

## Frequently Asked Questions about Problem Gambling

### **Isn't problem gambling just a financial problem?**

**NO.** Problem gambling is a behavioral problem that just happens to have financial consequences. If you pay all of a problem gambler's debts, the person will still be a problem gambler. The real issue is that they have an uncontrollable mental obsession with gambling.

### **Do casinos cause problem gambling?**

**NO.** The cause of a gambling problem is the individual's inability to control the gambling. This may be due in part to a person's genetic tendency to develop addiction, their inability to cope with normal life stress and even their social and moral attitudes about gambling. The casino merely provides the opportunity for the person to gamble. It does not, in and of itself, create the problem any more than a liquor store can *create* an alcoholic.

### **Can you be a problem gambler if you don't gamble every day?**

**YES.** The frequency of a person's gambling does not determine whether or not they have a gambling problem. Even though the problem gambler may only go on periodic gambling binges, the emotional and financial consequences will still be evident in the gambler's life, including the effects on the family.

### **How can a person be addicted to something that isn't a substance?**

Although no substance is ingested, the problem gambler gets the same effect from gambling as someone else might get from taking a tranquilizer or having a drink. The gambling alters the person's mood and the gambler keeps repeating the behavior in an attempt to achieve that same effect. But just as tolerance develops to drugs or alcohol, the gambler finds that it takes more and more of the gambling experience to achieve the same emotional effect as before. This creates an increased craving for gambling and a decreased ability to resist the urges as they grow in intensity and frequency.

### **Are problem gamblers usually addicted to other things too?**

Research shows that people with one addiction are more at risk to develop another addiction. For example, higher rates of problem gambling have been found among groups of people who are in treatment for substance abuse. This does not mean that if you have a gambling problem you are guaranteed to become addicted to other things, but it does suggest that education about risk factors for any addiction is an important part of treatment and recovery.

### **How much money do you have to lose before gambling becomes a problem?**

The amount of money lost or won does not determine when gambling becomes a problem. Gambling becomes a problem when it causes a negative impact in any area of the individual's life.

### **Is Gamblers Anonymous a religious program?**

Gamblers Anonymous is based on the same principles as Alcoholics Anonymous. The 12-steps of recovery are a set of principles intended to help the member change the way he thinks and lives so that he can make a daily choice not to gamble. The program is considered to be spiritual, not religious, defining the word spiritual to mean embracing certain qualities such as kindness, generosity, honesty and humility. Although the program refers to a belief in a Higher Power, it is left to each member to define that source of strength for themselves. For some, a higher power may be represented by God and for others it may merely be a belief that the group can help them stop gambling. Even atheists and agnostics have found the 12-step model to be an effective approach to sustain recovery from addiction.

**Want to know more? Visit [www.nevadacouncil.org](http://www.nevadacouncil.org) for additional information and resources.**