

PROBLEM GAMBLING

Recognizing the Signs



Buying lottery tickets or joining an office pool can lead to problems just as easily as playing slot machines at a casino. Other common forms of gambling include bingo, card games, horse or dog racing, sports betting, gambling online or any game of chance where money or an item of value is exchanged as an outcome. Gambling can be fun and entertaining, but for some people it can become a problem.

Learn more about the warning signs of problem gambling.



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Gambling Addiction can have negative consequences for gamblers as well as their families, friends, and co-workers.

Gambling is identified as a problem when the gambling behavior causes disruptions to major areas of a person's life including their family, finances, work, education, and social life. Gambling addiction is much like the addiction to any substance such as alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Problem gambling can lead to an increasing obsession with gambling activity, the need to bet more money more often, and repeated gambling behavior despite the very serious and negative consequences that problem gambling can bring.

WARNING SIGNS

Excessive Time Spent Gambling

Problem gamblers are often noted for their absences. They miss work and ignore family and social obligations in order to gamble. Making frequent, unexplained phone calls could be another sign of trouble.

Hiding Gambling Losses

Problem gamblers enjoy boasting about their wins but rarely mention their losses. They may also be secretive about how they spend their money, hiding loans, withdrawals from family bank accounts and other financial dealings. When confronted, the gambler will lie or minimize the problem and look for ways to acquire more funds.

Gambling to Escape

While most gamblers are action-seekers, some use gambling as a way to escape from loneliness, stress, or a troubled relationship. Problem gamblers may gamble to feel good when faced with a crisis.

Mood Swings

A problem gambler's moods can be like a roller-coaster ride, soaring with wins and plunging with losses. Under constant pressure for action, the gambler can rarely unwind, even when winning. When such a person can't gamble, he or she may become restless, anxious or angry.

Finding More Reasons to Gamble

While a social gambler might suggest a gambling outing, a problem gambler is likely to insist on one. A problem gambler may invent opportunities to gamble.

Chasing Losses

A problem gambler often tries to win back losses. In time, this situation may spin out of control and the gambler will lose track of his or her losses.

No Success in Quitting

Despite promises to friends and family and repeated attempts to quit, most gamblers are unable to break their addiction without outside help.

HOW TO IDENTIFY A GAMBLING PROBLEM

Do you or does someone you know:

1. Take time off from work or other obligations to gamble?
2. Borrow money to gamble?
3. Gamble to escape stress or a crisis?
4. Sell personal belongings to get money for gambling?
5. Lie about time and money spent gambling?
6. Have trouble sleeping because of gambling?
7. Ever think about suicide as a result of gambling losses?
8. Steal money to gamble?
9. Gamble to solve money problems?
10. Feel an urge to gamble again as soon as possible to win back gambling losses?
11. Break promises to stop or cut back on gambling?
12. Feel bad after gambling?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you, or someone you know, may have a problem with gambling and help should be sought immediately.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you or someone you know needs assistance with problem gambling:

- **24-Hour Confidential Helpline: Dial 2-1-1 (Maine only)**
- **Gamblers Anonymous: www.gamblersanonymous.org**
- **Maine Office of Substance Abuse: www.maineosa.org**
- **2-1-1 Maine: www.211maine.org**