



MY GAMBLING STORY

Broadcast Monday 12 November at 8.30pm

Repeated Friday 16 November at 9am

89.7 PBA FM in Adelaide

Study Guide

Program 6 – Can problem gamblers reclaim their lives?

Three of the four gamblers who contributed their stories to this project were women. Each of them had a problem with poker machines. This continuous form of gambling, characterised by offering small rewards to the persistent player, has resulted in a new group of people being caught up in the gambling web.

Women are more likely to look at detail than men. This can prove positive, in that overcoming a gambling problem requires taking small steps at the beginning of what may prove to be a long journey.

It is common for a gambler to try, to have a lapse, to try again, and perhaps have a further lapse before the problem is solved. Even then, it requires vigilance on the part of the ex-gambler, in that impulses may still occur and a habit which has existed for five or ten years may not be completely eradicated in a matter of months.

Gaming Care is a program run by the Australian Hotels Association of SA, aimed at helping hospitality workers pinpoint gamblers who might be showing signs of stress associated with their gambling. With a maximum of forty machines allowed in any one South Australian hotel and given the tendency for patrons to select a particular variety of machine or even one particular machine, there is an opportunity for alert staff to identify a potential problem.

Early intervention is vital, so that the gambler does not become tangled in a web of lies, deceit, loss of trust, and financial difficulty.

The Independent Gambling Authority administers a state-wide voluntary barring scheme in relation to gaming machine gambling. Since July 2004 the IGA has also offered a Family Protection Order Scheme.

Some ways of overcoming the problem for those who choose to “go it alone” are to seek alternative activities. Physical exercise, in the form of walking, running, cycling, taking part in sport, are all ways of burning off the energy which has previously been absorbed by the gambling activity.

Some people choose to return to working life or to change jobs - to take one that is more physically and mentally challenging, thus finding an outlet for their energy. Social activities are excellent, in that they present a complete contrast to the solitary world the gambler has previously inhabited.

Above all, a gambler seeking to change needs to know and believe that the problem is solvable. There is hope. Despondency, depression, feelings of shame and guilt are

natural responses to trauma. Picking up the threads and starting again can give the former gambler an insight into their individual strength and resilience.

Above all, it is important to face the problem. It will not go away without positive action. It can be solved by the gambler alone, with the help of friends and family, with the aid of a counsellor or with any combination of the above.

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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