



IOWA GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM

# TIPS

TIPS ON UNDERSTANDING  
PROBLEM GAMBLING.



**No judging. Just helping.**

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For most people, gambling is a form of recreation. According to an Iowa gambling treatment program study— **88 percent of Iowans 18 years and older participated in some form of gambling.** Approximately 3-percent of those indicated problems with gambling.

This brochure is designed to **help Iowans understand problem gambling**, which can take over lives while ruining careers, education, health and relationships. With internet gambling and the popularity of card games, the opportunities to gamble are increasing exponentially, making information about problem gambling all the more relevant.

## GAMBLING ACTIVITIES

**THESE ACTIVITIES, WHEN DONE IN EXCESS, MAY PRESENT PROBLEMS FOR SOME GAMBLERS.**

- Video, internet and casino blackjack, roulette, craps and slot machines
- Bingo, raffles, keno, dice and dominoes
- Lottery games
- Greyhound, harness and horse racing
- Sports betting, cards, betting on games of skill and office pools
- Commodities, options and stock markets

## WHY PEOPLE GAMBLE TOO MUCH

Problems with gambling develop among men and women of all backgrounds. Problem gambling can affect anyone, regardless of social or economic status, ethnicity or age.

### **SOME PEOPLE GAMBLE TOO MUCH BECAUSE THEY:**

- Believe winning big will solve their problems
- Seek escape and relief from stress, grief, boredom or hopeless situations
- Are in troubled relationships and feel lonely, helpless or depressed
- Are tired and emotionally drained

For people experiencing symptoms of depression, gambling can provide exciting high points, creating a rush. Gambling can be seen as needed time away from troubling relationships or other stresses they might be experiencing. For those treatment professionals who work with individuals affected by a substance use, mental health or gambling disorder, it is important to be aware of and address the possibility of crossing over from one disorder to another. For example, individuals in recovery from a substance use or mental health disorder, may begin or even continue to gamble and put their ongoing recovery in jeopardy.

### **PEOPLE WITH GAMBLING PROBLEMS MAY:**

- Think continually of gambling and ways to get gambling money
- Fail to cut back or stop gambling
- Be restless or irritable when quitting
- Lie to hide gambling activity
- Commit forgery, fraud, theft or embezzlement for gambling money

## UNCOVERING A GAMBLING PROBLEM

Individuals whose lives revolve around gambling hide their problems well and can function in their day-to-day life for awhile.

### WARNING SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING MAY INCLUDE:

- Absent or late for work or school
- Undue interest in sports scores or sports news
- Excessive shopping and binge spending
- Unexplained money or new possessions
- Selling possessions
- Ignoring family, school, career and community duties
- Unexplained mood swings
- Blaming others for problems
- Avoiding family and friends after borrowing money
- Refusal to talk about money matters
- Delaying payment of household bills
- Emptying family bank accounts, retirement funds and children's savings
- Using credit cards for cash advances
- Getting small loans or second mortgage
- Filing for bankruptcy
- Stealing to gamble



## WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF PROBLEM GAMBLING?

### PHASE 1 WINNING

Problem gambling can start as a fun, social activity. People sometimes win large amounts, but it's not always about winning money. Sometimes problem gamblers are rewarded by the excitement, the dreams of winning or the escape from everyday problems and stresses.

### PHASE 2 LOSING

Trouble may begin when problem gamblers think their behavior is under control, but actually it is not. They seek more action, lose, and then gamble in an attempt to win it back. They hide their losses and borrow money to continue gambling. Concerned others begin to notice.

### PHASE 3 DESPERATION

People with a gambling problem become desperate. They know they're in trouble, but they still can't quit. Everything has gone bad. They've lost all their money, lost their jobs and lost their families. They have hit rock bottom. At this phase they may steal or commit illegal activities to finance their gambling.

## **HELP IS AVAILABLE**

### **FROM THE IOWA GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM**

**PERSONS AFFECTED BY PROBLEM  
GAMBLING MEET IN COUNSELING AND  
GROUP SESSIONS TO:**

- Face the problem honestly and openly
- Acknowledge the problem exists
- Learn to manage financial pressures
- Address the harm of gambling
- Bring balance to their lives
- Work on goals which accent the positive
- Identify patterns to prevent relapses
- Identify effective steps if relapse occurs
- Find leisure activities to replace gambling
- Enroll in Iowa's Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program

**RECOVERY TAKES  
HARD WORK,  
HONESTY AND  
THE DESIRE TO  
TAKE ON NEW  
RESPONSIBILITIES.**

## **FAMILY HELP**

Problem gambling often has devastating effects on families. Family members learn that encouraging gamblers to get treatment can be the best support to give. Bailing people with gambling problems out of debt is not the answer. Family members can receive counseling and education to cope with the problem.

**FAMILY MEMBERS LEARN THAT IT MAY BE  
NECESSARY TO:**

- Take control of their own lives
- Confront and cease enabling behaviors
- Restore their normal life routines
- Detach in healthy ways from situations
- Reinforce appropriate actions for recovery
- Distance themselves from problem gambling behavior
- Take control of money management, bank accounts and insurance matters

## **SERVICES**

Using state funds, specialized treatment programs provide help for Iowans who gamble too much and for family members and others affected by problem gambling. Iowans are eligible for services, regardless of their ability to pay; services are provided on a sliding fee scale. Educational presentations on problem gambling can be arranged at no cost to interested groups.

