



GAMBLING: A HIDDEN ADDICTION

When you or someone you care about has a problem:

There are many forms of addictive behaviors – alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, food, etc. Gambling, when it becomes an obsession is one of the more hidden yet devastating addictions if not treated. An addiction to gambling is not detectable by just looking at the person.

Recreational Gambling

For most individuals gambling in its many forms e.g. races, card games, bingo, lotteries, is nothing more than a form of relaxation and recreation mixed with a bit of excitement.

When then does this become a serious problem?

Compulsive Gambling

Heineman, in *When Someone You Love Gambles*, defines compulsive gambling as: “a progressive disease in which its victims pass through three specific phases – winning, losing, and desperation. Family members, and friends of compulsive gamblers, proceed through similar phases as they are affected by this illness.”

Winning phase – Not dissimilar to recreational gambling. It’s still fun, losses are affordable and the activity is often supported by family.

Losing phase –The frequency and amount of losses affects personal finances, tensions mount, and family tries to stop the gambler.

Desperation phase - The gambler’s energy is focused on finding some illegal ways to raise money to support the habit. Fear haunts the family – fear of destitution, job loss, the law, their safety and sanity.

At the desperation phase, gambling is no longer a choice. Instead it controls the person.

Gambling Signs in the Worksetting

It cannot be overstated that one must use extreme caution in drawing conclusions about a colleague (even privately)! First, any of the following symptoms may be signaling other types of issues in a colleague’s life. Secondly, we do not evaluate our colleague’s performance. Leave that up to your principal.

Lesieur, in *Understanding Compulsive Gambling*, highlights some possible indicators of someone in trouble:

1. **Misuse of Time** - Frequent lateness, excessive use of sick days when they come available, excessive phone calls, tracking results of races and sports while on the job.
2. **Signs of Obsession with Gambling and / or Debts** - Unfinished work, moodiness, irritability, poor concentration, obsessive interest in results of races, lotteries and sports.
3. **On the job** - Using school time to gamble or organize gambling events such as lotteries, junkets etc. Borrowing money, from colleagues and not re-paying.

Do you have a gambling problem?

Gamblers Anonymous has twenty questions that it asks new members.



1. Did you ever lose time from work due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling 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 of the welfare of yourself and your 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 considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever considered self-destruction as a result of your gambling?

If you have answered yes to at least seven of these questions you may be a compulsive gambler. There is help and hope available.

Supporting Your Colleague:

It is the responsibility of the principal and the employer to fully address performance concerns related to a gambling problem.

Avoid Enabling

- Don't cover for a colleague who is not fulfilling their duties at work.
- Don't lend colleagues money or pay debts.

Enabling behaviour prevents the individual from experiencing the consequences of the problem and places them at greater risks re their employment.

Be Supportive

- Pick a time to talk privately and confidentially.
- Let the person know you care.
- Tell your colleague you will not cover for his/her work or finances.
- Offer support and resources.

Do Not

- Jump to conclusions.
- Discuss concerns with other staff.

For support contact:

Responsible Gambling Council 416-499-9800 or for members' rights and obligations call PRS at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836

