



MY GAMBLING STORY

Broadcast Monday 29 October at 8.30pm

Repeated Friday 2 November at 9am

89.7 PBA FM in Adelaide

Study Guide

Program 4 – Living with Problem Gambling

Betting on horses was once the most common form of gambling, indulged in almost exclusively by men. Many of those seeking help for problems with gambling stated that they had been involved with horses in the course of their work. Many owners, trainers, jockeys, strappers spoke of having found the desire to bet on their charges irresistible even though jockeys are forbidden to gamble on the horses they ride as apprentices.

Initially, gambling on horses was done either at the track or through the intervention of the Starting Price (SP) bookmaker, who quite often could be found in the front bar of the local hotel. Young boys who attended the track with their male family members – fathers, grandfathers, brothers, uncles – revelled in the male-dominated atmosphere.

Betting was seen as an enjoyable form of entertainment, only available once the magic age of maturity was reached. Choosing a horse, having a bet put on for him and being successful was the beginning of the road to problem gambling for at least one client.

The coming of the Totalizer Agency Board (TAB) and the replacement of the illicit betting shops with legal venues for gambling gave a boost to race horse betting.

This was enhanced when the TAB moved into hotels and advanced technology made it possible to access race meetings all over the world in the course of one afternoon. One problem gambler told me that he had made no fewer than 64 bets in the course of a 3-hour visit to his local hotel.

Some TAB hotel gamblers found the presence of poker machines in the near vicinity an added temptation. Between races they would put money into a machine. Sometimes the result was that the social atmosphere which had formerly been a part of their experience – a drink at the bar with a few friends while having some bets – was replaced by the solitary occupation of feeding coins or notes into a gaming machine.

The problem gambler thus lost not only money, but also friends, many of whom felt insulted by the gambler preferring the company of a machine to spending time with them.

Ron's 64-year history of being associated with horse racing and betting is not unusual. Nor is his experience of having a big win and giving it all back. The first step in the path to problem gambling is often a win, especially if it is a substantial one. The philosophy adopted is – "I've done it once, I can do it again!" TAB gamblers pride

themselves on their expertise in choosing winners. Any losers are seen as being the result of unfair practices on the part of the trainers, jockeys, or the horse itself.

Some Discussion Points

- How are habits reinforced?
- Can habits be broken? If so, how?
- Is it possible that Ron is cured, after such a long history of gambling to excess?

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

My Gambling Story was produced at PBA FM in Adelaide with assistance from the Office for Problem Gambling, through the Department for Families and Communities. This Study Guide has been prepared by May Shotton, financial and gambling counsellor with thirteen years of experience in the field of problem gambling.



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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