

WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM

888-ADMIT-IT

 Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. www.gamblinghelp.org

Identifying Problem Gambling Behavior

Identifying a gambling problem can be very difficult, particularly in others as there are no visual or physical symptoms displayed. Examining a person's behavior could provide some clues. Looking for the following signs could point to a gambling problem:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Unaccounted blocks of time | 10. Boasts to others about winning, often minimizing losses and exaggerating wins |
| 2. Mood swings | 11. Misses work or school |
| 3. Neglects personal needs or responsibilities | 12. Disputes with spouse, partner, other family members or friends involving money |
| 4. Missing possessions or assets | 13. Behavior intensifies or changes when watching or listening to sports |
| 5. Sudden need for money or loans | 14. Difficulty sleeping or eating |
| 6. Ongoing borrowing of money from family and friends | 15. Isolates |
| 7. Secretive or lies about money | |
| 8. Spends disproportionate amount of time gambling, as compared to other activities | |
| 9. Seems to focus on gambling (e.g. wants to engage in social activities where there is gambling or insists on spending vacations or special occasions at locations where there is gambling). | |

If you or someone you know answers "yes" to any of these questions, gambling may be a problem. For help, call the FCCG 24-hour HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT)



Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.
237 Lookout Place, Suite 100
Maitland, Florida 32751
Phone: (407) 865-6200
Fax: (407) 865-6103
HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT
888-236-4848

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Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.

FOCUS

Concerning People with Gambling Problems

Spring 2004

Up Close & Personal

Somebody, Please Hear Me!



My name is JoAnn. I would tell you my last name but I'm too embarrassed. You see, very recently, I finally admitted that I'm a compulsive gambler. Specifically, I'm addicted to playing the lottery. My God, when I think of the thousands of dollars I've lost and what I've put my family through, I shudder.

You know, I've always been a highly trustworthy person. As a Certified Nursing Aid, I was responsible for other peoples' lives and now look what I've done to my own life and my family. How could I continue to borrow money from my daughter and brother like that and then go wipe out one of my husband's IRAs? Talk about addicted! I even had to sell my car to cover my bank shortages and then have my adult daughter pick me up at the used car lot.

I know that thousands of people have fun playing the lottery without any problem, but not me and others like me.

When my husband finally figured out what was going on and told me that we would have to separate if I didn't find a way to stop gambling. That was my wake-up call. Down deep, I knew he was right but I didn't know how to stop what I was doing. I thought about counseling but we were too broke to afford it.

In my case, it started out with just a few scratch-off tickets but once I was hooked it became a \$100 a day habit. OK, on occasion it was \$200 a day. No matter how you figure it, when you're gambling that much money every day for a couple of years, the total really adds up. And when I think about it, playing the lottery for me became a full time job.

In desperation, I wrote to the Florida Lottery asking for help and they in turn put me in touch with the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling. It was through the folks at the Council that I was able to get a free therapy session with one of their certified compulsive gambling counselors and I also found out about Gamblers Anonymous (GA). Now I go to my GA meetings faithfully but I really can't afford to get the additional counseling that I need.

"... it started out with just a few scratch-off tickets but once I was hooked it became a \$100 a day habit."

To be blunt about it, I'm not alone in my plight. There are around a half million people like me with a gambling problem in our state, many of them either unable to afford counseling or even able to find a qualified counselor near where they live. So, I think that the state of Florida should use some more of the gambling revenues to fund treatment for people with gambling problems. There are an awful lot of us who are hurting out here and I appeal to our governmental leaders to address this issue. Please, we really need your help.

I mean it took over my life. I spent most of my time figuring out how to get money to play or trying to cover my check overdrafts and especially making sure that I kept the whole thing secret.



Gambling Problem?
Yours? A friend's?
A family member's?
Call the FCCG 24-hour
HelpLine
888-ADMIT-IT
(888-236-4848)

Table of Contents

Up Close & Personal	Page 1
From Our President/Want to Help?	Page 2
Executive Director's Update/FCCG Info	Page 3
What's New	Page 4
Special Focus	Page 5-6
In the Limelight	Page 7
Identifying Problem Gambling Behavior	Page 8

Want to help? Join FCCG.

