



Problem Gambling and Domestic Violence in Times of Crisis

These are trying times – not only for Floridians, but for people around the globe. Being isolated and in “lockdown mode” can be a difficult experience. It is important to keep staying positive and have hope that this will all be over sooner, rather than later.

A troubling side effect – domestic violence is on the rise around the world.

Multiple states have shown a substantial increase in domestic violence calls over the last few months and unfortunately, this could be a trend that continues for some time.

The United Nations raised the alarm that there has been “a sharp rise in domestic violence amid global coronavirus lockdowns.” Recently, super-middleweight boxing champion Billy Joe Saunders posted a video on social media about how to hit your spouse during the coronavirus lockdown. This, of course, drew ire from many, and Saunders was suspended by the British Boxing Board of Control following the incident. In the video, the world super-middleweight champion appeared to demonstrate how men could hit their partners if “your old woman is giving you mouth” during the coronavirus lockdown. Also of note, Saunders posted in October about losing £22,000 (about \$23,715) at a casino in one visit.

For problem gamblers, the rate of domestic violence has always been a serious and related statistic. It is not just spousal or significant other abuse but also children and elders that are affected. Unfortunately, domestic violence takes on many ugly faces and can be physical, verbal, or emotional abuse.

Troubling factors that may influence domestic violence during this time include: isolation, financial woes, unemployment, frustrations over lack of access to gambling opportunities, and others. These can all lead to a dangerous boiling point for some, which can result in violence, neglect, and conflict.

According to the 2018/2019 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine data, 75% of callers cited family conflict, 56% stated there was family neglect and 4% admitted to domestic violence as a result of problem gambling.

Unfortunately, many victims will not reach out for help, due to the close proximity of the perpetrator (especially during quarantine), a feeling of guilt as a result of continued emotional manipulation, and desensitization from prolonged abuse.

During the “stay at home” order, some problem gamblers will try new ways to stay in action. Casino gamblers could turn to illegal online gambling/gaming and there is a concern that this has already happened with many in Florida.

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) wants you to know that if you are living with a problem gambler (or any addict), and you are being abused, to contact the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-500-1119 or contact them through fcadv.org.

The FCCG can connect you with resources regarding your significant other’s gambling problem and even legal assistance. Contact Florida’s 24/7, Confidential, and Multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine at 1-888-ADMIT-IT (236-4848), by starting a live chat at www.gamblinghelp.org, or by texting to 321-978-0555. You can also email us at fccg@gamblinghelp.org or reach out to the Council on Facebook and Twitter.



References

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[2] Morse, Ben. "World Champion Boxer Billy Joe Saunders Suspended Following Domestic Violence 'Advice' Video." CNN, Cable News Network, 31 Mar. 2020, edition.cnn.com/2020/03/31/sport/billy-joe-saunders-suspended-domestic-violence-boxing-spt-intl/index.html.

[3] 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Annual Report. July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019 ed., The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc., 2019, pp. 19–19, 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Annual Report.