

ARE YOU A GAMBLER—HOLIC?

*You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em,
Know when to walk away, know when to run...Kenny Rogers*

WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ Gambling addiction is an urge to gamble despite harmful negative consequences
- ❖ Gambling addiction/compulsive gambling is recognized as an impulse control disorder
- ❖ Problem gambling is any type of gambling that interferes with or disrupts one's life
- ❖ There are estimated to be more than 15 million people who are problem gamblers with more than 3 million being compulsive gamblers
- ❖ Gambling is a problem when it disrupts your life to the point where more and more, you think about it, make bigger bets, chase losses, and lie and sneak to place a bet
- ❖ Gambling addicts often go through a series of stages including:
 - a. *Winning phase* where a win results in more frequent gambling, higher bets and increased self esteem
 - b. *Losing phase* where the thinking is only about gambling. Personality changes occur with lying, borrowing, and stealing. The gambling cannot be controlled and interpersonal relationships break down
 - c. *Desperation phase* where the gambler looks to be bailed out by anybody, legal or illegal, because they have no money. They believe that a big win will fix everything. Depression and suicidal thoughts may occur
 - d. *Hopeless phase* where major consequences occur including divorce, arrests, substance abuse and suicide. All hopes about winning are given up
- ❖ Compulsive gamblers cannot control the impulse to gamble even when they know the harmful consequences; it is all they can think of and want to do
- ❖ Gamblers stop caring about themselves and others, they gamble when happy or depressed, and they even gamble when they know they will lose
- ❖ People turn to gambling because of low self esteem, feeling unimportant, stress, depression, loneliness, boredom, and anxiety
- ❖ People often rationalize their gambling with the following excuses: to provide excitement and get a "rush", to be with people and be more social, to escape from problems, to solve financial problems with a big win, to numb other problems, and to escape boredom
- ❖ Gambling addiction is often called the "hidden illness" as there are no obvious physical or emotional signs, it is denied or minimized, and it is often concealed by the gambler
- ❖ Sports, office pools, lotteries, poker, blackjack, slot machines, and roulette are the some of the most common activities in which people bet
- ❖ Online and internet gambling, especially among college students, is on the rise because its easy, people spend a great deal of time on the internet, and it is secretive

WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Recognize that you have a problem with gambling and that winning big is a fantasy
- ❖ If you have an urge to gamble, call someone to stop you
- ❖ Think about the consequences to yourself, to your job, and to your family
- ❖ Let someone else manage your money, stay out of casinos, and fill your free time
- ❖ Exercise, eat and sleep well, and find your passion in another activity
- ❖ Call the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling at 888-ADMIT-IT
- ❖ Attend meetings of Gamblers Anonymous which is a 12-step recovery program
- ❖ Seek professional help to change gambling behaviors and thought patterns

WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com

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