Gambling Disorder

A gambling disorder is defined as a diagnosed mental health disorder that touches individuals, families, and our communities (divorce, mental health and suicide, loss of jobs and homes). It is also a public health problem due to an increase in crime, incarceration, mental health services, and financial services.

- Preoccupied with gambling
- Unable to cut back or control gambling
- Irritable or restless when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
- Risks more money to reach desired level of excitement
- Gambles to escape problems or depressed mood
- "Chases" losses
- Lies to family and others about gambling
- Risks or loses relationships or jobs because of gambling
- Relies on others for financial needs caused by gambling

Ties to Mental Health

In the DSM-5, gambling is classified as "Addiction and Related Disorders" with substance abuse disorders.

- 5% of adults with mental illness also have a gambling problem
- 95% of problem gamblers have a psychiatric disorder

Gambling

- The staking or risking of something of value, typically money
- Some type of game or contest occurring
- Some type of win or loss in which the outcome is always uncertain
- A problem gambler is characterized as someone who experiences negative consequences due to gambling behaviors.

Data adapted from "What is Problem Gambling and How Does it Relate to Mental Health?", a webinar originally held on 5/3/2021. Presented by Ken Wolfson, CPRS, CCAR, RPS and Heather Eshleman, M.P.H.
Encourage seniors (and all adults) to set limits on spending.
Gamble for fun and entertainment, not to make money.
Balance gambling with other leisure activities.
If gambling behaviors worry you, cut back.
Have a plan of what to do in lose or win situations.
Do not borrow money or make trips to the ATM machines.
Do not spend money that is for basic needs such as food, housing, etc.

Choose the right time. Do not have the conversation after a big win or loss.
Let the person know you are concerned for them in a caring manner.
Be specific about the behaviors you have seen.
Really listen non-judgmentally to what the person is saying.
Let them know you are willing to help - getting them to support and counseling.

Resources

Helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER
Website: www.helpmygamblingproblem.com

Maryland Coalition of Families: Support for family members who have a loved on who is a problem gambler, Nancy Quidas, 410-730-8267 or info@mdcoalition.org

Voluntary Exclusion Program: Jasmine Countess, jasmine.countess@Maryland.gov or 410-230-8798