

# The DRUG QUIZ SHOW

## Gambling

### “NOT just a game of Chance”

Today’s teens are the first in American history to live at a time when gambling is both **1)** legal in most states, and **2)** commonly approved by the general public. As a result, gambling has become BIG business. Ads for lottery tickets, casinos, etc. can be found everywhere. They make gambling look exciting, as if **YOU** really have a good chance of winning.



According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, about 85% of adults have gambled at one time or another. The good news is that most of them are able to do so responsibly. The bad news is that about 2% to 3% become “**problem gamblers.**” (That means they keep gambling despite suffering negative consequences.) Another 1% develops even more serious troubles. They are known as “**pathological gamblers.**”



But don’t be fooled by these small numbers. Even though the percentages are low, they each represent **MILLIONS** of people!



## What exactly is GAMBLING?

It seems like kids have always gambled, whether at marbles or flipping baseball cards. And the older they get, the higher the stakes.

Youngsters also often pressure each other to do things they shouldn't, like pull a classmate's ponytail or steal something from a store.

Sometimes kids dare each other to do things that can be scary emotionally (like trying out for the class play) or physically (like drag racing their cars). (To learn about good ways of dealing with "Peer Pressure," check out the Decision-Making Learning Center.)

But the kind of gambling we're talking about here specifically involves taking part in any game or activity in which you risk money or a valuable object in the hope of winning more money or something of even greater value.

Gambling activities can be broken down into several different categories, but the main ones teens are attracted to are **games of luck** and **games of skill**.



**Games of luck** include bingo, scratch-off lottery tickets, and casino slot machines. Winning at these games totally depends on luck. Practice does NOT increase a person's chances of winning.

**Games of skill**, on the other hand, require a certain level of expertise. Players can, to some degree, depending on their skill level, influence the outcome of the game. Sports (think soccer, golf, pool, etc.), chess, some board games, fantasy games, and some card games are examples of games of skill.





## Can Kids Gamble?

In most states, organized gambling is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 (21 in most casinos). And even though systems are in place to verify their ages, youngsters are sometimes able to get around them. If younger teens decide to gamble over the Internet, well, often there is no one (other than their own consciences) to stop them. In addition, kids should know that, because gambling over the Internet is less well regulated, payout rates are not always as high as advertised. On some sites, people can actually win, but receive no \$ at all !!



For the most part, teens choose to gamble informally with friends. Similar to adults, about 85% do so occasionally ... just for fun.

**But the thing most teens (and their parents!) don't understand is that gambling isn't always a "harmless recreational activity."** It's easy to get sucked in by the excitement of the game. For some, it actually has the potential to cause serious, lifelong problems.

**Fact!**

Compared to adults, kids are 2 to 3 times more likely to develop a gambling addiction. And, just like with the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, the younger they start gambling on their own, the more likely it is to become a major problem in their lives.



## Why in the world would kids want to gamble?

For **LOTS** of reasons, including:

- To win money
  - For entertainment, fun, enjoyment
  - For excitement and adventure
  - For relaxation
- To try to temporarily forget their troubles or escape their problems (such as a bad home life)
  - Because of peer pressure
  - Because their parents gamble
  - To get attention
  - To feel important
  - To feel alive

Did you notice that many of these are the same reasons teens often start using alcohol and other drugs?



## Can you really win a lot of money gambling?

Sometimes. But the truth is, the probability of scoring big is definitely against you. The odds of winning the state lottery, for example, are approximately fourteen million to one, while the odds of being struck by lightning are only 5000 to 1. **This means you've got a much better chance of being zapped by lightning than of actually winning the lottery!**

Not very good odds, huh? Sounds like I could probably find dozens of better ways to spend my money.



## When they gamble, what do teens usually bet on?

### All sorts of things, such as:

- Physical feats (Bet you can't lift that desk off the floor!)
- Card games such as poker
- Sports (pool, darts, basketball)
- Bingo
- Dice games
- Carnival games
- Flipping coins
- Lottery games (including scratch-off tickets)
- Video Lottery Terminals (VLT's)
- Gambling web sites
- Casino games (slot machines, roulette, Keno)
- Horse racing at racetracks
- Fantasy games

