

Have the Conversation About Problem Gaming - for Families

Do you know someone with a gambling problem? Have the conversation. As many as 2% of adult Iowans meet the criteria for a gambling addiction, and almost 1 in 5 adult Iowans are affected by problem gambling. Yet only a fraction receive help. We believe many who suffer in silence do so because they do not know they are developing a problem, what a gambling disorder (addiction) is, or where to get help.

Have the Conversation about Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling is a public health issue affecting all aspects of physical, social, and mental health. It can affect families, work performance, and general well-being. It is important to know the signs of a gambling problem, that treatment is available, and it works. Use this document to learn about problem gambling, how to recognize the signs of gambling addiction, and where to go for help.

How does problem gambling impact me?

- It is estimated that 1 out of 5 adult Iowans are affected by an individual's gambling problem
- If you gamble, it is important to recognize that what was once fun and recreational can become a serious issue
- Your awareness may help a loved one seek necessary help
- Problem gambling is a public health issue that impacts relationships, families, businesses, and communities

What are the consequences of a gambling addiction?

- If untreated, gambling addiction can lead to serious health issues including:
 - Suicide
 - Depression
 - Mental Health Concerns
 - Increased rates of domestic abuse
- Children of a person with a gambling problem show higher rates of gambling problems, higher levels of tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use, and more overeating than children of people without gambling problems.
- It can cause stress in relationships and families.
- It can cause financial difficulties, debt, food scarcity, money borrowing, late payments, and hidden money or debt.
- It can lead to depression and other mental health concerns in a spouse or loved one.
- Problems can develop at work, such as loss of productivity, theft, and promoting of gambling in the workplace.
- Problem gambling can also lead to increased violent behavior between children.

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How do I have the conversation with a loved one?

Talking with someone you know about a potential gambling problem can be difficult. Remember, you cannot stop the person from playing; only he or she can make the decision to stop. Choose the right moment, speak in a caring and understanding tone, and hear what he or she is saying. To start the conversation:

- Be clear, non-judgmental, and speak only for yourself.
 - *I have been noticing changes in your behavior and I'm worried about you.*
- Be positive.
 - *Your involvement in our family is usually so good and we miss you.*
- Explain how the problem affects you.
 - *The amount of money you are spending on gambling is hurting our family.*
- Use everyday observations.
 - *You are coming home late everyday and are too distracted to spend time with us.*
- Be clear about your position.
 - *We all depend on each other. We need to be able to count on you.*
- Be prepared for denial or a hostile reaction.
 - *It must be uncomfortable to hear this. It is difficult for me to bring it up, but I am concerned about you.*

Individuals who experience problems with their gambling come from many backgrounds. They can be rich or poor, young or old, male or female. Problem gambling can affect people of every race, every religion, and every education and income level. It is a treatable addiction and does not have to ruin your life.

Remember...

Don't try to fix the problem yourself. Help is available for the concerned other as well as the individual with the gambling problem.

*For more information please call **1-800-BETS OFF** to be connected to a problem gambling treatment professional in your area. They can answer questions and get you the help you and your family may need. You can also visit www.1800BETSOFF.org to chat live with someone who understands.*