

Four Different Phases of the Gambling Addiction

http://local.soberrecovery.com/Four_Different_Phases_of_the_Gambling_Addiction_Lehi_UT-r1298808-Lehi_UT.html

In recent days the gambling addictions rising than ever due to the varied chances to gamble. Nowadays there are a number of sports betting, slot machines and casinos than ever before. If you stay away from casinos, there is also telephone betting and even more gambling on the internet. It is truly an addiction that can be difficult to conquer. Gambling can and does become a serious problem. It often leads to financial and relationship ruin in most, if not all, cases. For some, attempted suicide after losing a bet is not unheard of. Pathological gambling is much more common among men than in women, though the number female gambling addicts are on the rise as well. Gambling addicts are also more likely to smoke cigarettes and abuse alcohol compared to recreational gamblers and this can compound the problem. There are four phases that can help you realize a gambling addiction: the winning phase, the chasing phase, the desperation phase and hopelessness.

The Winning Phase:

This is a short and sometimes non-existent phase that associates escape from problems with winning several small or large bets. It can give a temporary boost in self-esteem and a sense of empowerment. The excitement and titillation often felt at the casino is used to charge up the lives of those predisposed by some conditions and loneliness.

The Chasing Phase:

The addiction starts to unravel when a number of losses are attributed to poor luck. Somehow, no win is ever enough. More often, the person prefers to gamble alone. They start to hide their gambling because the losses have put them in a tight financial spot. The addict begins to ignore his or her family and then becomes irritable when not gambling. Slowly, gambling and betting become the sole coping mechanism to the larger issues in life. The addict can gamble until he is insolvent and can become unapproachable about the problem. This phase can last a number of years, with the addict progressively placing larger bets on longer odds. More often than not, the addict starts borrowing money to support the habit and his family life is gone.

The Desperation Phase:

The addict behaves there is little, if no time for anything else and nothing else in life matters except the thrill of betting more. He resorts to lying, manipulation and complete denial of criticism. He usually externalizes the blame and does not hold himself accountable for his desperate state. Sometimes he can exhibit acute anger at others who deny that his gambling is just "normal". Usually, his finances

are a wreck and bills remain unpaid. The family by now knows the addiction but remains suffering and powerless. Sometimes the gambler contemplates suicide and sees death as the only exit strategy. This is the point where most remediation occurs but relapses from initial recovery programs can be frequent. Unfortunately, there are many who undertake the recovery program but keep gambling anyway.

The Hopeless Phase:

This is the last stage of gambling addiction that involves clinical depression, suicide and other criminal actions that often place them in jail.

What is a gambling addiction?

http://www.medicinenet.com/gambling_addiction/article.htm

Gambling addiction is a mental-health problem that is understood to be one of many kinds of impulse-control problems a person may suffer from. The types of gambling that people with this disorder might engage in are as variable as the games available. Betting on sports, buying lotto tickets, playing poker, slot machines, or roulette are only a few of the activities in which compulsive gamblers engage. The venue of choice for individuals with gambling addiction varies as well. While many prefer gambling in a casino, the rate of online/Internet gambling addiction continues to increase with increased use of the Internet. Gambling addiction is also called compulsive gambling or pathological gambling.

Estimates of the number of people who gamble socially qualify for being diagnosed with a gambling addiction range from 2%-5%, thereby affecting millions of people in the United States alone. Although more men than women are thought to suffer from pathological gambling, women are developing this disorder at higher rates, now making up as much as 25% of individuals with pathological gambling. Other facts about compulsive gambling are that men tend to develop this disorder during their early teenage years while women tend to develop it later. However, the disorder in women then tends to get worse at a much faster rate than in men. Other apparently gender-based differences in gambling addiction include the tendencies for men to become addicted to more interpersonal forms of gaming, like blackjack, craps or poker, whereas women tend to engage in less interpersonally based betting, like slot machines or bingo. Men with pathological gambling tend to receive counseling about issues other than gambling less often than their female counterparts.

