



Problem Gambling: Awareness and Resources

What is Problem Gambling?

Problem Gambling is defined as an increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, chasing losses and a loss of control from continued gambling behavior despite mounting, serious and negative consequences.

Individuals in any age group may suffer from gambling disorder. Those with a gambling disorder struggle to control their behavior, which can cause financial hardship, emotional distress and strain relationships, impacting their families and society.

Signs of Problem Gambling

According to the American Psychiatric Association, a diagnosis of gambling disorder requires at least **four** of the following during the past year:

- Frequent thoughts about gambling (such as reliving past gambling experiences or planning future gambling experiences)
- Need to gamble with increasing amounts to achieve the desired excitement
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back on or stop gambling
- Restlessness or irritability when trying to cut down or stop gambling
- Gambling when trying to escape from problems, negative mood or stress
- Often gambling when feeling distressed
- After losing money or an item of value due to gambling, often returning to get even (referred to as “chasing” one’s losses)
- Lying to hide the extent of gambling involvement
- Losing important opportunities such as a job, school achievements or close relationships due to gambling
- Relying on others to help with money problems caused by gambling

Problem Gambling and Substance Use

Problem gambling and substance use often co-occur. Individuals with gambling disorders may be more vulnerable to substance use as they attempt to cope with the emotional and financial stress caused by their gambling. Both disorders can exacerbate each other, creating a cycle where one problem reinforces the other, leading to more severe consequences for the individual’s health and well-being.

If you are using substances and want help stopping, please contact our Peer Recovery Program at **848-303-0008** for recovery support services. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call 911.

Sources:

www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gambling-disorder/what-is-gambling-disorder
www.addiction.rutgers.edu/about-addiction/facts-and-figures/gambling/
www.ncpgambling.org/problem-gambling/pgam/
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4803266/>

Impacts of Problem Gambling

- Individuals can experience financial instability as a result of using their money to fund their gambling activities.
- Relationships with friends and family can suffer as a result of the preoccupation with gambling.
- Individuals may experience difficulties at work due to the negative impacts of excessive gambling on their productivity and focus.
- People with a gambling disorder often experience negative emotions such as guilt or shame.

Treatment for Problem Gambling

Gambling can change parts of the brain that deal with experiencing reward or excitement. Treatment for gambling disorders can slowly help reverse these changes and return the brain to normal functioning. **Different approaches may work better for different people. Some approaches include:**

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Psychodynamic therapy
- Group therapy
- Family therapy

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ offers support for gamblers, family and friends.

1-800-GAMBLER | 800gambler.org