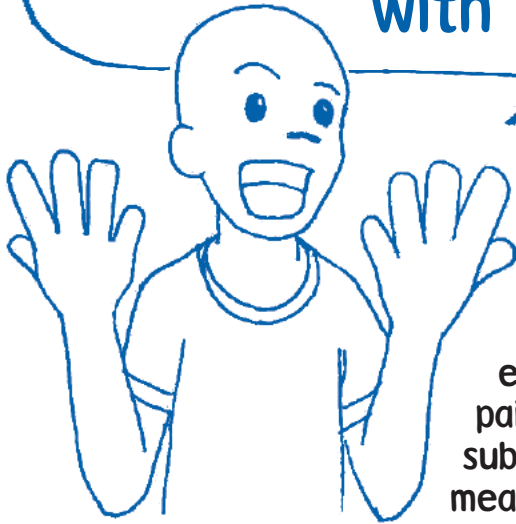


## DID YOU KNOW THAT...



- ◆ Boys tend to gamble more than girls?
- ◆ Girls tend to play instant lotteries, card games, and bingo?
- ◆ Boys generally prefer card games, sports, and other games of skill?
- ◆ Boys are more likely to experience gambling problems than girls?
- ◆ In order to get more money to bet, teenagers that gamble are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior and criminal activities?

## So... what can happen to a person with a gambling problem?



### They can develop **PHYSICAL HEALTH issues**

like sleeping disorders, poor eating habits, and physical pain. Some also develop substance abuse issues (that means problems associated with the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs).



They can develop **MENTAL HEALTH issues** such as anxiety, stress, depression, mood swings, unexplained anger, loneliness, and, in severe cases, thoughts of suicide.

They can develop **INTERPERSONAL problems** with people they care about because the problem gambler always puts gambling first ... before family and friends.



They can develop **FINANCIAL problems** such as spending more money than planned, borrowing or stealing money, or not paying back loans.

They can develop **ACADEMIC problems** including excessive absences and failing grades. They also often seem to lose interest in subjects, hobbies, or clubs they used to enjoy.



# note:

Gambling problems can happen to anyone — **INCLUDING TEENS** — of any race, sex, religion, economic background, nationality, academic ability, social status, or family dynamic. **NO ONE is immune!**

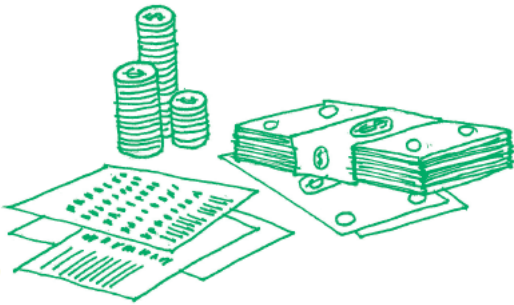


Wow! That sounds serious.  
How can I tell if someone  
has a gambling problem?

That's a great question,  
but the answer is not so easy.

Gambling is often called an **"invisible disease"** because you can't tell if people have a problem just by looking at them or by doing a simple laboratory test. Detection can also be tricky because gamblers typically go to great lengths to hide the extent of their activities.

You might become suspicious, however ...



- If person carries around a lot of money or shows off unexplained wealth;
- If person starts selling personal belongings to pay for gambling activities; or
- If you find signs of gambling (betting slips, lottery tickets, etc.) that the person may have been trying to hide.

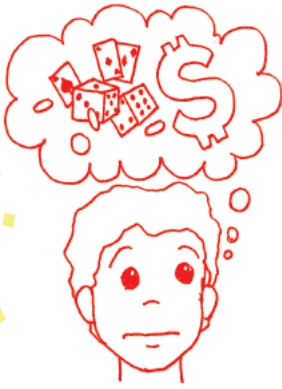
**PROFESSIONALS** use the following  
widely accepted definition that lists  
ten specific standards or tests.



It basically says that people can be considered ...

- 1) **"Problem Gamblers"** if two to four of the criteria apply to them, or
- 2) **"Pathological Gamblers"** if five or more of the criteria describe them. Pathological gambling is considered an impulse control disorder. Also a chronic and progressive mental illness. (That means that without help, the situation will probably get even worse.)

Here are the ten characteristics professionals look for:



- **Preoccupation.** Person spends a LOT of time thinking about gambling and about ways of getting money for gambling.
- **Tolerance.** As with drug tolerance, person needs to bet more frequently or to bet larger and larger amounts of money in order to experience the same “rush” or feelings of excitement.
- **Loss of Control.** Person repeatedly fails at trying to control or stop gambling.