(Contributions are tax deductible)

Name _____

Address _____

Home phone _____

Bus. Phone _____

Membership Categories

Full	\$35
Sponsor	\$75
Benefactor	\$150
Patron	\$500
Institution / Corporate	\$1,000
Silver Corporate	\$5,000
Special Gold Corporate	\$10,000
Donation	\$ _____

Care to volunteer?

If so, select your area(s) of interest:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Labor / Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Info. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research | |

Signature _____

Date _____

Make check payable to the **Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling.**

Our Mission:

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG), established in 1988, is a not-for-profit 501 c (3) educational and advocacy corporation under contract with the Government of the State of Florida. FCCG's primary mission is to help persons adversely affected by difficulties due to problem and compulsive gambling. The FCCG maintains a neutral stance on the issue of legalized gambling while seeking to assist citizens in need of support. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the FCCG is an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling.

From Our President

by Paul Ashe



Family, Friends and Others

Prevalence studies by the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) clearly show that approximately 500,000 Floridians suffer from serious to severe difficulties due to gambling. As bad as that is, most treatment professionals estimate that for each compulsive gambler, there are eight to ten other people who are deeply impacted as well. This multiplying effect includes the gambler's spouse or significant other, children, parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, friends, employer, insurance agent, banker, doctor, and the list goes on. When you add it all up, 4-5 million Floridians, 30-40% of our population, is affected. This is a significant consideration by any standard.

In many situations, out-of control gamblers will borrow or steal money from their children, spouse, parents, friends, and employers. Although the gambler has every intention to pay all monies back, the spiraling effect of this progressive disorder only seems to intensify the problem leaving devastation in its path. Most of all, of course, compulsive gamblers hurt those closest to them. Loss of companionship, economic hardship and a chaotic life style can shred loving relationships and literally rip families apart.

In an effort to limit the emotional and financial impacts of compulsive gambling, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Strongly urge the gambler to attend a self-help support group such as Gamblers Anonymous as part of a recovery program.
2. Family members or friends should consider attending Gam-Anon, the self-help meetings that assist in understanding how to cope and deal with the compulsive gambler.
3. Gamblers and family members may also benefit from counseling by a trained compulsive gambling treatment professional.
4. To the extent possible, remove the gambler's access to and control of financial matters. Close all joint bank accounts and cancel any joint credit cards.
5. No matter how severe the adverse consequences are for the gambler, bailouts, loans, or other payments on behalf of the compulsive gambler should not be made. Be certain to ask all family and friends to no longer lend the gambler money in any form, and not to co-sign any loans or other financial obligations on the gambler's behalf.
6. Review various recovery workbooks available from the FCCG regarding compulsive gambling and the family, including issues relating to financial and legal matters. (See related story on page 6 titled "A True Chance for Change.") Most importantly, remember you can get help in dealing with the problems associated with compulsive gambling by contacting the FCCG Problem Gambling Helpline (888-ADMIT-IT) and speaking with someone who is knowledgeable about the subject and can assist you in securing the support you need.

Executive Director's Update

by Pat Fowler



Friends and Loved Ones at Risk

Most often when we discuss the impact of compulsive gambling and the research, program development and treatment needed to address this public health issue, attention is primarily focused on the gamblers themselves. The result has been a decided lack of help for the gamblers' families and friends who are deeply affected by this destructive disorder.

Over the years, family members and friends of compulsive gamblers have sought assistance from the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's (FCCG) Problem Gambling HelpLine. They have come to us desperately searching for help or refuge from the devastating effects that gambling has caused in their lives. Unfortunately, with few if any professional treatment resources available even to compulsive gamblers, such resources are literally non-existent for their families and friends. Even self-help meetings are not widely available in many areas.

The impact of compulsive gambling on persons closest to the gambler is real and often severe, both emotionally and financially. Family members suffer a range of effects from deprivation of basic needs, to physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Typically, family members and other loved ones are willing, even anxious, to obtain whatever help is available, whether the gambler has the same desire or not. Since it is strongly suggested that loved ones begin a program of change to better their lives, self-help, professional treatment and other resources are equally important for this population, regardless of the gambler's status of recovery.

