

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

# Understanding and Addressing Gambling Addiction

All addictions can be hard on the pocketbook, either through money spent to feed the habit or by getting in the way of keeping a job. The cost of gambling addiction, however, is unequalled in the potential financial havoc that it can create.

Many problem gamblers succeed in hiding or denying the extent of their addiction until the damage—sometimes including losing your home, job or even family—has been done.

If you or a loved one are wrestling with addiction, recognize that seeking help is the first step to a better tomorrow. And now is the perfect time to begin.

**Warning Signs**

While many people gamble occasionally through lotteries or casino nights, there are a few telltale signs of problem gambling. These include:

- Gambling becomes more frequent
- Gambling increases around paydays
- Playing becomes about the money rather than fun, and continues until cash runs out
- Increasing debts and mounting bills
- Trying to cover losses by gambling more
- Selling possessions or taking out loans for gambling
- Lying and secrecy are to try to hide gambling activities
- Increasing moodiness, depression and withdrawal from family and friends

Recognition that gambling has crossed this line and spun out of control is the first stage in treatment. It is also often the most difficult to accept. Here are some other tips to help you understand the condition and find solutions:

**Recognize that compulsive gambling can lead to:**

- Overwhelming debt
- Loss of home, job and/or family
- Bankruptcy
- Depression
- Engaging in criminal activities to cover losses

**Factors contributing to compulsive gambling include:**

- Genetics
- Substance abuse
- A pattern of risk-taking behavior
- Low self-esteem

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- Loneliness or chronic boredom
- Escapist desires
- Stress or depression

**Help for Problem Gamblers**

Many gambling addicts enter treatment reluctantly. The first step is acknowledging the addiction. Comprehensive treatment programs are available as well as support groups for both gamblers and their families. Medications may also be recommended.

Ask your doctor to recommend appropriate treatment. For urgent help, call your local distress centre or crisis line.