

What are the odds? Understanding problem gambling



Many adults gamble. People take part in lotteries, fantasy sports, horse racing, card games and many other kinds of betting. Most gamble for fun and recreation.

What is problem gambling?

Gambling can get out of control. When people are sad, stressed or trying to “escape” from their lives, gambling may provide quick relief.

Then they may gamble more and more to keep feeling the “high” of winning. Or they may say they need to gamble until they recoup lost money. They may not even realize how serious their problem has become. But others around them will usually see the signs.

What to look for

Like other addictions, problem gambling has warning signs. People may be addicted if they¹:

- Say they’ll stop gambling as soon as they make up for their losses
- Obsess about gambling
- Lie, borrow or steal to get money for gambling
- Can’t stop gambling without having emotional and psychological withdrawal
- Gamble to forget other sad or painful parts of their lives
- Bet more and more money

The key question

If you or someone you know shows one or more of the above signs, it’s possible that there’s a gambling problem. Another way to check for addiction is to ask yourself or the other person this question: “Can I/you stop gambling right now?” If the answer is “no,” it’s likely there’s an issue.

How to help

As with other addictions, there is help. You can call or text the National Problem Gambling Hotline (NPGH) at 1-800-522-4700. Chat and phone lines are open 24/7/365.

The NPGH can give you confidential help and information. Their specialists can direct you to local resources, support groups and helplines. They can also refer you to counselors who focus on gambling problems.

When in doubt, reach out

Don’t underestimate problem gambling. It can have severe family, financial and emotional impacts. Some people can even become suicidal if they owe too much money, feel desperate or don’t know how to get help.

If you think someone may have a problem, take a “gamble” and reach out to them. If you think it’s you, remember: You’re not alone and help is just a call or text away.

¹<http://www.psychguides.com/guides/compulsive-gambling-symptoms-causes-and-effects/>

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