



Problem Gambling & Mental Health

Gambling

- The staking or risking of something of value, typically money
- Some type of game or contest occurring
- Some type of win or loss in which the outcome is always uncertain
- A **problem gambler** is characterized as someone who experiences negative consequences due to gambling behaviors.

Ties to Mental Health

In the DSM-5, gambling is classified as "Addiction and Related Disorders" with substance abuse disorders

Gambling Disorder

A **gambling disorder** is defined as a diagnosed mental health disorder that touches individuals, families, and our communities (divorce, mental health and suicide, loss of jobs and homes). It is also a public health problem due to an increase in crime, incarceration, mental health services, and financial services.

- Preoccupied with gambling
- Unable to cut back or control gambling
- Irritable or restless when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
- Risks more money to reach desired level of excitement
- Gambles to escape problems or depressed mood
- "Chases" losses
- Lies to family and others about gambling
- Risks or loses relationships or jobs because of gambling
- Relies on others for financial needs caused by gambling

5%

5% of adults with mental illness also have a gambling problem

95% of problem gamblers have a psychiatric disorder

95%

Data adapted from "What is Problem Gambling and How Does it Relate to Mental Health?", a webinar originally held on 5/3/2021. Presented by Ken Wolfson, CPRS, CCAR, RPS and Heather Eshleman, M.P.H..



NAMI Maryland can help. Visit www.namimd.org or call 410-884-8691 for more information



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Safe Gambling Tips

- Encourage seniors (and all adults) to set limits on spending.
- Gamble for fun and entertainment, not to make money.
- Balance gambling with other leisure activities.
- If gambling behaviors worry you, cut back.
- Have a plan of what to do in lose or win situations.
- Do not borrow money or make trips to the ATM machines.
- Do not spend money that is for basic needs such as food, housing, etc.

Starting the Conversation

- Choose the right time. Do not have the conversation after a big win or loss.
- Let the person know you are concerned for them in a caring manner.
- Be specific about the behaviors you have seen.
- Really listen non-judgmentally to what the person is saying.
- Let them know you are willing to help - getting them to support and counseling.

Resources

Helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER

Website: www.helpmygamblingproblem.com

Maryland Coalition of Families: Support for family members who have a loved one who is a problem gambler, Nancy Quidas, 410-730-8267 or info@mdcoalition.org

Voluntary Exclusion Program: Jasmine Countess, jasmine.countess@Maryland.gov or 410-230-8798

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