

Talking to Your Children About Problem Gambling in the Family



It is important for children to know that although their loved ones are struggling with a gambling problem, they have not stopped loving their family.

How to Talk to Your Child

- Reassure your children that the gambling problem is not their fault.
- Let the child know that they alone cannot influence a problem gambler to stop gambling.
- Help them understand the gambling problem by providing them information from this fact sheet and answering their questions.
- Ask and listen to each child's feelings and concerns
 - Are your children sad, mistrusting, worried, stressed, embarrassed, alone or angry?
- Listen to what they are telling you and watch for warning signs that they are more affected by the problem gambling than you think.
 - How has your child's behavior been at home?
 - Have any relationships changed?
 - How is their school and extra-curricular performance?
 - Are they having trouble sleeping?
 - Are they suffering from any physical problems?
- Speak to school counselors or teachers, to share and listen about your child's behavior.
 - Be aware that not all teachers and counselors are equally aware of how to recognize and handle the effects of problem gambling.
- Devise an action plan for your child at home and at school that may include counseling and/or self-help groups.

Suggestions for Families

When one parent is a problem gambler, the other parent or another family member is left feeling responsible for maintaining the family's well being. Following are a few suggestions of what NOT to do:

DON'T

- Participate in gambling activities with the gambler.
- Exclude the gambler from family life and activities.
- Bail out the gambler by giving them money or access to money to relieve gambling debts.
- Cover-up or deny the existence of the problem to yourself, the family, or others.
- Preach, lecture, or allow yourself to lose control of your anger.
- Make threats or issue ultimatums unless you intend to carry them out.
- Expect immediate recovery—or that all problems will be solved when the gambling stops.

Help your Child to Express their Feelings:

Sometimes children are better able to express themselves through art than they are talking about their feelings. After talking with your child, ask them to write a poem, short story or draw or paint a picture to help express feelings about themselves and/or problem gambling. After they are done, ask them to share what the story, picture, or object is about. Ask them to tell you how they felt while producing it.

Resources:

Oregon Problem Gambling Help Line :1-877-My LIMIT or

www.1877mylimit.org

Talk or chat live online with a certified gambling counselor who will listen, educate, answer questions, and refer the gambler and their family members to FREE confidential treatment services. Telephone contact available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Online chat available Monday - Friday from 9am to 9pm.

Gamblers Anonymous

A fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem. <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/>

Oregon Gamblers Anonymous Meetings

<http://www.1877mylimit.org/gameetings.asp>

Gam-Anon

The self-help organization of Gam-Anon is a life saving instrument for the spouse, family or close friends of compulsive gamblers.

<http://www.gam-anon.org/>

Adapted from materials from the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling