



MY GAMBLING STORY

Broadcast Monday 8 October at 8.30pm

Repeated Friday 12 October at 9am

89.7 PBA FM in Adelaide

Study Guide

Program 1 - What is Problem Gambling?

Gambling can be defined as any risky undertaking or attempt; or, as taking great risks - usually in the hope of substantial gain. "Staking money on uncertain events driven by chance" was put forward in the 1996 Productivity Commission Report as a suggested definition. Risk-taking is a normal facet of human behaviour. It is in the degree of risk-taking practised by individuals that danger can lie.

Gambling is a legally and socially acceptable form of risk-taking. Gambling is also a readily available activity. Many people use it as a means of entertainment, as recreation. Given that risk-taking is an integral aspect of human behaviour, the gambler is not doing anything unusual in betting on horses or dogs, playing X-Lotto, wagering money on Casino games, or indulging in any other risk-taking action in the hope of a reward.

Problem gambling has been defined as gambling which has an adverse impact on various aspects of the life of the gambler and those closest to him or her. In 2005, the Ministerial Council on Gambling, through Gambling Research Australia, determined the following national definition of 'problem gambling', which has subsequently been endorsed by all States and Territories as "*Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gamblers, others, or for the community*". The gambler, by losing control of his/her risk-taking behaviour, may subsequently lose control of his/her life.

There are physical and psychological effects arising from any form of gambling. Initially, these can be enjoyable, eg the "high" experienced by a gambler when a favoured horse wins, or the music sounds and the credits on the poker machine begin to roll. Increasingly, however, the mood-altering effects of gambling can become unpleasant and can have detrimental effects, not only for the gambler, but also for his/her family and nearest associates. The latter may be friends, an employer, colleagues, neighbours, or strangers.

Problem gamblers need money to continue gambling. The source of that money may be any of those listed in the previous paragraph, as well as the usual commercial avenues of obtaining finance. Sadly, the constant stress experienced as the problem gambler looks for new sources of money has a detrimental effect on his/her relationships. Control has been surrendered to the need to continue gambling, in order to achieve the elusive trifecta or jackpot. Gambling becomes the focus, the *raison d'être*, and no aspects of the problem gambler's life remain untouched in the relentless pursuit of a win.

Decision-making is impaired when gambling becomes problem gambling. Research has not been able to pinpoint the turning point for a gambler, from enjoyment to enthrallment. Gamblers themselves often associate the loss of control with the day when he/she spent the whole of a week's income in one session of gambling. They describe the sensation as one of being unable to stop until the lack of money brings the activity to a halt.

Why can one person continue to gamble for entertainment whilst another finds that gambling takes over his or her life in a frightening way?

Some Discussion Points

- Is problem gambling an addiction?
- Why do only a small number (between 10% and 15%) of those adversely affected by excessive gambling seek help to rid themselves of the problem?
- Is it possible to solve the problem without help?
- What forms of help are available?

For more information:

www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au

<http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiry/gambling/docs/finalreport> - Australian Government Productivity Commission (*Australia's Gambling Industries* report)

Acknowledgements

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Gambling Helpline South Australia 1800 060 757

The Gambling Helpline is a free 24-hour counselling, information and referral service to assist people in South Australia with gambling related problems, or those affected by the gambling of others including family members. The Gambling Helpline can be used by anyone who would like to know more about gambling related problems and how to deal with them.

The Gambling Helpline is funded by the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund.

South Australian Gambling Help Services

The Gambling Help Services provide free, confidential counselling and assistance for people who are concerned about their gambling behaviour and the families and friends of problem gamblers. Counselling is provided over the telephone and in person and specific counselling is also available. Languages other than English are spoken at some services and interpreter assistance can be arranged.

Disclaimer

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