



## Up Close & Personal



**Gambling Problem?  
Yours? A friend's?  
A family member's?**

Call the FCCG  
24-hour HelpLine  
**888-ADMIT-IT**  
(888-236-4848)

## Dangerous Request

What do you do when you are a recovering compulsive gambler and your boss at work asks you to be a blackjack dealer for a fundraiser? That was the dilemma I was faced with a few months back and hope to never have to face again. My anonymity has already been threatened enough as it is so I would rather not give my name in this article. But I do want to tell my story because maybe what I have to say will prevent others from having to go through the same thing.

You see, nobody where I am employed, except one good friend, knew that I was a recovering compulsive gambler. So I really had to laugh silently when that first company-wide Email from the boss popped up on my computer one morning at work saying that we were going to be participating in a "Las Vegas Night" fundraiser. My superior went on to explain that our company would be having a booth at this event and volunteers were needed, especially a blackjack dealer. With my history of playing blackjack, I just shook my head at the irony of the request and ignored it.

Unfortunately, no one volunteered. The next thing I knew, the boss had, for some reason, recommended that I be the blackjack dealer. I was dumfounded but tentatively agreed, hoping I could figure a way out. Later on, at a company-wide meeting, I was asked to make a final commitment to being the dealer. Again, I somewhat side-stepped the request by saying I would only do it if they couldn't find anyone else.

What a predicament. If I just refused without giving a reason, I would be marked as not being a team player. Then again, if I told everyone about my compulsive gambling, it could change how everyone

looked at me or even be a threat to my employment or business advancement. On the other hand, I knew that dealing blackjack, even with play money and for a good cause, would be a direct threat to my recovery. Of course, my wife hit the ceiling when I told her what had happened. In fact, as time went on, she became convinced that I actually wanted to be the blackjack dealer. Bad news.

*"It would be like giving a drink  
to an alcoholic"*

Finally, with strong urging from my Gamblers Anonymous group, I sent an Email to my boss and the event coordinators declining to participate. I simply told them I used to be a major casino gambler and it had been necessary for me to quit, nothing more. Boy was I ever lucky. In a subsequent conversation with my boss, he disclosed that his wife had a chemical dependency problem and of course I shouldn't be the dealer. "It would be like giving a drink to an alcoholic," he said, letting me know he fully understood my situation.

Soon after our chat, it was announced that the company wouldn't be participating in "Las Vegas Night" at all. To this day, it makes me wonder if my situation didn't motivate them to rethink the wisdom of their involvement in such an event. In reality, I hope that was the case and it is also my hope that other businesses and organizations think twice about using gambling to raise money. If my recovery, anonymity and marriage can be put in jeopardy because of such an event, it can happen to others as well.

# From Our President and Executive Director



## An Appeal to Reason

by Paul Ashe, President and Pat Fowler, Executive Director



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### Want to help? Join FCCG.

(Contributions are tax deductible)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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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 Svcs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal            | <input type="checkbox"/> Labor / Mgmt    |
| <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.

In this edition of FOCUS, readers are encouraged to think about the practice of using gambling events to raise funds for worthy causes. Gambling, which had been a minor form of fundraising used by some nonprofits, has become “the” theme for generating money by some of the most respected nonprofits in the country, including the Red Cross. Incredibly, even drug and alcohol treatment programs, and other health oriented nonprofits, are using the potentially addictive activity of gambling to fundraise.

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) would never consider using a “Wine Tasting” or “Learn to Brew a Keg” night to raise funds, although it would certainly draw interest and donors. This would not be appropriate since it would be promoting one risky behavior in the name of helping those with another addiction. We realize how contributor dollars have been stretched in recent years from natural and manmade disasters, but it is a disservice to all nonprofits and their clients when questionable methods of fundraising are used. While well-intended, such activities compromise organizational principles, place individuals at risk and send a mixed message to young people.

*“ . . . it is a disservice to all nonprofits and their clients when questionable methods of fundraising are used.”*

The range of nonprofits using gambling to fundraise is broad and growing at a time when the FCCG is devoting significant resources to educate

adults and youth about the risks associated with wagering for fun and profit. Particular emphasis has also been made to raise awareness among parents regarding the dangers of widespread participation in Texas Hold’em poker by youth. Unfortunately, we are increasingly seeing such things as youth recreation centers offering poker instruction classes, as well as major colleges and universities tapping into the “gambling for charities” theme to raise funds. This is clearly counterproductive.

