



One of the leading barriers to getting help is the lack of information and misunderstanding of the problem. Loved ones may minimize it because losses were small; they may also have “enabling” behaviors and the best of intentions. Many recovery programs were designed for male “action” gamblers, leaving female “escape” gamblers feeling even more lost and bewildered. Even though women now constitute 50% of problem gamblers, there are distorted stereotypes that say women can’t really be problem gamblers.* They can be. And the effects can be emotionally, financially, physically and spiritually devastating.

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.

* “Women and Problem Gambling.”
The Women’s Addiction Foundation



Many calls to the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling's 24-Hour Helpline come from family members or friends who have discovered their loved one’s addiction and question how they might help them.

If gambling is becoming a problem for you or someone you care about, help is available.

Call the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling’s 24-Hour Helpline at:

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

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WOMEN AND GAMBLING



WOMEN AND GAMBLING

Problem gambling starts innocently enough—a recreational pursuit that is fun, sociable and exciting. For many women that's all it is . . . just a form of entertainment among the many that they enjoy. But for a growing number of women, gambling becomes much more. It becomes a crippling addiction—like drugs or alcohol—that disrupts, compromises and even destroys personal, family and professional goals.

Why do women gamble?

- To escape unhappy or disappointing relationships.
- To avoid family or personal demands.
- To avoid conflict or abuse at home.
- To escape professional or financial problems.
- To escape chronic pain or health issues.
- To avoid dealing with painful situations.
- To escape feelings of loneliness and boredom.
- For the excitement of the win or near-win.
- For a feeling of personal power and self-esteem.

There are two types of women gamblers—those seeking escape, and those seeking excitement. Those seeking escape are able to enter a “dissociative state” when gambling, and therefore temporarily avoid unpleasant circumstances or even become a different person. There is a high incidence of depression among women who gamble compulsively, and distress over relationships seems to be an equally common factor. Problem gamblers have a 2 to 3 times higher incidence of substance misuse than other women, and may substitute one problem for another.*

Unfortunately, for women — two powerful forces prevent them from seeking help.

These forces are:

- The shame and guilt of being a compulsive gambler.
- The shame and resentment of failing to meet society's expectations of her.

As many as 1 in 5 women who are problem gamblers may seriously consider suicide.* The problem is compounded if the woman faces violence or substance abuse problems at home. Women are also much less likely to see themselves as a compulsive gambler, and less likely to seek help or treatment.

* “Women and Problem Gambling.”
The Women's Addiction Foundation

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

Women who gamble tend to:

- Divert money from household funds.
- Delay payment of household bills.
- Borrow money without repayment.
- Create elaborate lies to conceal their gambling.
- Become more withdrawn and depressed.
- Experience extreme guilt and shame.
- Disappear for periods of time.

When legitimate sources of gambling money are depleted, women often ask family members for a “bailout” loan to repay household accounts or outstanding debt, accompanied by the promise to quit gambling.

Gambling may be the hidden source of many problems until the situation becomes desperate. Gambling addiction often results in the loss of a home, illegal activity that results in arrest, or a suicide attempt. By then the woman has been under terrible stress for a long time, coping with ever-mounting financial strain while running the household and hiding the problem from family and friends. The feelings of guilt and shame are extreme.