

FAMILY ISSUES

Problem gambling adversely affects the family of the gambler in a number of ways because of the problem gambler's altered behavior, dishonesty and manipulation.

What Can Be Lost or Damaged?

- **Trust** is often the first casualty in the family of the problem gambler. Change in the behavior of the family member is often attributed to many other possible problems before gambling is identified as the problem.
- **Respect** for the problem gambler is generally lost once this problem has been identified. "Why can't you just stop so the problem will go away?" "You can fix this!" When the gambler can't, respect for them is lost.
- **Relationships** are built on trust and respect. Without these, family relationships will be weakened or destroyed.
- **Employment** can be affected in two ways. The gambler will often neglect responsibilities at work and/or develop an attendance problem as they begin to have less control over their need to gamble. In the worst situation, the gambler will steal from their employer in order to continue their gambling. Any of this can lead to loss of employment and prosecution.
- **Financial** security for the family is often lost as the gambler seeks more and more resources with which to gamble. All of the family's financial resources may be liquidated without their knowledge. Savings, home equity, retirement accounts, children's savings, etc., may all be lost or damaged.
- **Reputations** are difficult to protect as the gambling problem affects more and more aspects of the gambler's life and become known by individuals outside of the family.



What Can Result?

- **Stress** is a certain occurrence for all of the family members of the gambler.
- **Isolation** between the gambler and their family generally occurs as their behavior changes.
- **Neglect** of dependents occurs as the gambler loses more and more control of their behavior.
- **Distrust** occurs between other family members as the extent of the problem and the extent of financial loss and the ramifications of this become known.
- **Resentment/Anger** also follows as the gambler loses control and the scope of the problem becomes known.
- **Domestic Violence** often results in a family affected by a member with an addiction problem. The family of a problem gambler can be impacted just as easily as that of someone with an alcohol or drug addiction. The problem gambler may be the victim or perpetrator.
- **Co-occurring Disorders** such as depression, substance abuse, compulsive behaviors and sexual issues often occur as a result of or along with the gambling problem.

Other Family Issues

Children of problem gamblers tend to have a higher probability of developing a gambling problem than those with parents who do not gamble. This follows the pattern as experienced by children of those affected by substance and domestic violence.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call:

**The Council on Compulsive Gambling of PA Helpline at
1-800-GAMBLER or 1-800-848-1880**

Don't wait for the problem to get worse!