- **Withdrawal.** Person becomes restless or irritable (that’s a fancy way of saying cranky and moody) when trying to cut back or stop gambling.
- **Escape.** Person uses gambling as a way to escape problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, anxiety, or depression.
- **Chasing.** Person tries to win back gambling losses by gambling even more.
- **Lying.** Person lies to try to hide the extent of his or her gambling.
- **Illegal Acts.** Person breaks the law (steals, writes bad checks, etc.) to get more money for gambling.
- **Risked Significant Relationship.** Person continues to gamble despite risking or actually losing a significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity.
- **Bailout.** Person relies on others to solve their gambling related \$ problems.



Adapted from the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)



What kind of people can become problem gamblers?

Anyone who takes a chance or places a bet. That's why it's so important for people who decide to gamble to be sure they do so responsibly.

What exactly does "RESPONSIBLY" mean?

### People who gamble "responsibly" do NOT...

- Start when they are young
- Break any family, school, state, or federal rules
- Bet \$ they don't have...or \$ they can't afford to lose
- Let gambling interfere with their other responsibilities (school, job, chores, etc.)
- Let gambling get out of control and take over their lives



While ANYONE might develop a gambling problem, who is MOST at risk?

- Those with low self-esteem
- Those with poor coping skills (that means they find it hard to overcome problems or difficulties)
- Those who are impulsive (that means they lack self-control and tend to act suddenly, without first thinking things through)
- Those with little or no parental supervision
- Those whose parents approve of gambling
- Those whose parents sometimes gamble themselves
- Males
- Risk takers
- Those who start gambling when very young

Generally speaking, there are 4 phases of compulsive gambling.

### Phase 1 is the “WINNING PHASE”



During this phase, gamblers often experience a “big win” that they interpret as proof of how smart or lucky they are. This increases their self-esteem and causes them to dismiss losses as merely “bad luck.” They tend to seek out other gambling action, brag about their winnings, and have an unreasonable amount of optimism (expectation of additional “big wins” in the future).

Tell me more about compulsive gambling.



### Phase 2 is the “LOSING PHASE”



In this phase, gamblers “chase their losses” and try to win back \$\$ they have lost. They often borrow more and avoid those who lend it to them. As their losses increase, their self-esteem decreases. Their home, school, and work lives are affected. Lying, absenteeism, family disputes, and personality changes are common during this phase.

### Phase 3 is the “DESPERATION PHASE”



During this phase, gamblers are completely out of control and may see their lives as spiraling downward. They may gamble away money from bailouts given to help them pay off debts. Some gamblers turn to illegal activities to support their addiction. Many feel a sense of panic that the gambling action will end. All believe that a winning streak will solve all their problems. As consequences of gambling start to catch up with them, they may fail in school, lose their jobs, break up with boyfriends/girlfriends, or get divorced if they are married. They could even get arrested.

### Phase 4 is the “HOPELESS PHASE”

In the hopeless phase, problem gamblers hit “rock bottom.” They don’t believe anyone cares about them or that help is even possible. They don’t even care if they live or die. Many try to numb the pain by abusing drugs and alcohol. Others consider ... or actually attempt ... suicide.



Yikes! I think my friend may have a gambling problem. What can I do to help?

Luckily, LOTS of things, such as:

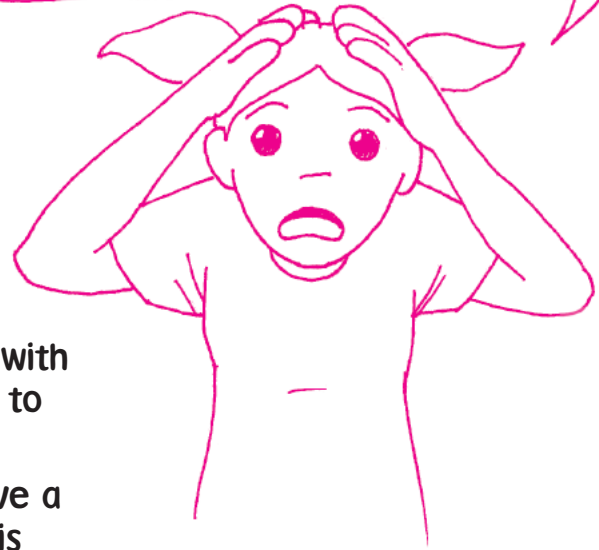
- ▶ **Educate yourself. Learn all you can about problem gambling.** Understand for example, that, like those with alcohol and other drug addictions, people with gambling problems are more likely to improve if they ...



