

Compulsive Gambling

Imagine for a moment how much more enjoyable and productive life might be in the absence of an overwhelming compulsion to gamble.

Gambling costs
FAR MORE
than money.

Humans can become addicted to many different behaviors and gambling is no exception. Many people are able to gamble recreationally with little to no lasting effects. However, others find the thrill of gambling addictive and return to it time and again despite incurring great costs in terms of their relationships, financial security and general well-being

WHAT IS GAMBLING?

Bingo, lottery tickets, casino games, online poker, and going to the racetrack are all examples of gambling. Clearly, not everyone who gambles becomes addicted. There is no easy formula for determining who develops an addiction to gambling. Studies have indicated,

however, that it is a combination of environmental, genetic, behavioral and biological factors.

DETERMINING A GAMBLING PROBLEM

As outlined in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013)*, Gambling Disorder is similar to substance-related disorders in nature, presentation and treatment. The following list of signs indicates the potential for gambling problems:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money to achieve the desired excitement
- Restlessness or irritability when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control gambling
- Often preoccupied with gambling
- Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed)
- After losing money gambling, often returns to gamble again as a way to recover losses
- Lies to conceal the extent of gambling
- Jeopardized or lost a relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity due to gambling
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling

ACCESS AND IMPACT

Gambling is more prevalent than ever before because people have constant access to the thrill of the behavior through the Internet. Like any addiction, compulsive gambling affects all aspects of life including physical health, relationships, finances and well-being.

ACTION STEPS

If you or someone you know is struggling with gambling consider the following:

- ✓ Schedule an appointment for a check-up with your primary care provider.
- ✓ Alternatively meet with a counselor or other provider experienced in treating addictions.
- ✓ Identify the triggers in your life that compel you to pursue gambling.
- ✓ Make a list of the current stressors in your life.
- ✓ Share the information you have compiled with your care provider.
- ✓ Inquire about available community resources and support groups.

KEEP IN MIND

Determination and will power are often not powerful enough to overcome the gambling impulse, and you are not alone in this struggle. Help is available, along with the hope of a better life. Consider reaching out to your health care provider and engaging other counseling resources for guidance on next steps.

What steps will you take today to be well and live life more fully?