

# BIG MONEY, BIG PROBLEMS

## Risks and Reasons

What are some of the risks involved in gambling? Here's a few:

- Damaged relationships
- Loss of income
- Loss of friends
- Arrests for crimes related to gambling
- Feelings of isolation
- Failing in school
- Being kicked off your team
- Suicidal thoughts

So, with so much at stake, why do teens gamble anyway?

- To escape problems
- To overcome loneliness or boredom
- To get easy money
- To impress others
- To be the center of attention
- To make friends

Many kids get hooked when they initially have success with gambling, but remember, the earlier you start, the worse it can get. And the consequences WILL catch up to you!



## OUT OF CONTROL

### Getting Help

If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be having gambling related problems, help is available. First, try and tell a trusted adult, a parent or teacher. Don't be afraid to admit that you have a problem. You can also get help at one of the following resources:

- Gamblers Anonymous (12 step self-help group):  
[www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)
- Gam-Anon, International Service Office (A 12-step self-help group for family members of problem gamblers):  
[www.gam-anon.org](http://www.gam-anon.org)
- National Council on Problem Gambling:  
[www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org)

# YOUTH GAMBLING



STAY SAFE SERIES

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## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?



## GAMBLING

### So What is it Anyway?

You and your friends are playing a game of basketball. Everyone is having a blast when Joe says, "Let's make things interesting". He suggests that everyone put up \$5.00 and the winning team wins the pot. Seems harmless enough, so you decide to join in. It's just a friendly wager. It's not really gambling, is it?

The answer is YES! Gambling is when someone takes a risk with something of value (usually money) on an event or activity in which the outcome is uncertain. The primary intent of gambling is to win additional money and/or items. Gambling problems almost always start with smaller risks, like betting on a friendly game of basketball, or even playing on online poker sites. No matter how small the risk, it's still a risk, and it's still gambling.

## PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING

### Can't Fight the Urge

According to the American Psychiatric Association, 10 to 15 percent of young people surveyed have significant gambling problems, and 6 percent of teens who have tried gambling have already become pathological gamblers.

What is Pathological Gambling? Pathological Gambling is when someone is unable to resist the urge, or impulse to gamble. This usually leads to severe personal, social and financial consequences. If you have any of these symptoms, you may be a pathological gambler:

- Stealing to get money to gamble
- Gambling to escape problems, sadness or anxiety
- Gambling to try to win back money lost
- Lying about the amount of time or money spent gambling
- Trying unsuccessfully to quit gambling
- Borrowing money to gamble or to pay back debts from gambling
- A lot of your time is spent thinking about gambling



## DISTORTED THINKING

### I Don't Have a Problem

Most of the time, teens with gambling problems have convinced themselves that gambling isn't a problem for them. They reason with themselves with thoughts that include:

- Gambling is an easy way to earn money
- I'm pretty smart, and I have a system to beat the odds
- My gambling is under control
- Yeah, I lost a few bucks, but I can win it back
- The more I gamble the better chance I have to win
- Borrowing to gamble is okay, as long as I pay it back



## GAMBLING, YOUR FRIENDS AND YOU

### Know the Signs

You're not sure, but you think one of your friends has a problem with gambling. Here are a few signs to look out for to determine if your friend has a problem:

- Unexplained absences from school and drop in grades
- Asking to borrow money
- Owns gambling materials, such as dice or playing cards
- Unexplained debt
- Stealing from family or friends
- Using lunch money to gamble instead of buying food
- Lies to people about gambling
- Displays large amounts of cash
- Gambles to escape worries, frustrations or disappointments

## DEAL ME IN!

### Stephen's Story

Stephen was a normal 15 year old kid. He loved playing video games, hanging out with his friends and was a pretty good soccer player. The summer of his sophomore year in high school, Stephen went to his friend John's house to play a new video game that John received for his birthday. A few of his other friends were already there when he arrived. After a while of competing with each other, John suggested that they each put up five dollars, and the one with the highest score wins the pot. They all decided that would be fun. After hours of playing, Stephen was the winner. The high he got from winning was awesome!

During his junior year, he started betting on other stuff. He and his friends would hang out and play poker, bet on video games and even games of darts. Sometimes he'd win, and sometimes he'd lose. He often begged his parents for money to gamble, telling them it was for something else. Once, he even stole some money from his Mom's purse.

By the time he reached his senior year in High School, Stephen's gambling problem was out of control. He was now the star player on his soccer team, and they were very good. He bet one of his friends from another school that they would win their upcoming game. Somehow, the principal found out about their "friendly wager" and he was kicked off the soccer team and suspended from school.

Ten years later, at the age of 28, and \$75,000 in debt from gambling, Stephen took his own life.

