



COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS experience the uncontrollable urge to continue gambling even though it causes **financial, relationship, or work problems**. Gambling **takes over all aspects** of their lives, sometimes leading them to do whatever it takes to keep gambling.

PROBLEM GAMBLERS are similar to compulsive gamblers, but they're **not completely out of control**. Individuals have a gambling problem once gambling **starts to interfere with work, relationships, or finances**.



What Contributes to Compulsive Gambling?

Brain Chemistry

The brains of compulsive gamblers are similar to those of drug addicts in that they need more intense stimulation.

Family Influence

The majority of compulsive gamblers have at least one relative with a gambling problem.

Mental Health Issues

Many compulsive gamblers have pre-existing mental health conditions, including mood, anxiety, and personality disorders.

Substance Abuse Issues

About half of compulsive gamblers also have a problem with alcohol or drugs.



What if I am a Compulsive Gambler?

It's never too late to get help!

♣ Gamblers Anonymous (GA) ♣

A 12-step program with chapters across the United States.

♦ Medication ♦

Anti-anxiety medications and anti-depressants have proven effective for some.

♠ Therapy ♠

Common types of therapy include cognitive, psychodynamic, and family therapy.

♥ Inpatient Recovery Centers ♥

These offer a combination of group and one-on-one therapies.

Symptoms

Compulsive or Problem Gambling usually starts with **social gambling**. More **frequent gambling** and **stressors** can turn social gambling into a **larger problem**. Signs of Problem or Compulsive Gambling include:

- ♥ Unsuccessfully trying to cut back or quit.
- ♥ A preoccupation with gambling.
- ♥ Experiencing a thrill from large gambling risks.
- ♥ Taking greater gambling risks.
- ♥ Hiding or lying about gambling behavior.
- ♥ Borrowing or stealing money to gamble.
- ♥ Using gambling as a way to escape from problems.
- ♥ Experiencing guilt after gambling.

Phases of Gambling

♦ WINNING ♦

Minimal consequences, big wins.

♣ LOSING aka "THE CHASE" ♣

Can't stop gambling, home and work life are affected.

♥ DESPERATION ♥

Funds gambling with illegal/immoral acts, withdraws from family/friends.

♠ HELPLESSNESS ♠

Suicidal thoughts and attempts, depression, emotional breakdown.



What if I Know a Compulsive Gambler?

- ♣ Don't expect immediate recovery.
- ♣ Stay calm when talking about the gambling behavior and its consequences.
- ♣ Refrain from lecturing or nagging.
- ♣ Seek help from support groups and encourage him/her to do the same.
- ♣ Ask to take over the finances, if appropriate.



DON'T GAMBLE YOUR LIFE AWAY!

