

# Gambling Disorder

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Compulsive Gambling

# What is Compulsive gambling?

- **Compulsive gambling, also called gambling disorder, is the uncontrollable urge to keep gambling despite the toll it takes on your life.**
- Gambling means that you're willing to risk something you value in the hope of getting something of even greater value.



# Why is gambling lumped in with drugs and alcohol?

- Gambling can stimulate the brain's reward system much like drugs and alcohol can, leading to addiction.
- Just like drugs and alcohol, gambling can **quickly become addictive and spiral out of control.**





- If you're prone to compulsive gambling, you may continually chase losses, hide your behavior, deplete savings, accumulate debt, or even resort to theft or fraud to support your addiction.

# Can Destroy Lives



- Compulsive gambling is a serious condition that can destroy lives. Although treating compulsive gambling can be challenging, many compulsive gamblers have found help through professional treatment.

# Symptoms of compulsive (pathologic) gambling



- Gaining a thrill from taking big gambling risks
- Taking increasingly bigger gambling risks
- Preoccupation with gambling
- Reliving past gambling experiences
- Failed efforts to cut back on gambling



- Taking time from work or family life to gamble
- Concealing or lying about gambling
- Feeling guilt or remorse after gambling
- Borrowing money or stealing to gamble
- Gambling as a way to escape problems or feelings of helplessness, guilt or depression

# How does it turn into an addiction?



- On rare occasions, gambling becomes a problem with the very first wager. But more often, a gambling problem progresses over time. In fact, many people spend years enjoying social gambling without any problems. But **more frequent gambling or life stresses can turn casual gambling into something much more serious.**



# An Unhealthy Escape



- During **periods of stress or depression**, the urge to gamble may be especially overpowering, serving as an unhealthy escape.
- Eventually, a person with a gambling problem becomes **almost completely preoccupied with gambling and getting money to gamble.**

# Not about the \$\$

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- For many compulsive gamblers, betting **isn't as much about money as it is about the excitement.**
- Sustaining the thrill that gambling provides usually involves **taking increasingly bigger risks** and **placing larger bets.** Those bets may involve sums you can't afford to lose.

# Don't know when to Stop

- Unlike most casual gamblers who stop when losing or set a loss limit, **compulsive gamblers are compelled to keep playing to recover their money** - a pattern that becomes increasingly destructive over time.



# Three Phases of the Gambling Cycle

- Winning – unrealistic optimism
- Losing – denial, chases losses
- Desperation – obsessed, blame, life falls apart



# Can they recover from it?

- Some compulsive gamblers **may have remission** where they gamble less or not at all for a period of time. However, **without treatment, the remission usually isn't permanent.**



# When is it time for help?



- If family members, friends or co-workers express concern about your gambling, you should listen to their worries. Because **denial** is almost always a characteristic of compulsive or addictive behavior, it **may be difficult for you to recognize that you have a problem.**

# What causes compulsive gambling?

- Exactly what causes someone to gamble compulsively **isn't well understood**. Like many problems, compulsive gambling may result from **a combination of biological, genetic and environmental factors**.



# Who has a gambling problem?

- Mostly men but cases in women are on the rise





# Men vs. Women

- Men more competitive card games
- Women slot machines / scratch tickets where they are more emotionally and physically comfortable



# Income Level



- Can affect anyone, but often becomes a problem for those who can afford it the least
- View money as the root cause and also the solution to their problems

# Teenagers

- 5-8% of teens
- Mostly males
- Not for the money, but for excitement, escape, or to relieve depression
- Usually starts in college for males and later for females



# Who is at greatest risk?

- **Other behavior or mood disorders.** People who gamble compulsively often have substance abuse problems, mood or personality disorders, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Many compulsive gamblers abuse alcohol, and many experience major depression.





- **Age.** Compulsive gambling is more common in **younger** and **middle-aged** people.
- **Gender.** Compulsive gambling is **more common in men** than in women. Women who gamble typically start later in life, are more apt to have depression, anxiety or bipolar disorders, and may become addicted more quickly. But gambling patterns among men and women have become increasingly similar.



- **Family influence.** If one of your **parents** had a gambling problem, the chances are greater that you will, too.
- **Certain personality characteristics.** Being highly competitive, a workaholic, restless or easily bored may increase your risk.

# Negative Effects



- Relationship problems
- Financial problems, including bankruptcy
- Legal problems or imprisonment
- Job loss or professional stigma
- Associated alcohol or drug abuse
- Poor general health
- Mental health disorders, such as depression
- Suicide

# Isn't it unethical for the government to allow this?

- Gambling is big business in states where it is legal
- Can generate billions of dollars per year
- Brings in state tax revenue





# Admitting you have a problem

- Treating compulsive gambling can be challenging. That's partly because most people have a hard time admitting they have a problem. Yet a major part of treatment is **working on acknowledging that you're a compulsive gambler.**

WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM

**888-ADMIT-IT**

[www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org)



Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.

# Treatment

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- If your family or your employer pressured you into therapy, you may find yourself **resisting treatment**. But treating a gambling problem can help you regain a sense of control - and it may help heal damaged relationships or finances.
- The 3 main approaches are **psychotherapy, medication, and self-help groups**.

# Psychotherapy

- Behavior therapy uses **systematic exposure to the behavior** you want to unlearn (gambling) and teaches you skills to reduce your urge to gamble.



# Medication

- **Antidepressants** and **mood stabilizers** may help treat problems that often go along with compulsive gambling — such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder or ADHD - but **not necessarily compulsive gambling itself.**





# Relapse

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- Even with treatment, you **may return to gambling**, especially if you spend time with people who gamble or you're in gambling environments.
- If you feel that you'll start gambling again, contact your mental health provider or sponsor right away to **head off a full-blown relapse.**

# Coping Strategies

- The appeal of gambling is hard to overcome if you keep thinking that you'll win the next time you gamble.
- Tell yourself it's **too risky to gamble at all**. One bet typically leads to another and another.
- **Recognize** and then **avoid situations that trigger your urge to bet.**



# Sources

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- [PsychCentral.com](http://PsychCentral.com)
- [MayoClinic.org](http://MayoClinic.org)