: Cults & Classics – “Amadeus” @ Fox Theatre
26: KHSD Empower WellNess Run 5K/1M @ Hart Park

APRIL FARMERS MARKETS

2, 9, 16, 23, 30 (Sun): Haggin Oaks Hen's Roost Farmer's Market @ 8800 Ming Ave
1, 8, 15, 22, 29 (Sat): From the Farmhouse Farmer's Market @ 3201 'F' St.; Downtown Hen's Roost Farmer's Market @ 1916 'G' St.; Riverlakes Farmer's Market @ 3825 Riverlakes Drive

The HR Spot

We are fully under way with recruiting for EMT Academy #50, if you know someone that wants to work in EMS, please let them know applications are open until April 4th.



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