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Introduction

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so that you are able to bear it.

There are from 40 to 55 million people in the United States today harmfully affected by compulsive gambling. Gambling is still spreading. Every state except two has some form of legalized gambling. There is a waiting list for most treatment centers. The need for a program such as this one is great.

For years, I was not able to speak or write about the dangers of gambling. As long as I needed permission from casino general managers to enter their casinos and minister to their customers and employees, I had to be careful. They all knew how I felt about gambling, but by silent agreement, they did not ask and I did not tell them. They felt that I was doing them a favor by taking customers who had fallen to the Hopelessness Phase of compulsive gambling out of their casinos. Yes, these people made gambling look bad to the other customers who watched them. I also did the casinos a favor by ministering to their employees by helping them to lower the stress in their lives

The first week of my ministry in the casinos, a man came up to me and said, "I'm a Christian. What do you think about me working here?" I had no idea what to say. I asked God quickly to give me the words to say, and He did. I turned back to that young man and said, "God could have a reason for you working in this casino. It's up to you to find out what it is or get out."

He did! He quit! Yes, he quit seven years later. In those seven years he led 21 of his fellow-employees to the Lord, right

there in the casino. Over the years, I made that same statement to many others. About one-third of them quit as soon as they could, about one-third did start witnessing to their fellow-employees, and one-third did nothing as they kept working in the casino. I do not judge them. I simply pray for them.

This is not just another book about gambling. It is not just another book about compulsive gambling recovery. It takes 14 years of my life and ministry and puts it together so others may use it to help compulsive gamblers and those affected by compulsive gambling to freedom in Christ.

This book describes how the two different kinds of compulsive gamblers become compulsive. It gives detailed, systematic instructions on how any competent Christian can lead a compulsive gambler to victory in Christ. The program uses hundreds of Bible verses to guide both the leader and the gambler through the program.

In my 14 years of counseling compulsive gamblers, I have worked with many suicidal individuals. Almost all the gamblers I worked with admitted to having had suicidal thoughts. One fourth of them had attempted suicide.

When I began working with compulsive gamblers, I found few programs to help me, and none of them was Christian. I took the certification course approved by the state of Illinois and over the years began to adapt that secular program to develop a Christian approach. The results of all those years of learning and applying came together in this book.

My prayer is that through this book Christ will save the lives, both physically and spiritually, of thousands of people harmfully affected by compulsive gambling.

The most difficult part for any compulsive gambler in quitting is the temptation or the urge gamble that hits them and controls their actions. This does not have to be. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul was reassuring us that we will all face temptation, many times. The good news is that God will not let any temptation be more than we are able to take. The great news is

that God will give us a way to escape whatever temptation comes our way.

Compulsive gambling is nothing but a series of temptations. If we believe God, then He will give us a way out of compulsive gambling as well as any other temptation that may come our way.

The goal of this book is to help as many people as possible to find that way out of compulsive gambling. All compulsive gamblers can achieve victory from compulsive gambling by turning their lives over to Christ.

If you want to help someone overcome his or her gambling problem, then this book is for you. The section “How to Use This Book” at the end of this introduction will tell you what you need to know to start. It will get you started on how to lead compulsive gamblers to freedom in Christ.

The Order of This Book

Part I, The Road to Compulsion.

Part I begins with a chapter on the three types of gamblers, then defines compulsive gambling, and briefly describes the two types of compulsive gamblers. It also lists some of the physical illnesses that a compulsive gambler may experience. Then it goes into some of the causes of compulsive gambling.

The next two chapters describe the early years for the two compulsive gambler types.

Chapters four through six describe how these compulsive gamblers go through the Reality Phase, the Desperation Phase, and the Hopelessness Phase.

Chapter Seven describes how gamblers slip into compulsion.

Chapter Eight describes the effects that compulsive gambling has on the gambler’s spouse.

Part II, The Road to Victory in Christ

Part II begins with a chapter on intervention, which guides the leader and the gambler's family through a loving intervention designed to bring the compulsive gambler to a realization of the need for help.

The next five chapters are the Bible-based program that will bring a gambler to victory in Christ. The gambler will go through an assessment of his or her emotional, gambling, spiritual, and financial condition. Then the gambler prepares to make a decision for Christ. Either they will accept Christ as their Lord and Savior, or they will rededicate their lives to Christ.

The next big hurdle will be that of seeking forgiveness from all whom they have wronged and then forgiving all those who have wronged them.

Each chapter that describes how a gambler goes through a phase of compulsive gambling or a step out of compulsive gambling also show how each gambler relates to others in the following relationships.

