



## Gambling Disorder & Substance Abuse

### Similarities

- Acquired tolerance
- Inability to stop
- Denial and rationalization
- Progression (phases/stages)
- Depression, anxiety/mood swings
- Chasing the first win/high
- First drink/first win remembered
- Blackouts/brownouts
- Substance use and gambling used to escape from pain
- Preoccupation
- Low self-esteem/high ego
- Dysfunctional families
- High of gambling not unlike cocaine rush
- Use of rituals
- Immediate gratification
- Chronicity
- Withdrawal
- Loss of spirituality and life management skills
- Continuation of use, despite consequences

### Differences

- Progression is rapid with problem gambling.
- There is secrecy with problem gamblers.
- Gambling is a “hidden addiction” which allows for less detection.
- There is no saturation point; you cannot overdose on gambling.
- “Double or nothing” attempts to chase, control or win.
- Severe financial problems requiring immediate attention.
- No “biological test” can detect problem gambling.
- No ingestion is required for the high.
- There are minimal resources available for gamblers and their families.
- Gambling is considered by many to be a moral weakness, reflecting poor judgment, irresponsibility and/or greed.
- Prevention message is not easily accepted by communities.
- Substance abuse is accepted as treatable by society.
- Treatment is often not reimbursable.

### Lie-Bet: 2-Question Screening Tool

These two questions aid in identifying gambling problems. No single question is adequate in capturing the majority of those experiencing gambling problems. Answering “yes” to one or both of these questions is suggestive of a problem deserving further assessment.

1. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
2. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gamble?

VA, R. Nora, MD [The Wager](#)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***Problem Gambling***



### **WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING?**

Problem gambling or gambling addiction includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. The symptoms include:

- increasing preoccupation with gambling
- a need to bet more money more frequently
- “chasing” losses (betting even more to try to recoup previous losses)
- restlessness/irritability when trying to stop
- loss of control manifested by continuation of gambling despite mounting, serious, negative consequences
- in extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide (\$7 billion social cost in America alone!)

### **ISN'T PROBLEM GAMBLING JUST A FINANCIAL PROBLEM?**

No. Problem gambling is an emotional problem that has financial consequences. If you pay all the debts of a person affected by problem gambling, the person still has a gambling problem or gambling disorder. The real issue is that they have an uncontrollable obsession with gambling.

### **HOW DO I KNOW IF A PERSON HAS A GAMBLING PROBLEM?**

Problem gambling is known as a hidden addiction. There is no physical test that indicates gambling behavior, but there are some signs to look for:

- Frequently borrowing money to gamble.
- Gambling to escape boredom, pain or loneliness.
- Lying to loved ones about gambling.
- Trying to win back money lost.
- Preoccupation with gambling.

### **WHO IS AT RISK FOR A GAMBLING PROBLEM?**

- Problem gambling does not discriminate based on age, gender, religion, social status or education. Anyone can develop a gambling problem.
- Gambling problems may develop with any form of gambling activity.
- Groups at high risk include seniors, adolescents, college students, athletes, veterans, and racial and ethnic minorities.

### **WHY DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING?**

- Although most people gamble for fun and recreation, some can develop a problem that can lead to severe negative consequences.
- Gambling addiction affects 6-9 million Americans (2-3% of population).
- Anyone who gambles can develop problems if not aware of the risks.
- Gambling is more readily available in the U.S. than at any point in our history; 48 states allow some form of gambling.

## **HOW DOES PROBLEM GAMBLING IMPACT ME?**

- It is estimated that 8-10 people are affected by one individual's gambling problem.
- If you gamble it is important to recognize that what was once fun and recreation can become a serious issue.
- Your awareness may help a loved one seek the necessary help.
- Problem gambling is a public health issue that impacts relationships, families, businesses and Communities.

## **HOW CAN A PERSON BE ADDICTED TO SOMETHING THAT ISN'T A SUBSTANCE?**

Although no substance is ingested, someone with a gambling problem gets the same effect from gambling as one might get from taking a drug or drinking alcohol. But just as tolerance develops to drugs or alcohol, a person with gambling problems finds that it takes more and more of the gambling experience to achieve the same effect as before. This creates an increased urge for the activity and the person finds that they have less and less ability to resist as the craving grows in intensity and frequency.

## **HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE BEFORE GAMBLING BECOMES AN ISSUE?**

The amount of money lost or won does not determine when gambling becomes problematic. Gambling becomes an issue when it causes a negative impact on any area of the person's life.

## **HOW WIDESPREAD IS PROBLEM GAMBLING IN THE U.S.?**

2 million U.S. adults (1%) are estimated to meet criteria for severe gambling problems each year. Another 4-6 million (2-3%) would be considered to have mild or moderate gambling problems; that is, they do not meet the full diagnostic criteria for gambling addiction but meet one or more of the criteria and are experiencing problems due to their gambling behavior. Research also indicates that most adults who choose to gamble can do so responsibly.

## **WHY IS PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH IMPORTANT?**

Most adults gamble, and therefore would benefit from programs to prevent gambling addiction. March has become one of the biggest gambling occasions because of the popularity of the NCAA "March Madness" Basketball Tournament. Between six and nine million people meet criteria for gambling problems, yet only a fraction seek help. We believe many who suffer in silence do so because they don't know they developed a problem, what gambling addiction is, or where to get help.

## **HAVE THE CONVERSATION ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING**

Problem Gambling is a public health issue affecting all aspects of physical, social, and mental health. It can affect families, work performance and general well-being. It is important to know the signs of a gambling problem, that treatment is available, and that it works. Use this document to learn about problem gambling, how to recognize the signs of gambling addiction and where to go for help.

March is a great time to Have the Conversation about Problem Gambling.



## Gambling Disorder Screening Day

### About the Event

The National Council on Problem Gambling is partnering with the Cambridge Health Alliance Division on Addiction, which has developed a free Gambling Disorder Screening Day Toolkit.

The Gambling Disorder Screening Day Toolkit as well as current information can be accessed on our website at [www.wi-problemgamblers.org](http://www.wi-problemgamblers.org) under the events tab.



Materials include information on:

- What is Gambling Disorder?
- Why Screen for Gambling?
- About the Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen
- The Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen
- An electronic version of the Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (only users see their results)
- Gambling Resources & Referrals
- Your First Step to Change (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), a self-help toolkit
- ...and more

**WISCONSIN COUNCIL**  
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING



**The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling, Inc. provides resources, public awareness and education on gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling.**

Services Provided by the WCPG:

- Promote public education and awareness of gambling disorders
- Maintain a toll-free statewide Helpline
- Provide Resources:
  - Gamblers Anonymous Meetings,
  - Treatment Providers,
  - Credit counseling referrals
- Expert training to professional counselors in the treatment of gambling disorders
- Public speaking
- Exhibits
- Social Media presence – Find us on:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Instagram
  - LinkedIn