It has gotten to the point that fundraising businesses have developed to solely promote gambling events marketed as an easy and “no investment” way for nonprofits to generate money. These businesses tout other high profile nonprofits using this method to further validate the appropriateness of their product. Many organizations believe that because such businesses are supporting this action, it must be appropriate.

Through this publication, it is the hope of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc., that nonprofits will rethink the use of gambling as an option for fundraising events and refuse to compromise a segment of their client population in order to assist others. The fact that these events use paper money and chips instead of real money does not prevent putting at risk those who may be recovering from or have a gambling problem, nor does it alter the perception of approval and promotion by the sponsoring organization. It is our belief that gambling events are never an appropriate or responsible way to fundraise.

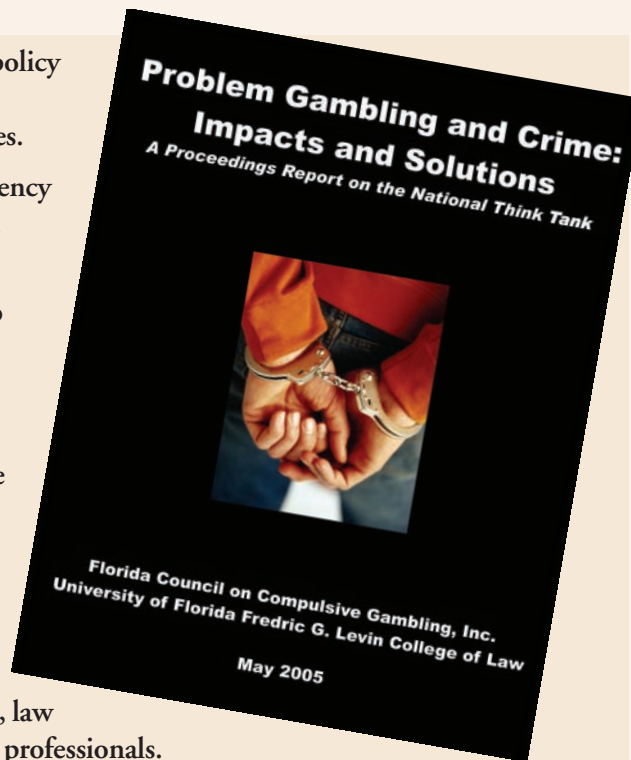
# What's New

## Think Tank Plots the Future

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) and the University of Florida Fredric G. Levin College of Law hosted the nation's first *Think Tank on Problem Gambling and Crime: Impacts and Solutions*.

The "Think Tank" convened prominent representatives from government offices, law enforcement organizations, the problem gambling treatment community, the corrections and judicial systems, the legal profession, the gambling industry, the academic and research communities and people in recovery. This forum was designed to develop a strategic plan to guide the efforts of the FCCG and its partners in working with Florida's law enforcement and criminal justice systems to identify problem gamblers, as well as coordinate services, treatment and related supports in a context which values justice and due process. Upon considering current trends and implications, participants identified policy goals to guide the FCCG and its partners in moving forward. A synopsis of the Think Tank's recommendations are as follows:

- Develop a clear, consistent state policy on gambling that addresses regulatory and public health issues.
- Identify one state government agency to oversee problem gambling as a public health issue.
- Require the gambling industry to more formally and consistently address responsible gambling.
- Solicit greater input on problem gambling and the criminal justice system from minority groups for purposes of research, planning and decision-making.
- Expand problem gambling education for the general population, public policy makers, law enforcement and criminal justice professionals.
- Devise a system to identify those with gambling problems at all levels within law enforcement and criminal justice.
- Provide problem gamblers in Florida with access to therapeutic justice through drug, mental health, domestic violence and/or gambling courts.
- Make high quality gambling treatment options available for problem gamblers at sentencing, in both traditional and therapeutic justice court settings.
- Provide all incarcerated problem gamblers with access to trained problem gambling counselors and Gamblers Anonymous meetings.