Gambling: The different styles or methods of gambling

Relational: How they relate to family, friends, and occupation

Emotional: Compulsive Gambling affects the thought processes of the gambler in many different ways.

Physiological shows how the gambler may develop any of many different physical symptoms.

Financial: There are many ways that gambling may cause financial problems.

Legal: The Compulsive Gambler usually has legal problems in the Hopelessness Phase and sometimes as early as the Desperation Phase.

Each chapter will also end by trying to answer the following question: "How do you help the gambler to stop now before he or she goes deeper into gambling?"

Two case studies listed progressively throughout the book describe how two gamblers went through all the phases to become compulsive gamblers and how they went through the steps to find freedom in Christ. Butch is an example of a Gradual Gambler and Sue is an example of an Escape Gambler.

There is a Study Guide at the end of the book described in the section, “How to Use This Book.”

Terminology Used in This Book

This book uses the term compulsion rather than the harsher term addiction. Chapter Seven explains this decision.

Most compulsive gamblers fall into one of two types: The Gradual Gambler and the Escape Gambler.

Gradual Gamblers, sometimes called Action Gamblers do eventually seek action, but they arrive at that point after a long period of gradually getting deeper into gambling.

Escape Gamblers look for something to fill a void in their lives. When they find gambling, they usually get in over their heads rather quickly, much more quickly than Gradual Gamblers.

Those who work with Compulsive Gamblers have many different terms they use to describe the types and the phases gamblers go through to become compulsive. The terms used in this book are ones that are the result of 14 years of observation and experience while working with compulsive gamblers.

To avoid confusion, masculine pronouns will refer to the Gradual Gambler (which usually are men), and feminine pronouns will refer to Escape Gamblers (which usually are women). This does not imply that all Gradual Gamblers are male or that all Escape Gamblers are female.

Who Should Use This Book?

This book is for concerned Christians who want to lead compulsive gamblers through this Christ-centered program to a life free of gambling. Detailed directions guide you through each step of the program.

If you have no experience in counseling, you may still be able to follow the directions in Part II, which can prepare you to help your gambler.

I must caution you however that if the gambler is too close to you (such as spouse or child) you may want to enlist the aid of someone else to do the leading. Perhaps you could approach your pastor or another church leader.

Once you have determined that you are not too close to the gambler, you need to read and study Part I of this book to identify which compulsive gambler type you have. You need to familiarize yourself with the problems unique to your gambler as he or she went through each phase of compulsive gambling.

Next, you need to study Part II thoroughly so you are familiar with the procedure in order to lead your gambler along the path to a new way of life.

From this point, you will lead your gambler through the program using the systematic instructions found in Part II.

If you are a Christian pastor or counselor, you should have no difficulty in helping compulsive gamblers to achieve victory over their gambling using this program. You should already know not to try to lead anyone too close to you.

If you are not already familiar with the phases of compulsive gambling, you may need to read Part I too.

Please, no matter how much you have counseled, study Part II before you begin to work with gamblers.

Experience has taught that it is best for you not to look at any section and decide that you have a better way. These methods went through 14 years of testing with many compulsive gamblers.

How to Use This Book

Before you begin the program with a gambler, make sure you are familiar with compulsive gambling, the two types of compulsive gamblers, the phases that they go through, and how compulsive gambling affects the spouse.

Make sure you know not only what each step of the program is doing, but also why it does it before trying to complete it.

It is important that your gambler complete each step in the program before going on to the next one. This is especially true, in Chapter Twelve, when asked to wait until the gambler has made a decision for Christ before continuing the program.

Remember that you and I are only instruments Christ will use to help your compulsive gambler. Christ is the only One who can bring about lasting victory over gambling.

One-on-One:

The primary intent of this book is for one competent Christian to lead one compulsive gambler at a time to victory in Christ. Therefore, when using this book, you need to read and study Part I carefully before you try to go any farther. Then you need to read and study Part II until you are sure you can lead your compulsive gambler to freedom in Christ. Once you have done this, you are ready to start the program in Part II with your gambler.

There is a Study Guide at the back of this book, which may help you in your studies. It will help you bring out the major points of each chapter in your answers to the questions.

Before you begin any step with the gambler, please read all instructions carefully until you thoroughly understand them. Then read and study all Bible verses used in that step until you are sure of how to interpret them to your gambler. If your gambler is not a Christian, it will be more important that you explain each Bible passage to his or her satisfaction.

Please follow directions carefully. Do not let the gambler go to the next step until he or she has finished the present section. That means they must thoroughly understand what they need to do and why.

Make sure all involved commit themselves to regular, punctual attendance at every meeting.

