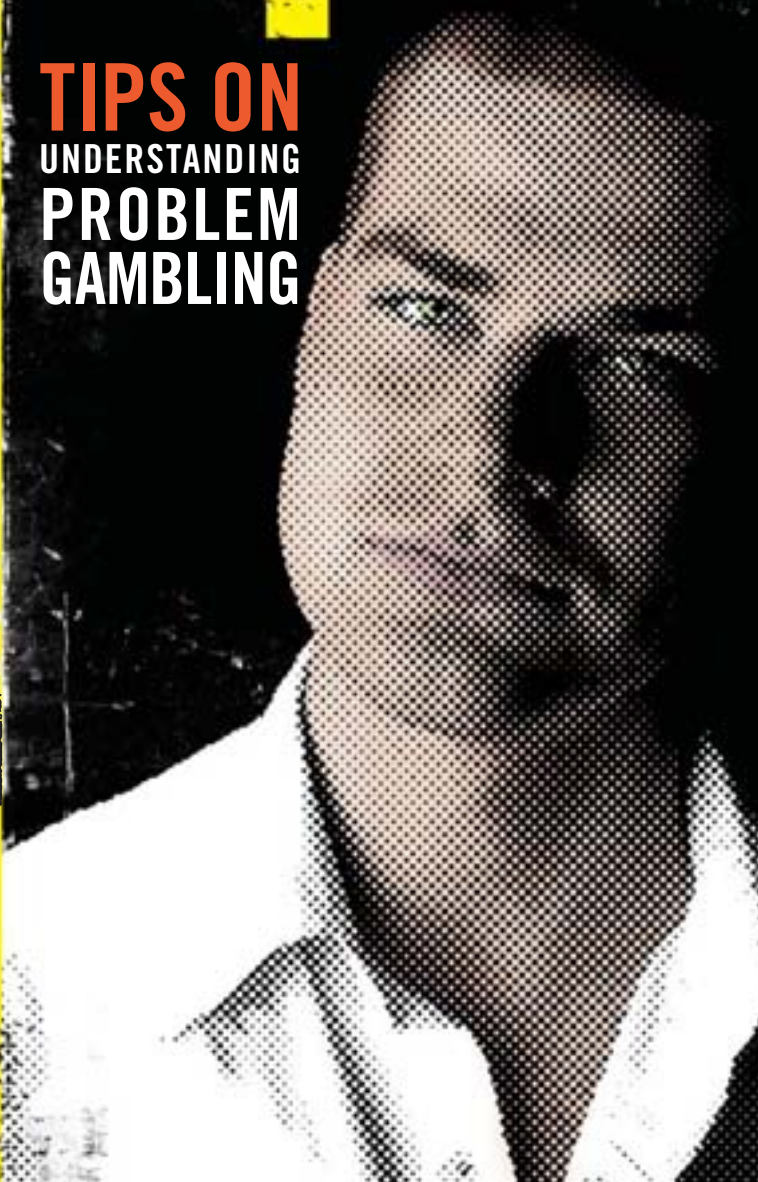


tips

TIPS ON
UNDERSTANDING
PROBLEM
GAMBLING



FOR MOST PEOPLE GAMBLING IS A FORM OF RECREATION. ACCORDING TO AN IOWA GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM STUDY, **88 PERCENT OF IOWANS 18 YEARS AND OLDER HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SOME FORM OF GAMBLING.** APPROXIMATELY THREE PERCENT OF THOSE INDICATED PROBLEMS WITH GAMBLING.

THIS BROCHURE IS DESIGNED TO **HELP IOWANS UNDERSTAND PROBLEM GAMBLING,** WHICH CAN TAKE OVER LIVES WHILE RUINING CAREERS, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS. WITH INTERNET GAMBLING AND THE POPULARITY OF CARD GAMES, THE OPPORTUNITIES TO GAMBLE ARE INCREASING EXPONENTIALLY, MAKING INFORMATION ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING ALL THE MORE RELEVANT.

GAMBLING ACTIVITIES

These activities, when done in excess, may present problems for some gamblers:

- Video, Internet and casino blackjack, roulette, craps and slot machines
- Bingo, raffles, keno, dice and dominoes
- Lottery games
- Greyhound, harness and horse racing
- Sports betting, cards, betting on games of skill and office pools
- Commodities, options and stock markets

WHY PEOPLE GAMBLE TOO MUCH

Problems with gambling develop among men and women of all backgrounds. Problem gambling can affect anyone, regardless of social or economic status, ethnicity or age.

Some people gamble too much because they:

- Believe winning big will solve their problems
- Seek escape and relief from stress, grief, boredom or hopeless situations
- Are in troubled relationships and feel lonely, helpless or depressed
- Are tired and emotionally drained

For depressed people, the thrill and euphoria of gambling can provide exciting high points, creating a rush. It provides time away from their suffering, troubling relationships or other stresses. In addition, people quitting one problem may substitute gambling in its place. People with alcohol or drug addictions or eating disorders may substitute gambling for these addictions. It is extremely important for treatment professionals, who work with those affected by problem gambling, to address the possibility of crossover from one disorder to another.