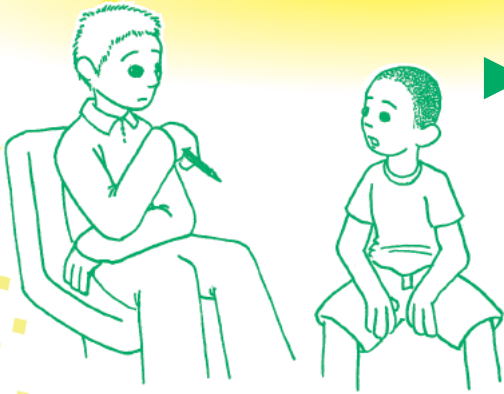
- 1) Face the truth and admit they have a problem (This isn't easy as denial is common among people with this disorder.)
- 2) Completely stop the behavior (in this case, the gambling)
- 3) Become open and honest with their family and friends (Recovery is easier when loved ones know the truth and are supportive.)
- 4) Take advantage of treatment options such as individual counseling, family therapy, and/or participation in self-help groups.

- ▶ **Tell the person you care about them and encourage them to talk to a trusted parent, teacher, or counselor.** (If they refuse, consider showing you care by telling a trusted adult yourself.) When talking about the situation, use "I" statements to express your feelings. (See the Conflict Resolution Learning Center for information on how to do this.) Share your concern, but don't judge the person.

- ▶ **Never cover up or try to make things look better by making excuses or lending your friend money.** In order to recover, it's helpful for gamblers to experience the full consequences of their behavior (including the fact that they may owe a lot of people a lot of money).



## More Ways to Help....



▶ Recognize yet another similarity between pathological gambling and other addictions - in most cases, people need outside help in order to recover. As such, be a good friend and refer the person you're concerned about to a trusted adult such as a school counselor or to a helpful organization or web site.

- New York State Addiction Services HOPEline  
1-877-8-HOPE-NY (That's 1-877-846-7369.)
- New York Council on Problem Gambling  
1-518-427-1622 or [www.nyproblemgambling.org](http://www.nyproblemgambling.org)
- Gamblers Anonymous  
213-386-8789 or [www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org).

Gamblers Anonymous (GA) is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), a cost-free, self-help group for alcoholics.



▶ Refer family members & close friends of both problem & pathological gamblers to Gam-Anon 718-352-1671 or [www.gam-anon.org](http://www.gam-anon.org). Gam-Anon is modeled after Al-Anon, a peer support group for families and friends of alcoholics.



▶ Take heart knowing that ...

- ★ People with gambling issues CAN get better;
- ★ It's never too late to ask for help; and
- ★ It's okay to continue your friendship if you wish. Just remember to suggest fun things to do together that don't involve gambling.

▶ Last but by no means least, take care of yourself (this means making sure **YOU** have someone to talk to) as helping a friend with this kind of problem can be VERY stressful indeed.





# Acknowledgements

The Drug Quiz Show gratefully acknowledges  
The Howard L. Green Foundation, Inc.  
for making possible the creation of this Learning Center.

Special thanks also go to the following individuals for their  
dedication, expertise and assistance:

- Concept:** Mattie Bicknell, Prevention Educator
- Content:** Nicole M. B. Rood, CPP-G  
Community Programs Coordinator  
Seaway Valley Prevention Council
- Susan Meidenbauer, Executive Director  
The Drug Quiz Show
- Kristen N. Stanton, M.S., C.A.S., Assistant Director  
The Drug Quiz Show
- Linda Shapess, Teacher Trainer  
New York Health Central  
Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES
- Larry Sharps, Program Coordinator  
Youth Gambling Prevention Initiative  
Prevention Network | OCAA
- Nick Lamson, Lafayette Central School District  
The Drug Quiz Show Teen Advisory Caouncil Member
- Nicholas Mariani, Tully Central School District  
The Drug Quiz Show Teen Advisory Council Member
- Leah Kuppermann, Fayetteville, NY
- Elana Kuppermann, Fayetteville, NY
- Emily Meidenbauer, Manlius, NY
- Debrah Shulman, Ph.D., Prevention Educator  
President of the Drug Quiz Show
- Consultant:** Michelle Hadden, LMSW, CPP-G  
Prevention Specialist / Special Projects Manager  
New York Council on Problem Gambling
- Artist:** Anthony Washington, Syracuse, NY
- Graphic Design:** David VanWie

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