It is also true that family units in particular become enmeshed in the disease of the gambler and often display unhealthy behaviors. For this reason, assistance to the gambler alone is no longer sufficient in salvaging such relationships. In fact, if a compulsive gambler receives assistance and begins to progress, he may no longer fit in with the family dynamics unless loved ones are exposed to the recovery process. Yet, on the other hand, if family members receive assistance, it is highly likely that they will readily see improvements from day-to-day whether or not the gambler is able to reach out for help.

In a determined first step towards filling this vast gap in needed services for the families and friends of compulsive gamblers, the FCCG has developed a recovery workbook series titled, *A Chance for Change* (See article on page 6). It is hoped that these carefully designed self-help materials will be the impetus for initiating true change and a comprehensive approach to addressing the dire circumstances these forgotten victims struggle with every day of their lives.

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What's New

PATS Program Helps Assess Problem Gamblers

Due to the non-existence of state funding for the treatment of problem and compulsive gambling, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) created and operates the Preliminary Assessment and Treatment Supports (PATS) Program. The primary objectives of this initiative are to:

- Broaden statewide preliminary screening treatment supports to Florida residents suffering from gambling related difficulties
- Provide assistance to persons unable to pay for treatment and/or without appropriate health care insurance
- Establish certification and reporting requirements for FCCG HelpLine referral providers

The PATS Program provides stipends to mental health and addictions professionals that help offset the cost of assessing problem gamblers, and others adversely affected by gambling, who are referred by the FCCG HelpLine. In order to receive these stipends, counselors must complete:

- The 60 hour FCCG problem and compulsive gambling training
- The National Council on Problem Gambling's certification process
- The PATS specific training offered by the FCCG

Practitioners interested in providing treatment support to problem gamblers and loved ones may begin the certification process by participating in the FCCG training on dates still available as in the schedule below. Call the FCCG at (407) 865-6200 for further information or additional training dates.



Caught on camera at a recent FCCG training event for PATS qualified counselors are:

- Back row: Merlinda Poole, Paul Adams, Sherry Boles, Edgar Gonzalez,
- Third row: Evelyn Mesa-Ojeda, Terri Orsino-Rebosio (PATS Instructor), Marianne Jones
- Second row: Kathy Radbid, Janet Fox
- Front: Maria Jaques
- Right corner: Sheila Martinez, Pamela Moore

Training Dates

1. Delray Beach:
 - Phase II - May 28, June 25, July 30, August 27
2. Daytona Beach:
 - Phase I - May 18, June 15
 - Phase II - July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19
3. Orlando:
 - Phase I - May 19
 - Phase II - June 23, July 21, August 18, September 22

National Conference on Problem Gambling Coming Up



Join presenters and attendees from around the world at the oldest and largest conference dedicated to problem gambling issues. This multidisciplinary event will feature over 90 presentations on clinical, research and policy aspects of problem gambling and will focus on, but not be limited to, the topic of "Women and Gambling." Conference tracks include: self-help groups and gambling recovery; responsible gaming programs,

with emphasis on Native American casinos; and Motivational Interviewing.

**National Council on Problem Gambling
18th Annual Conference
June 17-19, 2004
Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa
Phoenix, AZ**

For information, call: (202) 547-9204 or visit www.ncpgambling.org

Special Focus

Older Adult Initiative Begins in Earnest

It isn't often that a one-day conference welds participants into a unified whole but that was the case on March 19th at the Wyndham Hotel in the Fort Lauderdale area. Titled, "Older Adults and Gambling: Recreation or Risk?" this heavily attended landmark event was a joint effort by the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) and the Broward Older Adult Workshop.

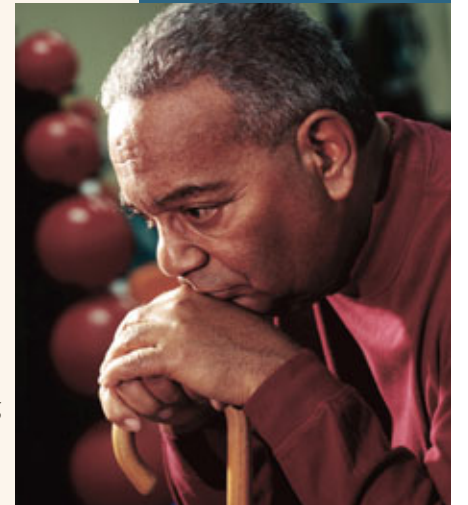
For the first time ever, government officials, agency heads, researchers and mental health professionals shared strategies that will soon begin to address the issue of problem gambling that deeply affects one out of 20 Florida senior citizens. Pat Fowler, Executive Director of the FCCG said of the conference, "[It] was a historic launch of a coordinated statewide effort to develop and implement resources for awareness, prevention, and treatment for older adults who are in need of help."

