

## Myths and facts about problem gambling



**MYTH: You have to gamble every day to be a problem gambler.**

**FACT:** A problem gambler may gamble frequently or infrequently. If a person's gambling is causing psychological, financial, emotional, marital, legal, or other difficulties for that person and the people around him or her, then he or she has a gambling problem.

**MYTH: Problem gamblers gamble at any opportunity on any form of gambling.**

**FACT:** Most problem gamblers have a favorite form of gambling that causes them problems. Some gamblers also engage in secondary forms of gambling, but these other forms are not usually as problematic.

**MYTH: Problem gambling is not really a problem if the gambler can afford it.**

**FACT:** Problems caused by excessive gambling are not just financial. If a person's gambling is interfering with the ability to act in accordance with his or her values, then there is a problem. For example, too much time spent on gambling means less time to spend with family, friends and others. It can lead to relationship breakdown and loss of important friendships.

**MYTH: Problem gamblers are irresponsible people.**

**FACT:** Many problem gamblers hold, or have held, responsible community positions. In addition, even people with a long history of responsible behavior are vulnerable to developing a gambling problem. When a person is having a problem gambling episode, that person is unable to control the gambling and in this compromised state his or her actions look like irresponsible behavior.

**MYTH: Children are not affected by problem gambling.**

**FACT:** Surveys show that about 10 percent to 15 percent of American and Canadian youth have experienced gambling-related problems, and 1 percent to 6 percent of these individuals may satisfy diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling. Additionally, children of problem gamblers have been shown to be at a higher risk of developing health-threatening behaviors. This includes alcohol and drug use, problem gambling, eating disorders, depression and suicide.

**MYTH: Partners of problem gamblers often drive problem gamblers to gamble.**

**FACT:** Problem gamblers are skilled in finding ways to rationalize their gambling. Blaming others is one way to avoid taking responsibility for actions – including actions needed to overcome the gambling problem.

**MYTH: Financial problems are the main reason that problem gambler's relationships break down.**

**FACT:** It is true that money problems play an important part in ending relationships. However, many non-gambling partners say that lying and the associated lack of trust is the biggest cause.

**MYTH: Parents of problem gamblers are to blame for their children's behavior.**

**FACT:** Many parents of problem gamblers feel hurt and guilty about their son's or daughter's gambling behavior, but they are not to blame.

**MYTH: If a problem gambler builds up a debt, the important thing to do is to help him or her get out of the financial problem as soon as possible.**

**FACT:** Quick fix solutions are often attractive to everyone involved and may appear to be the right thing to do. However, "bailing" the gambler out of debt may actually make matters worse by enabling gambling problems to continue.

**MYTH: Problem gambling is easy to recognize.**

**FACT:** Problem gambling has been called the hidden addiction. It is very easy to hide, because it has few recognizable symptoms, unlike alcohol and drug use. Many problem gamblers themselves do not recognize that they have a gambling problem. Problem gamblers often engage in self-deception.

*Adapted from Chris Lobsinger's Problem Gambling Pages*