



## MY GAMBLING STORY

Broadcast Monday 5 November at 8.30pm

Repeated Friday 9 November at 9am

89.7 PBA FM in Adelaide

### Study Guide

#### Program 5 – When Reality Returns

Jo spoke of not attending family events, of not going to work, of being secretive, lying and being deceitful. Shame and guilt overwhelmed the feeling of escape from reality which the gambling had created originally.

Jo's family reacted in a variety of ways, some being helpful, others seeing her conduct as shameful and the problem being easily fixed by Jo just not gambling any more. The greatest loss at this time was the loss of trust, something which most people take for granted until it has gone.

Jo's analysis of the reasons for her gambling had been that she was suffering from loneliness and boredom. She revelled initially in the sense of being able to close the world out when sitting in front of a gaming machine. It was only when she faced up to the amount of time she had wasted and the amount of money she had spent that Jo looked to change.

Counsellors working with gamblers whose habit has spiralled out of control find it very helpful to have the gambler keep a record of the time spent gambling and also of the amount of money spent on each occasion. The gambler will be in denial about the full extent of losses initially, but gentle questioning can bring the reality home. In Jo's case, she had taken that final fateful step of stealing in order to finance her habit.

Time can be wasted as prodigally as money by a gambler. That time is stolen from some other area of a gambler's life – it may be from work or from social activities - and is most commonly taken from family. Families and friends are often quite reluctant to raise the issue of why the gambler is more often absent than present, for fear of creating tension.

Gamblers will sometimes remain in denial for lengthy periods of time, not only about the amount of money spent on gambling, but also about the harmful effects their behaviour is having on others. The catalyst sending them to seek help to solve the problem may be the committal of a crime and the subsequent fallout of unemployment and disgrace. It may also be the discovery by a family member or close friend of the unreal world that the gambler is inhabiting.

The stress caused by dishonest or isolating behaviour can act as a weight on the gambler. It is common to hear a reforming gambler state that he or she was relieved when their actions were revealed and it "all came out." The dishonesty and the secretiveness impose a heavy burden on the gambler.

Jo made the point that it is “not the real person” who is committing a crime or deceiving family and friends. This is a further indication of the ability of the poker machines to create a sense of unreality, a dissociation from the world around the gambler, which begins as a relief, but later becomes a burden.

The lack of anonymity available to those living in small communities is a major concern for gamblers seeking to find help in order to change their behaviour. They may see no choice but to do it without seeking professional assistance. Their movement “from darkness to light” is a solitary one.

**For more information:**

[www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au](http://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.

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