



Gambling Dependency

A gambling dependency is difficult to spot. It has been called the 'hidden addiction' because:

- ◆ There are no physical symptoms as there are with drug abuse or alcoholism;
- ◆ Gamblers frequently do not believe they have 'a problem' or wish to hide it;
- ◆ Gamblers are exceedingly plausible and become adept at concocting believable stories to mask the truth;
- ◆ Money shortages and debts can be explained away with ease;
- ◆ With young people, gambling may be only one of several excessive behaviours.

There are, however, a number of signs and symptoms which, when taken together, indicate that gambling may be the problem. The more probable signs are listed in this leaflet.

Many of these signs can also be applied to other excessive behaviours, so caution must be exercised before deciding that gambling is the problem.

Signs and Symptoms

1. Clear Indications

- ◆ Request for help from gambler.
- ◆ Admission by gambler that he or she spends too much money on gambling.
- ◆ Gambler saying that they spend too much time gambling and cannot keep away.
- ◆ Gambling seen as legitimate means of making money.
- ◆ Persuading friends to gamble against their will.
- ◆ Gambling alone for long periods.
- ◆ Frequenting amusement arcades, betting shops, horse and dog tracks, or casinos several times a week.

- ◆ Spending excessive time playing on internet gambling sites
- ◆ Spending more than they can afford on the Lottery.
- ◆ Committing crime to fund gambling or pay off gambling debts.
- ◆ Persistent reports that a person has been seen gambling and in the informer's view has a problem.
- ◆ Frequently in possession of fruit machine tokens, betting slips, scratchcards, etc.

2. Probable Indications

- ◆ Money difficulties and debts that are cleared and then re-appear.
- ◆ Unrealistic suggestions to pay off debts.
- ◆ Criminal offences of fraud, embezzlement, and persistent theft of cash.
- ◆ No apparent interests, pastimes or leisure pursuits.
- ◆ High degree of knowledge about gambling.
- ◆ Blind optimism, looks at short-term prospects and is only concerned with the 'here and now'.
- ◆ Creates rows at home as an excuse to go out.
- ◆ Pockets/purse full of coins.
- ◆ Strenuous denial when challenged that gambling is a problem.

3. Possible Indications

- ◆ Parent(s) had gambling problem or gambled frequently.
- ◆ Need to show off skills or achieve group status.
- ◆ Poor school/work results compared to ability level.
- ◆ Truancy, college or work absenteeism.
- ◆ Dinner money misused – coming home persistently very hungry.
- ◆ Mood swings, irritability, restlessness.
- ◆ Very low, depressed, pre-occupied, withdrawn.
- ◆ Lying to cover tracks or disguise money shortages.
- ◆ Lack of, or half-hearted interest in children, other family members or friends.
- ◆ Isolated, lonely, and with no time at all for friends.
- ◆ Suicide attempt(s).
- ◆ Working in a job that allows time to slip away and gamble.
- ◆ Lack of instant accountability in a job.
- ◆ Always has a ready excuse as to why short of money.
- ◆ Workaholic attitude, seems to have drive and energy.
- ◆ Saleable and valuable items go missing from home.
- ◆ Very competitive, always likes to win, bad loser.

Interventions for a Gambling Dependency

Understand the issues

Gain what knowledge you can about the issues of gambling – both positive and negative.

Structure change

Adapt a method of changing behaviour you have used with other problems (such as alcohol or drug dependency), or develop one that is realistic and attainable.

Understanding their motivation

Escaping from an unhappy life, missing work or studies to gamble.

Money as a tool

Even after great losses, the impulsive need to continue gambling as soon as possible in an attempt to win back what's gone

Total Lack of Interest

No interest in family and friends, borrows or steals to support their gambling habit.

Driven by Despair

Creates arguments, feelings of frustration & disappointment, gambling becomes their release. Depressed or even suicidal over gambling.

Manage finances

Debt counselling will almost certainly be needed, and the control and accountability of all money may be required. If mutually agreed, it can help a gambler initially if a trusted friend/family member holds the gamblers finances until their confidence in managing money is restored.

For further information or literature contact GamCare

GAMCARE

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