

Problem gambling and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, or military combat.

How does PTSD relate to problem gambling?

- PTSD among problem gamblers is estimated at 12.5 percent to 29 percent (Ledgerwood & Petry, 2006).
- Among treatment-seeking pathological gamblers, 34 percent had a high level of PTSD symptoms, as assessed by a self-report checklist. (Ledgerwood & Petry, 2006).
- A study in 1987 found a 23-percent rate of major traumatic events in a sample of pathological gamblers seeking treatment. (Taber et al., 1987).

PTSD, problem gambling and special populations

In a study of 834 elderly adults, 11 percent were identified as “at risk” gamblers with PTSD symptoms (Levens et al., 2005).

In another study of treatment-seeking problem gamblers, similar associations were found and a significant gender difference was discovered, with women reporting more childhood abuse than men (Petry & Steinberg, 2005).

In a study of military veterans entering treatment for PTSD, 17 percent met DSM-IV criteria for problem gambling (Kausch et al., 2006).

In a study of 111 veterans entering a problem gambling treatment program, 64 percent reported a history of emotional trauma; 30.5 percent, physical trauma; and 24.3 percent, sexual trauma. Most trauma had occurred in childhood (Kausch et al., 2006).

A new study, funded by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Center in Canada, is now underway to more fully determine the connection between PTSD and problem gambling. (Korn and Najavits, 2007)

Source: www.responsiblegambling.org/en/research/PTSD_PG_proposal.pdf