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Is playing no longer fun?

What is problem gambling?

Problem gambling includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. The essential features are increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, "chasing" losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences. In extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide.

What kind of people become problem gamblers?



Anyone who gambles can develop problems if they are not aware of the risks and do not gamble responsibly. When gambling behavior interferes with finances, relationships and the workplace, a serious problem already exists.

How can a person be addicted to something that isn't a substance?

Although no substance is ingested, the problem gambler gets the same effect from gambling that someone else might get from taking a tranquilizer or drinking alcohol. The gambling alters the person's mood and the gambler keeps repeating the behavior attempting to achieve that same effect. But just as tolerance develops to drugs or alcohol, the gambler finds that it takes more and more of the gambling experience to achieve the same emotional effect as before. This creates an increased craving for the activity and the gambler finds they have less and less ability to resist as the craving grows in intensity and frequency.

Are problem gamblers usually addicted to other things too?

It is generally accepted that people with one addiction are more at risk to develop another. Some problem gamblers also find they have a problem with alcohol or drugs. This does not, however, mean that if you have a gambling problem you are guaranteed to become addicted to other things. Some problem gamblers never experience any other addiction because no other substance or activity gives them the same feeling as the gambling does. There also appears to be evidence of family patterns regarding dependency, as many problem gamblers report one or both parents had a drinking and or gambling problem.



Can children or teenagers develop gambling problems?

A number of states allow children under 18 to gamble, and youth also participate in illegal forms of gambling, such as gambling on the internet or betting on sports. It is not surprising that research shows that a vast majority of kids have gambled before their 18th birthday, and that children may be more likely to develop problems related to gambling than adults. While debate continues on this issue, there appears to be a number of factors influencing this finding. Parental attitudes and behavior play a role. Age of exposure plays a part, in that adults who seek treatment for problem gambling report having started gambling at an early age. A number of adolescents reported a preoccupation with everything related to gambling prior to developing problems.