

Problem-Gambling **(www.morethanagamenc.com)**

GAMBLING: Research indicates that college aged students are among the highest risk groups for developing problem gambling behavior.

WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Problem gambling includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. The essential features are increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, "chasing" losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences. In extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide. (www.ncpgambling.org)

MYTHS & FACTS

MYTH: You have to gamble everyday to be a problem gambler.

FACT: A problem gambler may gamble frequently or infrequently. The frequency is not as important as the impact of the gambling. If a person's gambling is causing psychological, financial, emotional, marital, legal, or other difficulties for themselves or the people around them, then they have a gambling problem.

MYTH: Problem gamblers gamble at every opportunity and on any form of gambling.

FACT: Most problem gamblers have a favorite form of gambling that causes them problems. Some gamblers also engage in secondary forms of gambling, but these are not usually as problematic.

MYTH: Problem gambling is not really a problem if the gambler can afford it.

FACT: Problems caused by excessive gambling are not just financial. If a person's gambling is interfering with their ability to act in accordance with their values, then there is a problem. For example, too much time spent on gambling means less time to spend with family, friends, and others. It can lead to relationship breakdown and loss of important friendships.

MYTH: Problem gamblers are irresponsible people.

FACT: Many problem gamblers hold, or have held, responsible community positions. In addition, even people with a long history of responsible behavior are vulnerable to developing a gambling problem. When a person is having a problem gambling episode, that person is unable to control their gambling and in this compromised state their actions look like irresponsible behavior.

MYTH: Children are not affected by problem gambling.

FACT: Surveys show that about 10% to 15% of American and Canadian youth have experienced gambling-related problems, and 1% to 6% of these individuals may satisfy diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling. Additionally, children of problem gamblers have been shown to be at a higher risk of developing health-threatening behaviors. This includes alcohol and drug use, problem gambling, eating disorders, depression and suicide.

MYTH: Partners of problem gamblers often drive problem gamblers to gamble.

FACT: Problem gamblers are skilled in finding ways to rationalize their gambling. Blaming others is one way to avoid taking responsibility for actions, including actions needed to overcome the gambling problem.

MYTH: Financial problems are the main reason that problem gambler's relationships break down.

FACT: It is true that money problems play an important part in ending relationships. However, many non-gambling partners say that the lies and lack of trust is the biggest cause.

MYTH: Parents of problem gamblers are to blame for their children's behavior.

FACT: Many parents of problem gamblers feel hurt and guilty about their son's or daughter's gambling behavior, but they are not to blame.

MYTH: If a problem gambler builds up a debt, the important thing to do is to help them get out of the financial problem as soon as possible.

FACT: Quick fix solutions are often attractive to everyone involved and may appear to be the right thing to do. However, "bailing" the gambler out of debt may actually make matters worse by enabling gambling problems to continue.

MYTH: Problem gambling is easy to recognize.

FACT: Problem gambling has been called the hidden addiction. It is very easy to hide as it has few recognizable symptoms, unlike alcohol and drug use. Many problem gamblers themselves do not recognize they have a gambling problem. Problem gamblers often engage in self-denial.

PROBLEM GAMBLING WARNING SIGNS

- Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
- Have you ever lied to people important to you about how much you gambled?
- Have you repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling?
- Do you gamble as a way of escaping emotional or physical pain?
- Have you ever relied on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling?
- Have you ever jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job or career opportunity because of gambling?
- Have you gambled to get money with which to pay debts or to solve other financial problems?
- Have you borrowed money to finance your gambling?
- Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
- Do you gamble to try to get your money back?

RESOURCES

- Call **NC Problem Gambling Helpline** at 877-718-5543; 24 hour confidential national hotline at 1-800-522-4700 or visit www.ncpgambling.org for more information on how to receive help and screening tools.
- Call **Gambler's Anonymous** at 888-846-4427 to find meetings near you or visit www.gamblersanonymous.org.
- Call **Gam-Anon** at 800-552-0170 or 704-552-4633 to find meeting near you meetings near you or visit or visit www.gam-anon.org.