



Make Prevention a CHOICE

Do You Have A Gambling Problem?

Gambling is a form of entertainment and means playing games of chance for money. A number of gambling activities include: video poker machines, bingo halls, illegal sports betting, off-track betting, pool halls, state lotteries, office pools and casinos. People who are unable to control their gambling have an impulse control disorder. When this causes life problems and the behavior continues, this is called compulsive gambling. Compulsive gamblers think irrationally, behave obsessively and sometimes gamble against hopeless odds. The following questions from Gamblers Anonymous indicate areas in which most compulsive gamblers have been troubled.

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling ever affect your reputation?
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties?
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
7. After losing did you feel you must return as soon as possible and win back your losses?
8. After a win did you have a strong urge to return and win more?
9. Did you often gamble until your last dollar was gone?
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
12. Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?
13. Did gambling make you careless about the welfare of yourself and family?
14. Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned?
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry or trouble?
16. Have you ever committed, or consider committing, an illegal act to finance your gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments, or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you have an urge to celebrate good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever consider self-destruction as a result of your gambling?

Most compulsive gamblers will answer yes to at least seven of these questions.

INDICATORS SUGGESTING A PROBLEM

Any one, or a combination of the following characteristics, are suggestive of a problem with compulsive gambling:

1. Is there an increase in the amount of time spent gambling?
2. Are payments on household expenses being delayed or not paid?
3. Is there boasting about winning and evasiveness about losing?
4. Is there a decreased interest in other previously enjoyed activities?
5. Are there frequent poorly explained absences from home or work?
6. Is there a personality change toward irritability, impatience, criticism, sarcasm and mood swings?
7. Is there borrowing of money from friends and banks?

THE ADDICTION STAGES

There are three stages of addiction in becoming a compulsive gambler.

The Winning Stage consists of when the gambler wins, loses and breaks even often. The winning and losing seems to be an adventure to the gambler. In this stage there are thrills, excitement dominates and it seems as if worries disappear.

The Losing Stage is when the gambler begins to lose more than win. Self esteem is reduced and the gambler may borrow money to "get even." More time seems to be spent gambling to recover losses and repay loans. A roller coaster ride begins: the stakes and the takes increase; but the losses come faster, and the ride down is a fearsome experience.

The Desperation Stage is when the gambling becomes a full-time obsession. Life is centered around "getting even" and paying off debts, often with borrowed or stolen money. Lies are told; secret loans and still greater risks are taken. Depression becomes constant and chronic.

For more information for you or someone you care about contact your local Gamblers Anonymous in the white pages of the telephone book or call:

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