For a complete copy of the Think Tank report, forward all requests to the FCCG.

### Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.

901 Douglas Avenue, Suite 200  
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714

Phone: (407) 865-6200  
Fax: (407) 865-6103  
HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT  
(888-236-4848)  
[www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org)

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#### 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 Florida state government. The 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.

# In the Limelight

## Problem Gambling: The Neglected Step-Child of Addiction

By Reverend Leo Booth, Unity minister, published author and conference & workshop presenter.

Also a Spiritual Advisor to various treatment centers. For more information, visit [www.fatherleo.com](http://www.fatherleo.com)



*Reverend Leo Booth*

I have spent the last twenty-five years working in the field of addiction and have witnessed treatment programs progress from addressing alcoholism and substance abuse to embracing eating disorders, co-dependency, and, more recently, an emphasis on sex addiction. However, compulsive gambling, not to mention problem gambling, is still in the shadows. Indeed for most treatment centers, it's actually in the dark! Perhaps this is why I see some programs using gambling as fundraisers.

I have a particular interest in problem gambling because my father, who wasn't an alcoholic, had a severe reality issue when it came to gambling, especially with English horse racing. One bet was too many and a hundred not enough.

Notice how the following symptoms I experienced in my household, concerning my father's gambling, stacks up against what we have come to know to be issues around drugs and alcohol. See if any of these ring a bell:

- Denial by my father and in the early stages, my mother as well
- Euphoria followed by deep depression.
- Major legal and financial issues.
- Lies about how much was being spent on gambling.
- Periodic abandonment during gambling binges.
- Arguments and emotional violence based solely upon gambling bouts.
- Promises and sworn oaths never to gamble again, followed by relapse.
- Need to seek help, outside family.

All the above non-alcohol or drug related issues contributed to a spiritual breakdown in my family, just as if caused by alcohol or drugs. Thank God hope appeared in the form of a member of Gamblers Anonymous in a day when there was little or no research available to healthcare and treatment professionals about such a compulsion. Now I seriously question if many of us in the addictions treatment field really understand compulsive gambling, even though it's been thoroughly documented for quite some time.



*“Compulsive gambling creates all the unhappiness that we have always associated with alcoholism.”*

I hear some people, even treatment professionals, claim that compulsive gambling is not as widespread as alcoholism or drugs. Excuse me! I wonder if they have visited Las Vegas, Atlantic City or Reno recently and observed what is happening to people there. What do they think the popularity of TV poker tournaments are doing to viewers who are susceptible to gambling addiction, especially young people?

# In the Limelight



Did it ever cross their minds that Florida's vast gambling options, like the state lottery or all those land-based and floating casinos, are ensnaring a sizeable number of older adults at an incredible rate? Have they checked out statistics of how many people are even getting addicted to gambling in the stock market?

*“We and other nonprofit organizations . . . [who] use gambling type games to generate [a] financial base . . . are acting in a manner contradictory and counterproductive to our missions in the communities we serve.”*

OK, gambling is here to stay in America and I realize that for the vast majority of people it is a pleasant pastime. But for others it truly does become an obsession, a compulsion and yes, an addiction. In that light, those of us in the health care and addiction treatment fields ought to be especially aware of this fact and not only learn how to deal with this ailment but to also stop being part

of the problem by refusing to use gambling type games as fundraisers. We and other nonprofit organizations certainly need money, yet when we use gambling type games to generate that financial base, we are acting in a manner contradictory and counterproductive to our missions in the communities we serve.

But denial in this case can be extremely “cunning, baffling and powerful.” You may have noticed how nonprofit arenas, like schools, senior citizen clubs, battered women shelters, youth support organizations and yes, even alcohol treatment centers, can so easily co-opt gambling as a fundraiser. Bingo, poker or casino nights, raffles and evenings at the races abound in these places and astound me every time I see them.

Those of us in the recovery field should know better. For example, we would never serve alcohol at an addiction program banquet. Similarly, a therapist or other health care professional wouldn't give a gift of chocolate to a compulsive eater. But somehow, gambling seems to get lost between the social cracks.

