

Health Hints

Can't Quit Gambling? Don't Bet On It

(NAPS)—A preoccupation with gambling may cause some people to risk more than money. They may be gambling their health, happiness and their family's welfare.

That's the opinion of experts who define problem gambling as gambling behavior that causes a disruption in any major area of a person's life. It's estimated that two to three percent of the U.S. population suffers from a gambling problem. It can affect men or women of any age, race or religion, regardless of their social status.

Some of the warning signs to watch out for include:

- Preoccupied with gambling and unable to stop
- Gambling to win back what you've lost
- Lying to hide time spent gambling or unpaid debts

Fortunately, an organization is working to ensure help is available. The National Council on Problem Gambling is the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families.

Its mission is to increase public awareness of pathological gambling and to ensure the widespread availability of treatment for problem gamblers and their families. It also operates the Problem Gambling Helpline Network, a nationwide link to resources.

"A problem gambler doesn't need to wait to 'hit bottom' before asking for help," says Keith Whyte, executive director, the National Council on Problem Gambling. "Our Helpline can be used by anyone. When their problem is your prob-



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lem, you as a loved one can call the help line to learn what help is available."

One self-described problem gambler who turned to the Helpline for help characterized its services as being invaluable. According to Sandy Yakim, a 55 year-old teacher whose gambling increased after several personal setbacks, the Helpline provided her with emotional support and information, counseling and advice on how to get help.

Said Yakim, "I have now been clean for over a year. I have money in my savings account. I can shop a little bit. Life is good, I am happy, I have found my joy once again. The Helpline is invaluable. They provide a shoulder to cry on, but more importantly advice on help."

To learn more or to find help, call toll free (800) 522-4700 or visit www.ncpgambling.org.

Note to Editors: While it would be appropriate to use this article at anytime throughout the year, you may want to use it as a feature during National Problem Gambling Awareness Week, March 6-12, 2006. For more information, visit www.npgaw.org.

Did You Know?

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