

# GAMBLING Addiction

**COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS** experience the uncontrollable urge to continue gambling even though it causes **financial, relationship, or work problems**. Gambling **takes over all aspects** of their lives, sometimes leading them to do whatever it takes to keep gambling.

**PROBLEM GAMBLERS** are similar to compulsive gamblers, but they're **not completely out of control**. Individuals have a gambling problem once gambling **starts to interfere with work, relationships, or finances**.

## Symptoms

Compulsive or Problem Gambling usually starts with **social gambling**. More **frequent gambling** and **stressors** can turn social gambling into a **larger problem**. Signs of Problem or Compulsive Gambling include:

- ♥ Unsuccessfully trying to cut back or quit.
- ♥ A preoccupation with gambling.
- ♥ Experiencing a thrill from large gambling risks.
- ♥ Taking greater gambling risks.
- ♥ Hiding or lying about gambling behavior.
- ♥ Borrowing or stealing money to gamble.
- ♥ Using gambling as a way to escape from problems.
- ♥ Experiencing guilt after gambling.

## What Contributes to Compulsive Gambling?

### Brain Chemistry

The brains of compulsive gamblers are similar to those of drug addicts in that they need more intense stimulation.

### Family Influence

The majority of compulsive gamblers have at least one relative with a gambling problem.

### Mental Health Issues

Many compulsive gamblers have pre-existing mental health conditions, including mood, anxiety, and personality disorders.

### Substance Abuse Issues

About half of compulsive gamblers also have a problem with alcohol or drugs.

## Phases of Gambling

### ♦ WINNING ♦

*Minimal consequences, big wins.*

### ♣ LOSING aka "THE CHASE" ♣

*Can't stop gambling, home and work life are affected.*

### ♥ DESPERATION ♥

*Funds gambling with illegal/immoral acts, withdraws from family/friends.*

### ♠ HELPLESSNESS ♠

*Suicidal thoughts and attempts, depression, emotional breakdown.*

## What if I am a Compulsive Gambler?

It's never too late to get help!

### ♣ Gamblers Anonymous (GA) ♣

A 12-step program with chapters across the United States.

### ♦ Medication ♦

Anti-anxiety medications and anti-depressants have proven effective for some.

### ♠ Therapy ♠

Common types of therapy include cognitive, psychodynamic, and family therapy.

### ♥ Inpatient Recovery Centers ♥

These offer a combination of group and one-on-one therapies.

## What if I Know a Compulsive Gambler?

- ♣ Don't expect immediate recovery.
- ♣ Stay calm when talking about the gambling behavior and its consequences.
- ♣ Refrain from lecturing or nagging.
- ♣ Seek help from support groups and encourage him/her to do the same.
- ♣ Ask to take over the finances, if appropriate.

**DON'T GAMBLE YOUR LIFE AWAY!**