

Health Bulletin

Compulsive Gambling: When The Big Payoff Is A Life In Chaos

(NAPSA)—More than 200 million Americans gambled last year and lost an estimated 50 billion dollars. For some, gambling is merely a matter of buying a lottery ticket and losing a dollar on a dream. Others aren't so lucky.

More than 2.5 million Americans are compulsive or pathological gamblers; another 3 million are considered problem gamblers.

"The problems caused by compulsive gambling can leave people's lives in chaos," says Valerie C. Lorenz, Ph.D., executive director of the Compulsive Gambling Center, Inc. "Addictive gambling devastates the lives of the gamblers and their families."

Typically, personal earnings and savings are lost and replaced by severe debt. Marriages end; family members become distant; jobs, homes, and personal possessions are gone. Physical health often deteriorates. The gambler may experience depression and anxiety. Some turn to alcohol or drugs to escape. About a third will steal, write bad checks, and abuse credit cards, which can lead to prison.

Approximately 1.5 percent of adult Americans may suffer from compulsive gambling at some point in their lives. According to the American Psychiatric Association, to be considered a compulsive gambler, an individual must exhibit five of the following behaviors:

- Preoccupation with gambling
- Increasing bets to sustain thrill
- Withdrawal
- Using gambling as an escape
- Chasing one's losses
- Lying about gambling
- Financing bets illegally
- Risking significant relationships



Compulsive gambling is more than a streak of bad luck. It's an addiction and it's treatable. Contact the Compulsive Gambling Center at www.lostbet.com.

- Relying on others for financial bailout
- Loss of control

"Compulsive gamblers often undergo personality changes, becoming angry, irritable, and argumentative," said Dr. Lorenz. "Family members may also withdraw and feel depressed and helpless."

There may, however, be some encouraging news for compulsive gamblers and their families. A recent study by Rhode Island Hospital researchers showed that the antidepressant Celexa (citalopram HBr), a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), demonstrated promise in treating compulsive gambling. In this small study, most participants reported significant improvements in all gambling measures, including number of days spent gambling, the amount of money lost, preoccupation with and urges to gamble.

For more information on compulsive gambling, treatment options, and education, visit the Compulsive Gambling Center on the Web at www.lostbet.com.