

Problem Gambling Services

Mary Lou Costanzo (Clinical Social Worker): If you're watching this, you've probably called the Problem Gambling Helpline here in Connecticut to try to understand what you may think is a gambling problem in your family. In this process, has anyone asked you, what about you? Has anyone paid any attention to what you may be experiencing or how you may be feeling?

That's what this is designed to do. In a moment, you're going to hear from a staff person at Problem Gambling Services here in Connecticut, Barbara Raimondo. She's going to talk to you about her journey and her experience with problem gambling and her family.

And hopefully, that's going to help you to start to think about you and how you cope and deal with this issue.

Barbara Raimundo (Family Peer Counselor): Fifteen years ago, being a family member, I called the helpline for someone that I loved who had a gambling problem. And as many people as I talked to, I was told, bring the gambler in. And that was very difficult because it wasn't the gambler that was doing the calling, it was me.

And in all that time and all those calls, no one said, what about you? I went through many years of pain and frustration, sadness, depression, anxiety. I just felt like my whole life was going out of control.

And I had other children in the family, and there was no one there that asked me that question. So after a lot of pain and suffering and making choices and just enabling and continuing this ongoing sadness within the family, I finally said to myself, well, what about me? So I did seek help for myself.

I went to a professional counselor, and I had the family with me. And we talked about many issues with gambling. The only person that didn't show up for this was the gambler.

So as the family continued, I went to a 12-step program. I made that call. And there, I learned so much more.

Someone is here today talking to you and saying, make the phone call. What about you? We're concerned about the family members as well as the addicted person.

I finally said to myself, I could not fix anything because I was out of control. Out of control and sadness. I was overwhelmed.

And if I didn't know what this addiction was about, there was no way I could make good choices. So I learned and I read. And all of these things have happened for me for the good.

So if you're feeling sad or anxious or frustrated and in a lonely, lonely place because you are a family member and you're so worried about your gambler within the household, make that call. Call to get help for the family, for yourself. Start your journey of health now.

Mary: Let me just summarize for you some of the symptoms of anxiety and depression. And keep in mind as I do that there is help available for you as the family member. The primary symptoms are the following.

Are you sad and anxious much of the time? Are you not sleeping well? Have there been changes in your sleeping pattern?

Are you feeling overwhelmed? Are you not able to concentrate and focus either at home or at work or both? Are you preoccupied with the gambling and with its consequences?

Have you had changes in your appetite, either eating too much or too little? Now that we've talked about the symptoms of anxiety and depression, let me tell you where you can get some help if you have any of these symptoms. Let me also add that even if you do not have these symptoms, you can call these numbers for information, support, and education about the problem gambling in your family.

First and foremost is Problem Gambling Services, a DEMAS-run facility with 14 sites all over Connecticut. The phone number is 860-344-2244. By calling that number, you'll be able to find the nearest location for you.

And please know that ability to pay is not an impediment to receiving care. These programs offer financial advice to family and loved ones of problem gamblers, professional counseling, psychiatric consultation, family peer counseling, with people like you who have been where you are now. Secondly is the Problem Gambling Helpline.

You're probably already familiar with this since you probably have called to get this tape. But just to remind you, the number again is 1-800-344-NO-BET or 1-800-346-6238. Additionally, for a 12-step program, Gamanon is the family affiliate of Gamblers Anonymous.

It's a 12-step self-help organization with meetings throughout the state. Call 1-800-266-1908 to find the meeting that's nearest you. I hope this information has been helpful to you.

But mostly, I hope, as you go through this process, that you continue to ask yourself, What about me? And I hope that now you have some answers when you do ask that question.