

Living With a Problem Gambler

Problem gambling is not just an issue that impacts an individual or person, but is one that affects entire families. Living with a problem gambler affects the spouse or partner, as well as children, in significant ways. Many times the spouses, partners, and children of compulsive gamblers experience the consequences of Problem Gambling as strongly as those who suffer from compulsive gambling themselves.

The primary area of impact when living with someone who is struggling with a gambling problem is the relationship between spouses and partners themselves. Many people's relationship does not survive and either ends in separation or divorce. The most significant impact to couples comes from one partner's loss of trust in the other, caused by repeated episodes of deceitful behaviors on the part of the individual with the gambling problem, which resulted in the eventual loss of respect and extreme stress on the couple's relationship.

Children are also impacted in familial relationships with individuals who suffer from compulsive gambling, as those who have this

problem sometimes do have children in their care. Besides issues with financial support and meeting their children's basic needs, the emotional impact of a poor relationship with their

the issues that your family faces with problem gambling, many children cope with issues better when parents include them in conversations about problems facing the family. Third, focus



parental figure can lead to long lasting developmental issues as children grow. Many times partners and children of problem gamblers suffer from guilt and isolation caused by their relationship with problem gamblers.

So if you are in a relationship with a problem gambler, what do you do? According to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, there are many things that you can do. First, realize that you are not alone. Seek out support from others in the form of family groups sponsored by organizations like Gam-Anon. Secondly, talk with your children about

the good qualities in your partner and remain calm when talking to them about gambling issues and the consequences that it may have for the family. Fourth, seek help for yourself and let your partner know why you are doing so. Fifth, understand that gambling problems take time to correct and that the possibility of a relapse may occur several times. Sixth, take control of the family finances.

Some things to avoid doing when dealing with a partner with a gambling issue are one, Don't preach, lecture, or lose control of your anger when dealing with familial issues surrounding gambling problems. Don't issue ultimatums or threats unless you



intend to carry them out. Don't exclude the gambler from family life or activities. Don't expect an immediate recovery even if the gambling stops. Don't bail out the gambler, or deny that the issue does not exist to friends, family members or yourself.

If you or someone you know may be suffering with a gambling issue then seek help by calling 1-800-BETS-OFF or contact CFR's Prevention Department at 1-866-801-0085 Extension 1410.

References

V. A. Dickson-Swift, E. L. James, and S. Kippen (2005). The experience of living with a problem gambler: Spouses and partners speak out. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 13 doi: 10.4309/jgi.2005.13.6



Community and Family Resources

"Community and Family Resources is a pro-active organization dedicated to assisting individuals, families, and communities achieve healthy behavior and lifestyle through advocacy, prevention, and treatment of substance abuse and problem gambling."

Since 1968, CFR has a long history of helping people learn healthy behaviors to prevent addictions and achieve an improved quality of life while maintaining abstinence from addictive behaviors.

How to Talk to Someone with a Gambling Problem

Something is going on with your partner or spouse, but you are not sure exactly what? There has been issues in your personal relationship with your significant other, they are going through more money than they normally do, they are spending greater amounts of time away from home, or are being secretive about where they are at and what they are doing, they have asked friends or family members to loan them money for "emergency expenses", or have missed work for questionable reasons. This situation may have led you to believe that they have a problem with gambling. So what do you do? Talking to them would be a good place to start but how do you broach the subject?

The first thing when talking to your partner about a problem gambling issue is to keep in mind is that you should approach the subject but not to attack the person. Discuss the issue from a position of concern and support, not acquisitions and blame. Talk to your partner about the things that you have noticed and remind them that you are concerned

about them, not angry at the situation. Remember though, that you may not get a straight answer out of them and they may try to avoid the issue or redirect the conversation. Some individuals may be ready to talk about their behaviors, but others may not. Either way, you can still reiterate to them that you care for them, and give them information



on where to get help.

So you and your partner have broken the ice and are discussing their problem gambling issues, and they are willing to seek help and change their behaviors, great! But what if they are not yet willing to talk, or react negatively; what then? Remain calm and remember that you cannot control how another person acts, you can only control how you react in a situation. Do not ignore or deny that the issue exists. When talking about things with

your partner use "I" statements, for example "I feel" or "I think" when discussing issues with your spouse. Get information and seek help for yourself and let your partner know that you are doing so. Don't be judgmental or blame your significant other for the problem, it does not help. Avoid using threats or issuing ultimatums unless you are ready to carry through on them. Be supportive and gather useful information to learn about the condition of problem gambling. Do not expect your partner to change overnight; behavior change is sometimes a long process. Finally, remember to watch for signs of depression in your partner or other family members.

Remember that you are not alone and if you suspect that someone you care about may have a problem gambling condition urge them to call 1-800-BETS-OFF. For more information on problem gambling please contact Community and Family Resources' Prevention Department

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Cfrhelps.org

*One Life at a Time
One Day at a Time*

"Play interests me very much, ... but I am not in the position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous."

— *Alexander Pushkin*

at 1-866-801-0085, Extension 1410.

References

<http://www.psychguides.com/guides/how-to-help-someone-with-a-gambling-problem/>

<https://www.problemgambling.ca/EN/GettingHelp/Pages/MovingTowardChange.aspx>



IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE NEEDS HELP FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING, CALL

1-800-BETS OFF

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