

## Gambling

Compulsive gambling has been described as “pure addiction” because it does not involve substances such as drugs or alcohol (although these are often indirectly associated with gambling addiction). This fact does not make it any less dangerous, as without the side effects of substances to slow the person down, the active addict can continue until he or she runs out of cash or credit or the race meeting ends or the casino closes.

If he or she is gambling compulsively online, the credit will run out long before the opportunities to lose are withdrawn. For the wealthy online gambler, in the privacy of their home or on their mobile phone, only the onset of exhaustion will finally intervene. As well as the potentially life-destroying external and financial consequences of gambling addiction, the emotional turmoil resulting from this compulsive behaviour can be devastating, and the emotional-spiritual internal void which the behaviour attempts to fill is even more painful to live with.

Yet in his fantasy world a gambler may see himself as a glamorous James Bond character, devil-may-care, easy-come, easy-go, feigning indifference to losses and wins. Typically, the compulsive gambler will justify their financially destructive behaviour to themselves or to their critics with sentiments such as “It’s only money!” or “I’ll win it back next time”. Typically they may absolve themselves with the fact that they work hard, do not have a problem with drink, drugs or food, do not smoke, keep fit, are not promiscuous - as if these virtues in other areas were legitimate justifications for their financial and behavioural recklessness when gambling.

Unlike the recreational gambler who joins in the sweepstake on the Grand National, tries to pick the Derby Winner, goes to the casino occasionally, or plays the fruit

machine in the pub or the club, the compulsive gambler desperately seeks to fulfil themselves with the excitement of gambling, and chasing the illusion of a quick reward or ‘easy money’. In reality, there is nothing easy about money made from gambling. As folklore puts it: “A bookmaker’s money is only lent.”

For the compulsive gambler in denial, the activity of gambling is more important than winning. Money has no reality while the game is in play. Only later do losses become real. (Casinos use chips to reinforce the unreality. Credit cards by their nature allow a person to play now, pay later.) The repeated experience of the compulsive gambler is of “almost winning”. For the compulsive gambler, every “if” is an indulgence.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as “Repeating the same experiment and expecting a different result.” Compulsive gamblers do this on a regular basis because they delude themselves. While they will deny it vehemently, they care about the temporary buzz which gambling creates in them more than they care about themselves or their children, their families or their friends, their colleagues or their careers.

Compulsive gambling is often born of the pain of childhood loss, neglect and fear and goes on to cause exactly the same, destroying lives as thoroughly as any other addiction. Often, the consequences are extremely far-reaching before the idea of seeking help is able to be entertained. Early intervention is crucial to avoid complete ruin.

Given the necessary changes in behaviour, with support and guidance, even the most troubled gamblers can turn their lives around.

**If you think you suffering from gambling problems then give us a call, we can help**

**Call 020 7323 4970**

[www.charterharleystreet.com](http://www.charterharleystreet.com)