I want to emphasize that I'm not against gambling, anymore than I'm against non-alcoholics having a drink. At the same time, I feel we need to acknowledge the subtle, and for some, dangerous forms of gambling that surround us in diverse ways, including those of fundraising games.

*“Those of us in the recovery field should know better.”*

Does this have anything to do with spirituality? Yes, I think so. I believe that

spirituality is about being a positive and creative person . . . as opposed to being involved in negative and destructive behaviors. Compulsive gambling creates all the unhappiness that we have always associated with alcoholism. If, spiritually, we are concerned about alcoholism and drug addiction in our society, how can we turn a blind eye to what is happening to an increasing number of people around gambling. Seeking happiness in “the more” . . . will eventually bring less.



I recently returned from a Vietnam tour and read a message in a Buddhist shrine that brings a spiritual reminder to all of us: *“You can have everything; be possessed by nothing.”*

Problem gambling needs to be discussed and treated and those in the nonprofit world need to be attentive to how gambling is used to generate revenue at the expense of many.

# Special Focus

## Some Nonprofits Turn to Gambling as Quick Fix



Without question, we live in a time when gambling is increasingly part of the world we know. State governments run lotteries, cruise ships to nowhere let you wager at sea, Native American tribes invite you with open arms to their reservation casinos, and poker tournaments abound on cable television. These few examples only hint at the gambling options all around us and have essentially motivated nonprofit groups more than ever to use gambling type games as fundraisers and as quick fixes to monetary constraints.

Since gambling is increasingly seen by society as an acceptable form of entertainment, some think, “Why not capitalize on this trend in order to generate much needed income for worthy causes?” The prevalence of this practice is becoming so widespread that some fundraising books devote entire chapters to the subject and commercial fundraising companies heavily market their gambling packages to nonprofit groups, whether large national organizations, a church down the street or a cheerleading squad at a local high school. Listed below are just some examples of the options offered by such companies:

- Bingo/Raffles/Draws
- Casino or Las Vegas Nights
- Texas Hold'em or Poker Tournaments
- Evenings at the Races

The nonprofit organizations involved in this sort of fundraising are as varied as the causes they promote. A recent Internet search yielded the following types of groups: religious/interfaith, fraternal/service, business/professional,

hospitals/treatment centers, charitable, political, youth/school/college, recreational/cultural, advocacy and senior citizen. Regardless of the gambling venue, however, nonprofit groups must carefully follow state and local ordinances that regulate such wagering activities. Make no mistake, these venues provide real gambling games. By definition, gambling is anytime something of value is being risked in order to gain something of greater value. Running afoul of such restrictions can result in the cancellation of the event and great legal difficulty, as well as potential loss of an entity's nonprofit status. This is especially true when card and casino type games are involved. In such situations, the use of “play money” is required with prizes awarded to the top winner(s) upon the game's completion.

But well before any gambling type venture is planned by a nonprofit, organizational leaders should ask themselves three key questions:

1. **Is this activity compatible with our values?**
2. **Could anyone be compromised by this activity?**
3. **Have we seriously considered other fundraising options?**

The problem here is that honest soul searching isn't always that easy. The lure of what is perceived as “easy money” to support a worthy cause can blind even the best-intentioned fundraisers, especially when contributors are having fun. The fact is that a significant number of people have serious gambling problems, some of whom may be employees or board members of an organization sponsoring a gambling fundraiser or business associates or others asked to support the event—we never know who among us may suffer from a gambling problem. (See article on page 1 for true story.)

In pondering a question about fundraising by Catholic organizations, Catholic Archbishop Thomas Collins advised, “We have to be careful about the methods we use. And even though it is a worthy cause, it does not make much sense to raise money for a worthy cause if in the course of doing so, it causes harm to people... It is very difficult to find ways to raise money. Nonetheless, even if it is the easiest and quickest way to raise money, if it's causing harm, we should not be doing it.” This would be wise advice to heed for any nonprofit group planning a fundraising event.

