

# Finding Help

THE WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING, INC. HAS A 24-HOUR HELPLINE THAT PROVIDES INFORMATION AND REFERRALS FOR GAMBLERS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND CONCERNED FRIENDS OR EMPLOYERS OF GAMBLERS WHO HAVE FINANCIAL, LEGAL OR OTHER DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE OF THEIR GAMBLING.



HELP IS JUST A CALL AWAY AT:

**1-800-GAMBLE-5**  
(1-800-426-2535)

## **Mission Statement:**

*The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling, Inc. provides resources, public awareness and education on problem and pathological gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling.*



**WISCONSIN COUNCIL  
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**



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The Council's public awareness campaign is funded by the State of Wisconsin,  
Department of Health Services,  
Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services,  
Bureau of Prevention Treatment and Recovery.

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*Wisconsin Council on Problem  
Gambling, Inc.*

## *Family Issues*



*Problem gambling adversely affects the family of the gambler in a number of ways because of the problem gambler's altered behavior, dishonesty and manipulation.*



**WISCONSIN COUNCIL  
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**24-Hour Helpline  
1-800-GAMBLE-5**

## Family Issues

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.

## What Are The Stages?

**The Winning Phase** is characterized by frequent gambling, fantasies about the “Big Win” or an increase in the amount and/or frequency of bets.

**The Losing Phase** occurs when the gambler loses time from work due to gambling, is irritable, restless or withdrawn and can't stop gambling and borrowing.

**The Desperation Phase** has begun when the problem gambler is unable to pay debts, alienates him/herself from family and friends, feels remorse, and may have suicidal thoughts.

**The Hopelessness Phase** is characterized by continued gambling with an increased sense of hopelessness and despair, increased isolation and loss of remaining support systems, the feeling of being burned out, and realizing that one won't ever win, yet continues to gamble.

## What Can Be Lost or Damaged?

**Trust** is often the first casualty in the family of the problem gambler. Change in the behavior of the family member is often attributed to many other possible problems before gambling is identified as the problem.

**Respect** for the problem gambler is generally lost once this problem has been identified. “Why can't you just stop so the problem will go away?”

**Relationships** are built on trust and respect. Without these, family relationships will be weakened or destroyed.

**Employment** can be affected in two ways. Gamblers will often neglect responsibilities at work and/or develop an attendance problem as they begin to have less control over their need to gamble. In the worst situation, gamblers will steal from their employer in order to continue their gambling. Any of this can lead to loss of employment and prosecution.

**Financial** security for the family is often lost as the gambler seeks more and more resources with which to gamble. All of the family's financial resources may be liquidated without their knowledge. Savings, home equity, retirement accounts, children's savings, etc., may all be lost or damaged.

**Reputations** are difficult to protect as the gambling problem affects more and more aspects of the gambler's life and becomes known by individuals outside of the family.

## What Can Result?

**Stress** is a certain occurrence for all of the family members of the gambler.

**Isolation** between gamblers and their families generally occurs as their behavior changes.

**Neglect** of dependents occurs as gamblers lose more and more control of their behavior.

**Distrust** occurs between other family members as the extent of the problem and the extent of financial loss and the ramifications of this become known.

**Resentment/Anger** also follows as the gambler loses control and the scope of the problem becomes known.

**Domestic Violence** often results in a family affected by a member with an addiction problem. The family of a problem gambler can be impacted just as easily as that of someone with an alcohol or drug addiction. The problem gambler may be the victim or perpetrator.

**Co-occurring Disorders** such as depression, substance abuse, compulsive behaviors and sexual issues often occur as a result of or along with the gambling problem.

Children of problem gamblers tend to have a higher probability of developing a gambling problem than

those with parents who do not gamble. This follows the pattern as experienced by children of those affected by substance abuse and domestic violence.

## Other Family Issues

### Negative Impacts For Family...



**Financial crisis** -- a huge financial burden is often put on the family members, sometimes leading to ongoing debt and property loss.

**Being manipulated** into lending money to the person with a gambling problem.

**Lying** -- covering up and making excuses for the gambler's behavior.

**Mental and emotional health problems** such as high levels of anxiety, depression, sadness, anger, resentment, embarrassment, exhaustion and self-doubt.

**Physical health problems** -- insomnia, ulcers, digestive problems, headaches, neck and back pain and other stress-related health conditions.

**Self-esteem problems**, such as feelings of helplessness, being overwhelmed, insecurity and even feeling as though they are responsible for the gambling problem.

**Role imbalance**, such as children taking care of the parents, parents overprotecting their children, partners performing all of the household tasks that were previously shared and a lack of sexual and emotional intimacy between partners.

**Verbal and physical abuse** which can lead to arguments, strained relationships, alienation, separation, divorce, loneliness and isolation.

**Poor self-care** -- sometimes family members are so focused on the person with a gambling problem, they may neglect themselves and their needs.

*Negative Impacts For Family taken from Responsible Gambling Council.*