



Our son took up golf when he was just 14 years old. Michael was so good that he would play with the adults in the neighborhood, who introduced him to betting on the golf course. Given his natural competitive nature as an athlete, he was gambling on his own basketball games and in the latter days of high school he was playing Texas Hold'Em and poker with friends, which continued into college.

Though we knew Michael played poker, we did not know he had a problem until the beginning of his sophomore year in college when we went to visit him during Parents Weekend. It was then we realized something was amiss because Michael didn't look like himself and prior to that we couldn't reach him by phone. We learned from a roommate that Michael went to Atlantic City for 48 hours.

We ultimately pulled Michael out of school and arranged for a medical leave of absence. By this time, Michael had been gambling online 24/7, with numerous trips to Atlantic City, was flunking all his courses, having problems with his golf coach, and had gained 30 pounds in two months time. His credit card debt from his online bets was

significant and when all was said and done and Michael returned home, he owed in excess of \$5,000.

Both while away at college and when Michael was back in Florida, he attended counseling and self-help groups. We also attended sessions with the therapist and went to a support group for family members. However, nothing ever resulted in Michael stopping for long periods of time.

Today, several years later, Michael's gambling is sporadic but is not as problematic as it used to be. He has since graduated college with honors, is working towards his graduate degree, and is employed full-time. He lives at home and we help manage his money.

Michael's gambling continues to have short and long-term impacts on our family. He has never regained our full trust. His younger brother became disheartened upon realizing there was little he could do to help Michael. We acknowledge that Michael eventually needs to lead an independent life, which is critical to his development, but he needs to first gain stability and demonstrate that he can manage on his own.

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We stopped seeing the counselor, even though we found it beneficial, because he said we needed to totally cut Michael off and we are not prepared to abandon our son. We know that Michael never hit bottom because we chose not to let him. We also realize that Michael

has difficulty relating to some of the self-help group members because they tend to be much older than he. Similarly, the support group meetings for loved ones in our area are comprised of primarily spouses versus parents, and although we aren't looking to "divorce" our son, we do find the guidance offered and the forums helpful.

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We will continue to stand by our son as he transitions to the next phase of his adult life. Despite his challenges and daily struggles, we have seen the progress he has made since the day we brought him home from college. Finally, if there's one thing that recovery has taught us is that anything is possible if you keep the faith and keep working the program one step at a time.

Bill and Delores



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

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

To read Bill and Delores' tips to parents of young gamblers, see page 3.