

WEB LETTER



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THE IMPORTANCE OF STRONG MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SUICIDE AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

Protecting our mental health should be a priority in our daily lives; September 6-12, 2020, is National Suicide Prevention Week. More than ever, we are taking steps to prevent suicide and effects that may come from gambling addiction. No one has escaped from the changes that this pandemic has brought on the world. Even though COVID has physically affected lives, many have taken an impact financially and mentally. Situations such as job loss, lockdown orders, new school structures, and travel restrictions all affect mental health. Many may not know that all of these changes have caused changes in gambling habits, some for the worse.

A common misconception about gambling addiction is that those who suffer from this condition just “have a problem weighing their odds.” However, gambling addiction affects the brain much in the same way as drugs, leaving those who suffer unable to control their urges to bet.

Because this condition has no obvious physical symptoms, it often goes undetected by even those closest to the gambler, and so do the difficulties that may come with it, including suicidal ideation.

More than one in five (22%) reported the gambler had suicidal ideation or attempts [1]. These results leave us to understand how the pandemic and past events have impacted people negatively, and how this is reflected in gambling behaviors.

In July, a 20-year old male committed suicide due to a negative day trading balance on the popular app Robinhood [2]. However, this isn't the only instance; another teen in India this August took the same route as a result of losing all of his savings through online gambling [3].

While we mourn these tragic events, we know that we can continue to make a difference in prevention. Your gambling habits may be an indicator of your mental health. Many individuals who struggle with disordered gambling experience mental health and domestic challenges such as anxiety, depression, and family neglect [4]. As a result of these difficulties, these individuals seek gambling to “escape” the negative emotions and difficult situations. Our goal is always to inspire hope and create a path towards recovery and a better life on the other side of problem gambling. While many people gamble for various reasons, we remain steadfast in providing help through our Peer Connect Program, amongst other resources we provide for those who contact our confidential 888-ADMIT-IT Problem Gambling HelpLine. If you feel that you or your loved one are at risk of gambling addiction, contact our HelpLine. The first step is just a call away.

THE FCCG'S 24-HOUR CONFIDENTIAL AND MULTILINGUAL HELPLINE MAY BE REACHED BY CALLING 888-ADMIT-IT (888-236-4848), TEXTING (321) 978-0555, EMAILING FCCG@GAMBLINGHELP.ORG, INITIATING A LIVE CHAT AT GAMBLINGHELP.ORG, OR BY REACHING OUT TO US ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

REFERENCES

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[3] NewIndianXpress. "Youth Loses Savings in Online Gambling, Kills Self." The New Indian Express, The New Indian Express, 28 July 2020, www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2020/jul/28/youth-loses-savings-in-online-gambling-kills-self-2175731.html.

[4] 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Annual Report., 2019 ed., The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc., 2019, 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Annual Report