

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 or 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 like 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.

The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling

- Provides education and awareness on the issue of problem and compulsive gambling.
- Provides training for treatment providers.
- Offers at 24-hour Helpline.
- Maintains neutrality on the topic of legalized gambling.
- Is a model for other states in the country.
- Is one of 36 affiliates on the National Council on Problem Gambling in Washington, D.C.
- Is the only organization in Wisconsin dedicated to assisting thousands of problem and compulsive gamblers.

Help is just a call away
1-800-GAMBLE-5
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WISCONSIN COUNCIL
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

Family Issues & Problem Gambling



The Impact of Problem Gambling

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.

