



COMPULSIVE GAMBLING AND HONESTY DON'T MIX

According to the American Psychiatric Association, gambling disorder (i.e., commonly referred to as compulsive gambling) is a mental health disorder of impulse control. One of the 9 criteria for a clinical diagnosis is "lying to conceal activity."

Compulsive gamblers lie to protect themselves from being revealed. Secrets and lies become the foundation on which a web of deceit is built in a family with a compulsive gambler. Most times, their secret is disclosed following a major event, such as a substantial loss, difficulty at or termination of work, commission of a crime, etc. Family members and others closest to the gambler feel disrespected, demeaned and completely dumbfounded upon learning their loved one has been spending countless hours gambling, resulting in major financial and/or personal and familial problems.

The lying is often the most painful part for family members. It can be agonizing to confront the issues of lying because frequently they result in arguments and a cycle of behavior of more gambling, more lying, and more arguing. For the person

being lied to, very often their life begins to revolve around whether the gambler is telling the truth. Ultimately, re-establishing trust, after an extended period of lies, is an ongoing challenge for family members and for the gamblers themselves. This is when appropriate treatment and self-help supports can prove crucial to a family's recovery. A professional therapist and recovering persons can provide the assistance necessary to help family members and others to address the various gambling related impacts and to get back on track. In isolation, many families will remain in crisis, some will split up, others will toggle between recovery and everyday life struggles, and others may choose to live in denial.

However, recovery is possible for compulsive gamblers and their families if each family member, including the gambler is committed to change. For information and free statewide services and supports, call the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's 24-hour HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT or visit us online at www.gamblinghelp.org.

ARE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW EXPERIENCING THE FOLLOWING DIFFICULTIES DUE TO GAMBLING:

- Frustrated with a loved one?
- Facing financial problems?
- Being lied to by someone you care about?
- Feeling helpless and don't know what to do?
- Becoming emotionally detached?
- Feeling physically ill?
- Becoming stressed out?
- Having depressed thoughts or feelings?
- Suffering from legal impacts?
- Thinking about ending your marriage or relationship?
- Believing your problems are hopeless?

Reviewing the preceding checklist can help family members and others to determine whether a loved one's gambling is negatively impacting their lives. Answering "Yes" to one or more questions shows signs of a gambling problem. For confidential and free information, resources and community based supports, call the FCCG 24-hour HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Bill and Delores suggest the following tips to parents of young gamblers:

- Intervene early
- Be prepared to make a continuous commitment
- Value the relationship
- Insist that your child seek help
- Become proactive in treatment
- Maintain that your child take responsibility for his life
- Increase awareness as to the seriousness of gambling
- Monitor (and if necessary, manage) your child's finances
- Be mindful of credit cards your child may obtain via the Internet or on a college campus
- Be attentive to how and with whom your child is spending their time
- Be aware that athletic children have a natural competitive nature, which can lead to gambling
- Look for signs of substitution (e.g. consuming alcohol or using drugs)
- Be united as to how you handle and address certain issues with your child
- Require that your child apply himself at school and/or work

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that often parents and other family members attribute their child's erratic or secretive behavior to alcohol or drug use, without ever realizing that gambling is the contributing factor.