In a show of unprecedented collaboration, key presenters also participated in a press conference conducted by Fowler. In attendance were:

- The Honorable Terry White, secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs
- Colonel James McDonough, director of the Florida Office of Drug Control
- Dr. Rachel Volberg, president of Gemini Research, Ltd., who is renowned for her research on problem gambling
- Stephen Ferrante, director of the Broward County Elderly and Veterans Services Division and Chair of the Broward Older Adult Workgroup

In her statement to the press, Ms. Fowler said, "The key to the success of our initiative lies in working together, sharing our expertise and our resources. Our common goal is heightening public awareness among seniors that problem gambling is a growing challenge with serious implications for older adults and our society as a whole. Today's conference is dedicated to identifying strategies for addressing this issue on both a community and state level."

Later on in the day, FCCG President Paul Ashe and Ms. Fowler honored Secretary White, Director McDonough and Terri Orsino-Rebosio for their significant contributions to aid persons experiencing gambling related difficulties and/or to providers who service this population.



The Power of One Award was presented to Colonel James McDonough, director of the Florida Office of Drug Control, pictured here on the right next to Pat Fowler, Executive Director of the FCCG. Colonel McDonough received this prestigious FCCG award in appreciation for his commitment and support in furthering the FCCG's mission at the State level and an ongoing willingness to provide leadership.



The Government Award was given to the Honorable Terry White, secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, pictured here on the left next to Paul Ashe, President of the FCCG. Secretary White was lauded for his support that has resulted in all Florida Area Agencies on Aging becoming partners with the FCCG and for dedication in providing FCCG training and support to treatment professionals servicing the older adult problem and compulsive gambling population.



The Monsignor Dunne Award went to Ms. Terri Orsino-Rebosio, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, for dedication in providing FCCG training and support to treatment professionals servicing the problem and compulsive gambling population.

Special Focus

A True “Chance for Change”

In its continuing efforts to help family members deal with the severe life disruptions caused by a loved one who is a problem gambler, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) is about to release a group of self-help workbooks titled, *A Chance for Change*.

The first in what will be a series of such materials geared toward gamblers and their families, as well as older adult gamblers, each workbook is designed to be used independently or within clinical environments under the guidance of a trained therapist or other health care professional.

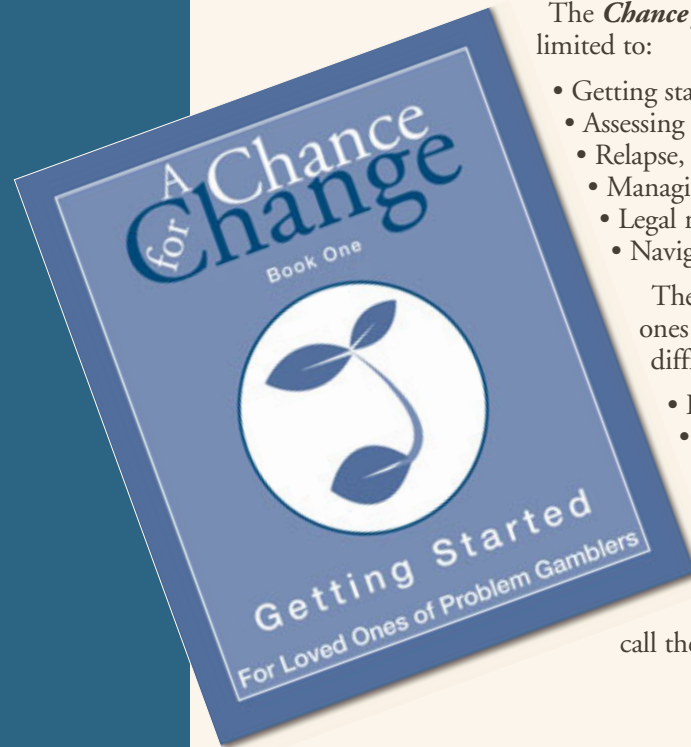
The *Chance for Change* series will address topics including but not limited to:

