

The Family

Compulsive gambling is an emotional illness which leads the gambler to believe the answer to all existing problems, financial or emotional, is to “hit it big” one more time. This thinking often keeps the compulsive gambler active until the very late stages. As a result the family may be MORE affected, both emotionally and physically. Because this disease can be completely hidden for so long, the family too often has no knowledge as to the depth of the illness until the late stages.

The goal of most families is to get the gambler into treatment, of getting the gambler help and stopping the chaos so life can return to normal. Often when they call they feel guilty for ‘betraying’ their loved one. The family member you see may have been told they are the *cause* of the out-of-control gambling. Realistically, your goal is to get someone into treatment.

It is necessary to ‘hook’ a concerned other in order to get them some understanding of the disease so they can reduce the chaos, begin to support each other, set a common goal of refusing any future bailouts, safeguard the finances and take charge once again of their lives.

The non-gambling partner may present as depressed, anxious, with a poor self-image, unable to express anger or prone to fits of rage, with physical, stress related problems and in various forms of denial. What was once a legitimate source of entertainment, recreational activity, has ruined their marriage, financially and emotionally.