

# Gambling Addiction

Gambling covers a range of activities from betting on horses and playing poker machines, to reckless stock market transactions.

Some people find they can gamble occasionally, without ever suffering any negative outcomes, however gambling becomes a problem when a person continues to bet or gamble regardless of the mounting negative consequences in their life. These consequences might include relationship or family breakdown, bankruptcy, criminal activity, potential imprisonment, and serious mood and anxiety difficulties. Despite the risks and consequences, the gambler often regards their loss as bad luck or the result of poor advice. This denial forms the basis of larger risk-taking behavior and further losses.

Compulsive gambling is characterised as a disorder of impulse control, and the disruption to their lives understandably leads the gambler to experience stress, anxiety and depression, with feelings of despair and hopelessness.

## Symptoms of a Gambling Addiction

- Preoccupation with gambling activities
- Reliving past gambling experiences
- Planning for the next venture
- Planning to quit or cut down gambling episodes
- Imagining that next time will be the big one
- Planning ways to get money for gambling
- Justifying why it is okay to gamble
- Feeling remorse for gambling behaviour
- Imagining new systems or methods
- Thinking of all the "if onlys"
- Making excuses for the losses
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
- Priority given to gambling over family or work commitments
- Loss of recreational interests
- Loss of friendships
- Needing to gamble with increasing amounts of money
- Telling lies to family members
- Breakdown of family relationships
- Financial problems
- Taking excessive risks in business situations
- Arrogance and anger
- Gambling as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving depression, anxiety or agitation
- Legal problems
- Taking excessive risks with personal safety situations
- Reduced ability to function in the social or work setting
- Relationship difficulties or conflict
- Feeling that the world is against you
- Feelings of low self-esteem

## **South Pacific Private's approach to treating gambling addiction**

There are many factors that fuel an addict, so at South Pacific Private we tailor a treatment plan based on an individual assessment of your needs.

During this assessment, our aim is to understand how your compulsive gambling behavior has been formed, by exploring your family history of coping, genetic factors, personality and underlying emotions that may interact to produce a compulsion-prone individual. In some cases, people have used gambling as a means of coping with difficult emotions. We also look at the brain's reward system in understanding compulsive gambling.

## **Benefits of our treatment programs**

Each of our programs is designed to help you learn how to:

- explore your issues around gambling and understand why you feel the way you do
- identify the behaviours and personal beliefs that are complicating your life
- communicate better and improve the important relationships in your life
- gain perspective on family dynamics
- cope better with anxiety or distress
- practice mindfulness: the self-awareness of your thoughts, feelings and physical wellbeing
- be better at understanding your thought processes, to recognise and correct distortions in your thinking and to change debilitating personal beliefs

## **Key things to remember**

- Recovery from a gambling addiction is more likely to be successful when treatment takes into account the whole person – their physical and emotional wellbeing as well as the wider circumstances of their life, routines and relationships
- A safe, supportive environment, away from life's pressures, will give you the best chance of recovery

## **For treatment options, other resources, or a complimentary assessment**

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