

Q. What is 'Problem' gambling and how does it differ from 'Compulsive' or 'Disordered' gambling?

A. "Problem Gambling" is a term used to describe gambling behavior, which causes disruption in any important life function, whether psychological, physical, social or vocational. **Disordered Gambling** as recently categorized by DSM-5, is a progressive addiction characterized by increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop gambling, "chasing" losses, and loss of control by continuing negative gambling behavior, regardless of the disruption and serious consequences of such behavior.

Q. How can Disordered Gambling become a Public Health issue?

A. Persons experiencing gambling-related problems tend to have higher rates of poor to fair general health because they often engage in alcohol, smoking and substance use or abuse while gambling. They also may experience anxiety and depression. Disordered gambling has the highest attempted suicide rate among those identified at a rate of approximately 17% - 24%.

Q. Is there a link between disordered gambling and substance type addictions like alcohol or drugs?

A. Yes. Approximately 50 percent of problem gamblers were found to also have drug or alcohol problems, while studies of people in treatment for substance abuse have found approximately 30 percent also having a gambling problem. People may have both addictions co-occurring, or can switch from one addiction to another. Additionally, one addiction can be a trigger back to another.

Q. What is the connection between Substance Use Disorder and Disordered Gambling from a Public Health perspective?

A. Substance use affects the body and mind of the user. For those who take drugs, it can cause abnormal vital signs, diseases from needle sharing, frequent hangovers, and more frequent illness. For those who consume alcohol excessively, almost every system in the body can be negatively impacted leading to cirrhosis of the liver, heart attacks, brain damage, and diabetes. Additionally, whether it be alcohol or drugs, they can each be linked to excessive risk taking, drunk or impaired driving, and domestic violence stemming from the excessive consumption.

Q. How are anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues tied in with the disordered gambler?

A. Various studies have found high rates of alcoholism, depression, mood disorders, and other conditions in disordered gamblers, leading some to conclude that disordered gambling is both a mental health and public health issue. A depressed gambler's mood is impacted. He or she gets excited with a win and feels disappointed with a loss. Prolonged losing can cause depression leading to increased irritability, unwanted thoughts and frustrations, or psychiatric disorders. Similarly, gambling can be an escape mechanism for those who are anxious; however, anxiety impacts the body by causing stress (leading to increased risk of stroke, heart disease, or obesity), heart palpitations, or insomnia.

Q. Can a person with a gambling problem be helped?

A. Yes. Problem or Disordered Gambling is a treatable illness. In New Jersey, a wide range of programs exist, ranging from the 12 step Gamblers Anonymous to private therapists and an inpatient treatment center. Support, treatment, and hope are available for the problem gambler and their family members or friends by calling **1-800-GAMBLER**. You can also visit us on the web at www.800gambler.org. There you will find information, resources, or a live chat feature. There is no one way or right way of recovery; it is recommended that the problem or disordered gambler seek many roads and paths to ensure they do not gamble again.