



Financial Troubles, Health Problems May Be a Sign of Problem Gambling

Have the Conversation with Friends & Family

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Washington, DC March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month. Issues seemingly unconnected to gambling, like financial stress or health issues, may be an indicator that someone in your life has a gambling addiction.

Common health consequences of gambling disorder include:

- Sleep disorders
- Heart disease
- Digestive ailments
- Anxiety
- Abuse of alcohol or other drugs
- Depression

While for many people gambling is a form of entertainment, for others it can become a serious addiction. Just like having a drink can develop into alcoholism, chemicals in the brain are activated during gambling activity – and for over 5 million Americans it turns into an addiction. Because a gambling disorder often goes unrecognized, only around 8% of those with a problem *ever* seek treatment.

Problem gambling is a legitimate mental health issue that responds well to treatment. The longer the problem gambling goes untreated, the greater the financial, emotional or health consequences can become.

If you suspect someone in your life has a gambling problem, *have the conversation*. Ask if they borrow money to gamble from friends or family. Ask if it interferes with their ability to focus on work or school. Ask if they've ever lied about their gambling or bet more than they intended. Share resources with them that can help.

For more ideas on how to *have the conversation*, and information on problem gambling prevention and treatment resources, visit the National Council on Problem Gambling at www.npgam.org or call the 24/7 helpline at 1-800-522-4700.

NCPG is the national advocate for problem gamblers and their families. NCPG is neutral on legalized gambling and leads state and national stakeholders in the development of comprehensive policy and programs for all those affected by problem gambling. Our vision is to improve health and wellness by reducing the personal, social and economic costs of problem gambling.

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