Problem gambling generally means gambling that involves more than one symptom but less than the at least five symptoms required to qualify for the diagnosis of compulsive or pathological gambling. Binge gambling is a subtype of compulsive gambling that involves problem gambling but only during discrete periods of time. That is different from a general gambling addiction, which tends to involve excessive gambling behavior on an ongoing basis and to include persistent thoughts (preoccupation) about gambling even during times when the person is not engaged in gambling.

What are symptoms and signs of a gambling addiction?

Pathological gambling involves persistent and recurring problem gambling that includes several of the following symptoms and are not the result of another mental-health problem, like during a manic episode:

- A preoccupation with gambling, either by reliving past gambling, planning for future gambling experiences, and/or thinking of ways to secure money to finance gambling.
- Needing more and more money for gambling in order to achieve the desired level of gambling enjoyment.
- Repeated unsuccessful attempts to stop or reduce betting behaviors.
- Becoming uneasy or easily irritated when trying to reduce or stop gambling.
- Gambling for the purpose of escaping problems or to relieve sadness or anxiety.
- Returning to gambling after losing money in an effort to recoup losses.
- Lying to family or other loved ones, mental-health professionals, or others in an effort to hide the extent of the gambling behavior.
- Committing crimes (for example, stealing, fraud, or forgery) in an effort to finance gambling.
- Risking important relationships, employment, or other opportunities due to gambling.
- Depending on others for money to resolve dire financial situations that are the result of gambling.

How is a gambling addiction diagnosed?

The first step to obtaining appropriate treatment is accurate diagnosis, which requires a complete physical and psychological evaluation to determine whether the person may have a gambling addiction. Since some medical conditions, can cause an individual to develop erratic, impulsive behaviors, including problem gambling, the examining physician should rule out (exclude) these possibilities through an interview, physical examination, and applicable laboratory tests, as well as implementing a full mental-health evaluation. A thorough diagnostic evaluation includes a complete history of the patient's symptoms, during which time the practitioner might ask the following questions:

1. How old were you when you gambled for the first time?
2. How much time (how often and for how long each time) do you spend gambling or thinking about gambling?
3. How much money do you lose/spend gambling?
4. What kinds of things do you do to finance gambling?
5. Do you have irresistible urges to gamble?

The doctor usually asks about alcohol and drug use and whether the patient has had thoughts about death or suicide. Further, the history often includes questions

about whether other family members have had a gambling problem, and if treated, what treatments they received and which were effective.

A diagnostic evaluation also includes a mental-status examination to determine if the patient's speech, thought pattern, or memory has been affected, as often happens in the case of a many forms of mental illness. As of today, there is no laboratory test, blood test, or X-ray that can diagnose this or any other mental disorder.

What are complications and negative effects of gambling addiction?

Although as many as one third of individuals who suffer from pathological gambling may recover from the disease without receiving any treatment, the potential devastation that compulsive gambling can wreak on the life of the sufferer and those around him or her make the pros and cons of treatment clearly indicate that the potential positive aspects outweigh the possible complications that result from an intervention. As much as \$5 billion is spent on gambling in the United States every year, with people who are addicted to gambling accruing tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. Harmful effects that compulsive gambling can have on the individual include financial problems ranging from high debt, bankruptcy or poverty, to legal problems resulting from theft to prostitution, to wanting, attempting or completing suicide. Gambling addiction can have a multitude of negative effects on the family. Statistics indicate that families of people with compulsive gambling are more likely to experience domestic violence and child abuse. Children of problem gamblers are at significantly higher risk of suffering from depression, behavior problems, and substance abuse. One of the challenges of treatment of compulsive gambling is that as many as two-thirds of people who begin treatment for this disorder discontinue treatment prematurely, whether treatment involves medication, therapy or both.

Some Sobering Statistics

- 15 million people display some sign of gambling addiction
- "Players" with household incomes under \$10,000 bet nearly three times as much on lotteries as those with incomes over \$50,000
- The average debt incurred by a male pathological gambler in the U.S. is between \$55,000 and \$90,000 (it is \$15,000 for female gamblers)
- The suicide rate for pathological gamblers is twenty times higher than for non-gamblers (one in five attempts suicide)
- Sixty-five percent of pathological gamblers commit crimes to support their gambling habit