- Getting started
- Assessing one’s state of mind
- Relapse, triggers and boundary setting
- Managing finances
- Legal related issues
- Navigating new terrain and maintaining the focus

The overall goals of *A Chance for Change* program for loved ones are to help family members experiencing gambling related difficulties be better able to:

- Eliminate self-defeating negative behaviors and reactions
- Learn how to feel more in control
- Experience a sense of calm
- Think clearly
- Make better decisions
- Lead a healthier lifestyle

In order to receive more information on this program, call the FCCG at (407) 865-6200.



A Tribute to Fallen Comrades

The FCCG would like to express its deepest regrets on the recent loss of two dear friends and colleagues:

DAN TALLEY Since 1986, Dan Talley served as Executive Director of The Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse of Northwest Louisiana. In 1994, he founded the Louisiana Council on Compulsive Gambling, known today as the Louisiana Association on Compulsive Gambling. Since then, Dan and the Council have helped thousands of problem gamblers and their families statewide. His longstanding reputation as a man committed to helping others will leave a huge gap in the field. He will be missed.

FATHER BERNARD SHANNON Knowing their pain and hopelessness as few counselors could, Father Bernard Shannon was a spiritual guide to persons struggling not only with compulsive gambling but with alcoholism as well. While assigned to the St. Ignatius Retreat House in Manhasset, New York, he gave the message of recovery to thousands of troubled individuals through personal interviews, confessions, retreats, step meetings and conferences. It was through his inspiration and hard work that many, many people have chosen life over destruction. We have lost a great friend in Father Shannon and he will be dearly missed.

In the Limelight

Married to a Compulsive Gambler

Susan, not her real name, readily shares her experiences of living with a compulsive gambler, but pain, fear and a deep sense of loss permeates her every word. The weariness in her voice when she talks about the last 25 years is so pronounced that you wonder how she ever survived.

Years later, when she thought her husband had finally stopped gambling, the family learned that the older son was terminally ill. In desperation Susan turned to her husband for support only to have him divulge that not only had he once again destroyed their finances at the casino but he had also gambled away the \$ 30,000 in cash her elderly father kept in a closet. “Our son was dying,” Susan says with a hard edge to her voice, “and my husband steals my 90-year-old father’s last penny. Oh how I wanted to leave that marriage but there were just too many obstacles. Now I look back and wonder why I stayed. But, what my husband did just shows you what a terrible illness that compulsive gambling really is. It was almost as if he was out of his mind and he was taking me with him.”



Then again, the last six years have been fairly stable. No longer does her husband haunt casinos and lose whatever money he can get his hands on at the blackjack tables. Now he faithfully goes to his Gamblers Anonymous meetings and she clings to Gam-Anon like a life preserver. But, the damage that was done to the family, the family finances and the marital relationship is severe and long-lasting.

The \$130,000 or so that her husband lost, as well as having to financially start over again so late in life, are just part of the reason why Susan can’t fully let go of the past. All of the lying and deception that her husband engaged in for so many years to keep his gambling a secret caused a break in trust that forces Susan to stay wary. “I don’t think he’s gambling now,” she says with a sigh, “but I can’t really be sure. If his behavior changes just a little bit, I think, ‘Oh no, here we go again.’”

If it was just the lost income over the years, the looted savings accounts, the maxed out credit cards or even the secret \$30,000 bank loan, maybe the distrust wouldn’t be so intense. But when Susan starts to talk about her family in a halting voice you really begin to sense why she feels as strongly as she does. It was her oldest son who would go with her to the casinos to help drag her husband away from the blackjack tables. “I couldn’t stand seeing his pain over his father’s gambling,” she explains. “Even though he was twenty years old at the time, it really hurt him.”



“Our son was dying and my husband steals my 90-year-old father’s last penny.”

But, because of their strong recovery program, both Susan and her husband now share their story with therapists being trained by the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling to work with problem and compulsive gamblers. “Just maybe,” she says, “our efforts will show how you can not only survive this devastating illness but with a little help, you can really put shattered lives back together as well.”