

GAMBLING AWARENESS



IT'S JUST A GAME..... OR IS IT??????

By Janice Robes, LCSW

It all started in 1952 when British professor A.S. Douglass introduced the computer version of "OXO" (Noughts and Crosses), otherwise known as Tic-Tac-Toe. Then, in 1958, William Higinbotham created "Tennis For Two," which later morphed into "Pong." Then came the early and immensely popular video games of the 70's and 80's which included, "Space Invaders," "Asteroids," "Pac-Man," and "Donkey Kong," to name a few.

Today, video games make up a 100 Billion Dollar global industry. Nearly two thirds of American homes have household members who play video games regularly. Some of the games involve Loot Boxes. These are "extras" that one may obtain in order to make the game more enjoyable. Loot products evolved from being earned exclusively through play to being bought with real money or money intermediaries. Paid Loot Boxes may be cosmetic, such as, special costumes (skins), voices, or, they may be competitive, giving gamers improved performance via more powerful weapons, camouflage clothing, or "run fast shoes." Paying for loot boxes or extras is a bridge that connects gaming to gambling.

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Playing video games and paying for Loot Boxes are not necessarily problem behaviors; however, there are some distinctions that may indicate that one is moving away from playing for fun and entertainment and moving toward playing out of need or necessity. Here are some potential warning signs:

- 1) Lowered interest in school/work achievement
- 2) Feelings of anger and frustration when not able to access a video game
- 3) Feeling depressed or anxious when not playing the game (especially for a prolonged period)
- 4) Thinking about the next gaming session when not online
- 5) Dreaming about the game
- 6) Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- 7) Downplaying the impact of the excessive habits (“It’s not as bad as alcohol addiction”)
- 8) Distorted perception of time
- 9) Justifying excessive use (“Others play more than I do”)

Some ways to ensure that gaming stays fun and safe for you:

- 1) Play only for a set amount of time and invest only a set amount of money on loot boxes
- 2) View gaming as a fun activity
- 3) Strike a balance of engaging in other activities you enjoy

If you have questions about gaming and Loot Boxes, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Bettor Choice program at (860)823-3094.

IS MY GAMBLING AFFECTING ME????



Gambling can affect how you feel, no matter how much or how often you do it. Is that true for you or someone you care about? These checklists may help you answer that question.

- I celebrate when I win but keep quiet when I lose
- I think about gambling when I'm not doing it
- I sometimes feel guilty after gambling
- I've put off doing or buying other things so I can gamble
- I've spent more than intended
- I've snapped at family members or friends over little things
- I've had trouble concentrating at work
- I sometimes feel regret after gambling
- I've found it difficult to unwind or sleep
- I've been drinking or smoking more than usual
- On a night out, I miss out on other activities because I overspend on gambling

If any of these are true for you, you could be feeling the effects of gambling. While this doesn't mean you have a problem, it does mean that when you're feeling stressed or down, gambling could be the reason.

By keeping this in mind, you can be more aware of the effects of gambling and be more mindful of your gambling choices.

The Holidays Could Feel Lonelier This Year Due to Covid-19, Here is How to Cope

The holiday season can be a lonely time for many people. This year, however, there is an extra hurdle. With states debating shutting down again, Americans are grappling with the challenge of creating memories and fostering togetherness without spreading Covid-19, which will prevent them from celebrating with their loved ones, both young and old. There are some things you can do to keep you from feeling lonely during the holidays:

1. Keep Communication Going. If you are computer savvy, technology will be crucial to helping you stay connected. Even if you are not, just picking up the phone to stay connected will help. Taking a moment to really connect with someone, can help remind us of good times and what makes us happy.
2. Practice Self Care. Coping looks different for everyone and needs vary depending on the state of one's emotional and physical health. Spending time in nature, getting exercise, even a short head-clearing walk can help you reset. Being sure to drink enough water and doing your best to eat well-balanced foods can also help you manage stress.
3. Practice Gratitude. Practicing daily gratitude can break you out of a rut. Focus on what you feel grateful for, moments you can savor and enjoy and try something new. If we can embrace what we do have and also invite new things into our lives, regardless of that it may be, it can be enough to feel lighter and brighter. Gratitude could also look like giving back. If there is a way you can give back, whether its donating time or money, it makes you feel more connected to the world and more positive.
4. Try New Activities and Get Creative. Quarantine can give you time for a much needed recess and play, be it online or in person, has been shown to improve focus, sleep and creativity. There are a lot of DIY workshops or you can go to your local craft stores and pick up a kit. Creating ornaments or even cookie baking can be a fun activity.
5. Accept Reality and Find the Silver Lining. The situation we are all facing is not permanent and keeping a positive outlook will help. Develop a plan for how you will spend the holidays ahead of time, even if it means staying home and watching movies by yourself. Knowing what you are going to do can remove some of the dread and ease your loneliness if you are going to be alone.



4 TIPS FOR DISCUSSING COVID-19 WITH FRIENDS

1. Try not to judge: A healthy friendship is where both people feel seen in a safe and satisfying way. If either person feels like they can't speak their truth, we walk away feeling judged or blamed or rejected.
2. Be transparent: Share both your expectations and comfort levels, as well as any risks, to allow everyone to make educated decisions about socializing.
3. Shift the conversation: If you are not comfortable with the way a friend wants to socialize, focus on your own way forward instead of the actions of others. We may have to be distant from each other, but that does not mean we have to be emotionally distant.
4. Do not argue about it: If wearing a mask and staying outdoors is nonnegotiable, do not try to convince friends with other views. Physical and emotional safety are not areas that make for great compromise.

KEEP GAMBLING SAFE & AFFORDABLE



Set a limit on how much time & money & stick to it.

View gambling as entertainment, not as a way to make money.

Balance gambling with other leisure activities.

If you gamble and spend more time & money than planned, take a break.

CONCERNED ?

HELPLINE Confidential 24/7
1-888-789-7777

KEEP THE PROBLEM OUT OF GAMBLING

● **Gamble with limits on time, frequency, & duration.**

● **Gamble in a social setting with others, not alone, & with money you can afford to lose.**



Problem Gambling Helpline: 1-888-789-7777
www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs

Low Risk Gambling is

A form of recreation, not to make money nor to make up for previous losses.
Setting limits on time, frequency, and duration.
In a social setting with others, not alone.
With money you can afford to lose.



High Risk Gambling is when

Coping with grief, loneliness, anger or depression.
Under financial pressure and stress.

Recovering from mental health or substance use disorders.

Using alcohol or other drugs, or is under legal age to gamble.

Problem Gambling Services, CT State Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs

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