People with gambling problems may:

- Think continually of gambling and ways to get gambling money
- Fail to cut back or stop gambling
- Be restless or irritable when quitting
- Lie to hide gambling activity
- Commit forgery, fraud, theft or embezzlement for gambling money



UNCOVERING A GAMBLING PROBLEM

Individuals whose lives revolve around gambling hide their problems well and can function in their day-to-day life for awhile.

WARNING SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING MAY INCLUDE:

- Absent or late for work or school
- Undue interest in sports scores or sports news
- Excessive shopping and binge spending
- Unexplained money or new possessions
- Selling possessions
- Ignoring family, school, career and community duties
- Unexplained mood swings
- Blaming others for problems
- Avoiding family and friends after borrowing money
- Refusal to talk about money matters
- Delaying payment of household bills
- Emptying family bank accounts, retirement funds and children's savings
- Using credit cards for cash advances
- Getting small loans or second mortgage
- Filing for bankruptcy
- Stealing to gamble



THE PROGRESSION OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

WINNING

People with a gambling problem may start gambling as a social activity, which they see as just a fun, healthy recreation. When a big win occurs, they thrive on the recognition and power it gives them. They gain self-esteem from the initial success, seek more action and become excited as gambling draws them into a fantasy world. The fantasies multiply as they envision getting pretty good at gambling, receiving larger payouts and living a life full of gambling glory. They believe that they are blessed with good luck and destined for greatness and riches. After winning, they feel invincible, risking larger amounts to gain a higher level of excitement. Some problem gamblers, who become dependent on the action, tension and thrill of gambling, soon have difficulty tolerating smaller betting and cannot easily withdraw from the kind of stimulation gambling provides.

LOSING

After entering a losing phase, problem gamblers think their gambling is under control, but continue seeking more action. They need to bet more money to reach the desired level of excitement, see no need to quit, and deceive themselves into thinking they can cut down and limit their gambling at any time. After losing, they gamble to win back losses. Their self-image suffers and they often feel guilty about losses. They lie about their gambling, hide their losses and borrow money for their urgent need to gamble.

Problem gamblers may begin exploiting jobs for the time to gamble and the money to pay for it. They talk of their wins and rarely mention losses. Consumed by gambling, they seek bailouts from family, friends and employers. Reinforced by bailouts and believing they have won again, they break promises to quit gambling and return to heavy betting. In turn, trust in the gamblers disappears and causes relationships to suffer. Child abuse or neglect and partner abuse may occur, coming at the hands of either frustrated gamblers or frustrated partners upset at the problem gambling behavior.



DESPERATION

Desperation and hopelessness set in as losses mount for the problem gamblers who may write bad checks, steal from employers and commit illegal activities and scams to finance their gambling. They have little concern for others except to the extent that others serve their excessive gambling habit. They may be depressed and irritable, impatient with loved ones and exhibit wide mood swings. Poor health habits develop; eating and sleeping are abnormal; regular exercise is not even considered. Problem gamblers cling to the fantasy of hitting a big jackpot or riding a winning streak to make all well again. Starting life over with a new identity enters into the minds of some desperate gamblers. Some gamble knowing they will lose; some think they have control over the outcome of the game. Some problem gamblers eventually consider suicide as the way out of their shame, despair, hopelessness and pain.

HELP IS AVAILABLE FROM THE IOWA GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM

People affected by problem gambling need to seek help before reaching the desperation stage.

PERSONS AFFECTED BY PROBLEM GAMBLING MEET IN COUNSELING AND GROUP SESSIONS TO:

- Face the problem honestly and openly
- Stop denying problems exist
- Correct irresponsible behavior
- Learn to manage financial pressures
- Address the harm of gambling too much
- Achieve positive balance in their lives
- Work on goals which accent the positive
- Identify patterns to prevent relapses
- Examine effective steps if relapse occurs
- Find leisure activities to replace gambling
- Enroll in the casino's statewide self-exclusion program

RECOVERY TAKES **HARD WORK,**
HONESTY AND THE **DESIRE**
TO TAKE ON **NEW RESPONSIBILITIES.**



FAMILY HELP

Problem gambling often has devastating effects on families. Family members learn that encouraging gamblers to get treatment can be the best support to give. Bailing people with gambling problems out of debt is not the answer. Family members can receive counseling and education to cope with the problem.

FAMILY MEMBERS LEARN THAT IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO:

- Take control of their own lives
- Confront and cease enabling behaviors
- Restore their normal life routines
- Detach in healthy ways from situations
- Reinforce appropriate actions for recovery
- Distance themselves from problem gambling behavior
- Take control of money management, bank accounts and insurance matters

SERVICES

Using state funds, specialized treatment programs provide help for lowans who gamble too much and for family members and others affected by problem gambling. lowans are eligible for services, regardless of their ability to pay; services are provided on a sliding fee scale. Educational presentations on problem gambling can be arranged at no cost to interested groups.

1-800-BETS OFF

1-800-BETS OFF

WWW.1800BETSOFF.ORG
OUTSIDE IOWA, CALL 1-800-522-4700

Iowa Gambling Treatment Program, Iowa Department of Public Health
Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0075

Promoting and Protecting the Health of Iowans.