# Special Focus

## Questionable Fundraising?

It is delicate enough for most nonprofit organizations to decide whether or not to use gambling type games as fundraisers (*see article on page 6*) but when it comes to youth related groups, the impact of such decision-making becomes even more crucial. As stated on page 6, when contemplating a fundraising activity, nonprofit leaders should carefully and honestly decide if the activity is compatible with the organization's values, if anyone could be compromised by the activity and if all other options have been considered. However, when it comes to generating revenue for youth organizations, leaders may wish to ask themselves four additional questions:

1. Is gambling an acceptable activity for minors?
2. Will the fundraiser teach children "how-to" engage in a gambling game?
3. Would the organization host a fundraiser for youth that promoted the use of alcohol or included lessons on mixing drinks?
4. Could the experience negatively impact a child, now or in the future?

When dealing with young people, these questions truly become critical issues for nonprofit groups to consider. The key here is that gambling, or even the appearance of gambling, is considered an "at-risk" behavior among youth. The onset of gambling addiction is far greater within the adolescent population than



among adults. Here in Florida, the average age a compulsive gambler starts betting is 12. The bottom line is that whether young or old, the results are the same - lives and families become damaged or destroyed.

A safe philosophy and approach to the topic of gambling among children should be consistent with the pathway taken to address alcohol and substance abuse prevention, education and treatment. This is why the Florida Department of Education endorsed statewide implementation of the FCCG's problem gambling prevention program for middle and high school students.\* This curriculum was funded by the Florida Lottery and supported

by the Departments of Children and Families, Drug Control, Health and Juvenile Justice. Simply, if a high school booster club would not sponsor a wine tasting fundraiser in their community because such alcohol promotion would be considered inappropriate for young people, then neither should it host a Texas Hold'em poker tournament, a day at the races or a casino night.

Today, more young people gamble once a week than smoke, drink or take drugs. Therefore, any hint of underage gambling as an acceptable concept for nonprofits servicing youth is inappropriate. Gambling events cannot be looked upon as a panacea for financial problems or challenges, particularly when children are involved. Young people are greatly influenced by the messages they receive and the behaviors they witness in others at home, in school and elsewhere. In fact, parental approval regarding gambling is one of the two primary predictors for developing gambling problems.

There are many ways to raise money for youth nonprofits and while some avenues may require additional time and energy, one must ask whether gambling is the best choice given the population served. The answer may confirm that gambling is indeed questionable fundraising.

\*The FCCG's *Problem Gambling Prevention Program for Middle and High School Students* is available to educators, counselors, coaches and all others serving Florida adolescents. To obtain a copy, please contact the FCCG by telephone (888-ADMIT-IT) or by e-mail ([fccg@gamblinghelp.org](mailto:fccg@gamblinghelp.org))



Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.  
901 Douglas Avenue, Suite 200  
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714

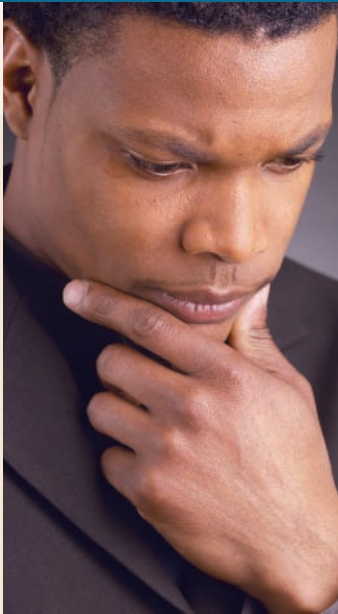
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# WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM

# 888-ADMIT-IT

 Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. [www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org)



## Warning Signs of Problem Gambling

- Thinking constantly about gambling.
- Betting more than planned.
- Experiencing mood swings based on wins and losses.
- Borrowing money or seeking loans to bet or pay off gambling debts.
- Withdrawing money from special accounts to gamble (e.g. savings, retirement or insurance).
- Gambling as an escape from anxiety, depression or everyday life.
- Lying about the amount of time or money spent gambling.
- Resorting to illegal acts, such as forgery or fraud to finance gambling.
- Risking or losing a relationship or job because of gambling.
- Failing in an effort to control or stop gambling.

**Identifying one or more of these signs in someone may indicate a gambling problem. Obtain confidential help by calling the FCCG toll-free 24-hour Problem Gambling HelpLine 888-ADMIT-IT (888-236-4848).**