

Family Tapestries Strengthening Family Bonds



Fact Sheet

Profile of a Problem Gambler

Susan Zies, M.Ed., Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, Lucas County,
 Assistant Professor, Ohio State University Extension, The Ohio State University

Gambling

For many people, gambling is something they do occasionally as a form of recreation or entertainment. They buy a lottery or raffle ticket, play the office Super Bowl pool, bet a few dollars at the horse or dog track, or take a yearly trip to Las Vegas. When the activity is over, they go on to other non-gambling activities.

Problem Gambling

Problem gambling can exist in all populations. Men, women, young, old, and people of all races, religious beliefs, and economic status can be at risk for developing a gambling problem. Approximately 11 million Americans have experienced some problems with gambling. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, problem gambling is defined as “a gambling behavior which causes disruption in any major area of life: psychological, physical, social or vocational.” Addictive gamblers begin to spend less time at work and less time with friends and family. Their self-esteem begins to depend more on making smart or lucky bets and, as a result, losses injure their self-esteem. Their mood follows their luck with periods of up and down depression. The gambler’s family life and work situation deteriorate as debt grows and personal possessions and savings may be exhausted. The impact on the entire family when a member has an addictive disorder can be devastating.

Problem Gambling Signs

Here are some signs that a person may have a problem with gambling:

- Frequent preoccupation with gambling. Spends a large amount of time gambling and thinks about gambling often.
- Becomes restless and irritable if unable to gamble. Gambles as a way of escaping from problems.
- Frequent, large gambling costs. May begin to place more frequent, regular bets, more than what was originally planned.
- Needs to bet more often to get the same level of “rush” or excitement. Becomes restless, tense, fed-up, or bad-tempered when trying to cut down or stop gambling.
- Repeated efforts to reduce or stop gambling. Problem gamblers are unable to reduce or stop gambling. May lie to family and friends to hide how much they gamble.
- Frequent gambling when expected to meet social or job obligations. The problem gambler may arrive late or miss work activities or family events.
- Continues to gamble in spite of growing debts. The problem gambler may borrow money from family or friends to support gambling efforts.

If you are concerned that you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, the following phone numbers and web sites can provide information and help on gambling:

- Gamblers Anonymous International Service Office, 1-213-386-8789,
www.gamblersanonymous.org
 - National Council on Problem Gambling, Inc., 1-800-522-4700,
www.ncpgambling.org
 - National Center for Responsible Gaming, 1-816-453-9964,
www.ncrg.org
- Additional fact sheets are available from your local Extension office on these topics:
- Adolescent Gambling
 - Positive and Negative Effects on Gambling

- Why People Gamble and Make Choices to Use Their Money They Need
- Types of Gambling

References

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- Schaffer, H. (2000, March) Compulsive Gambling Corner, *Behavioral Health* (online), Retrieved Sept. 7, 2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.behavioralhealthonline.com>.

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