Group Study:

Any group may use this book to help each member of the group to achieve an understanding of compulsive gambling. They may use it to learn how to lead a compulsive gambler to victory in Christ. A group could also study the whole book together.

The Study Guide in the back of this book will also work for group instruction or discussion. An informal group may use it as they work through the book together. A more formal group may use it with the questions used as assignments after each chapter.

I use the Study Guide when I lead workshops or seminars in implementing the program presented in this book, as well. I prepare a Study Guide handout to give each participant at the beginning of the meeting. At the end of each chapter, the entire group discusses each question, giving all participants the opportunity to fill in the correct answers. Then when the workshop is over, they will have the completed Study Guide for future reference.

Part I: The Road to Compulsion

Part I gives all the information on compulsive gambling that you need to understand the condition enough to lead a gambler through the program described in Part II. It begins with the types of gamblers and continues with definitions and descriptions of compulsive gambling all the way to the point when the gambler has to get help or wind up with a miserable life, prison, or even death.

Both types of compulsive gamblers go through The Early Years but in different ways. The Early Years is the time when life's events and their own personalities prepare both types of compulsive gamblers to become compulsive gamblers later in life.

The early years will include what some call the Winning Phase as the last part of that phase. All gamblers go through a time in which many causes may lead them into the phases of compulsive gambling.

Chapter One describes the different types of gamblers ending with a definition of compulsive gambling including the two major types of compulsive gamblers, the Gradual Gambler and the Escape Gambler. Then it gives some of the causes of compulsive gambling.

Chapter Two describes how the Gradual Gambler goes through a time of "Coasting" before he hits the first phase of compulsive gambling called a time of "Euphoria." During this phase, the Gradual Gambler experiences much more than simply winning. He gets so much satisfaction that he begins to have the feeling that everything is going great. He thinks that he has achieved euphoria. However, it is all part of his gradual decline into compulsive gambling.

A case study of Butch, a Gradual Gambler, will begin in this chapter to show how he went through each of the phases and steps described in both Parts I and II of this book.

Chapter Three describes how the Escape Gambler goes through a time of “Searching” before she hits that first phase of compulsive gambling called “Short-Term Gratification.”

The Escape Gambler feels a need to find relief or escape from her troubles, usually stress, frustration, loneliness, or even neglect. She finally finds what she thinks is the answer to her problems. However, as the title implies, this phase is not the final solution she thinks it is.

A case study of Sue, an Escape Gambler will begin in this chapter to show how she went through each of the phases and steps described in both Parts I and II of this book.

Chapter Four shows how each gambler goes through the Reality Phase. Some call this the Losing Phase because this is when they usually begin to lose more often than they win. In this phase, the gambler knows something is wrong. It is a time when the reality of what is happening to them may occur to them if only as a passing thought. They will ignore it by explaining it as coincidence and continue to gamble. Few gamblers realize they have a problem during this phase. They are still in denial and usually blame others for their misfortunes.

Chapter Five shows how the compulsive gambler goes through the Desperation Phase. This is when the gambler usually becomes desperate. He or she may not yet realize they have a gambling problem, but they know something is wrong. They will still blame it on other reasons.

Chapter Six describes the Hopeless or Give Up Phase where all compulsive gamblers wind up at some point in their gambling lives. Something has to bring about change in this phase. No one can function in this phase for long.

Chapter Seven describes how a person can go from no gambling to compulsive gambling. Crossing over from casual gambling to compulsive gambling is usually so subtle the gambler seldom knows when it happens.

Chapter Eight describes the effects of compulsive gambling on the spouse of the gambler. Simply put, they become codependent. The spouse will unknowingly go through each of the phases with the gambler. This chapter describes how the spouse responds throughout the time that a gambler goes all the way to the bottom and then all the way up out of their problem with the help of Christ.

Chapter One: Gambling

There are only three types of gamblers. Many causes, both hereditary and environmental, influence how one person can gamble every day and never have a problem while another can gamble once and have a problem. Most gamblers fall somewhere between the two. Many people who gamble never have a problem.

Professional Gambler

Legal professional gamblers consider gambling their occupation. They make their living from their gambling winnings. They are calm, calculating, and controlled. They know when to bet and when not to bet. They wait patiently for the best bet, and they always go with the favorable odds.

Illegal professional gamblers have also made gambling their occupation. The difference is that they have made their career one of getting money illegally. When they gamble, they try to fix the outcome.

Professional gamblers rarely become compulsive gamblers. A compulsive gambler is one who has lost control of his gambling, and the professional gambler is always in control.

Occasional Gambler

There are three different types of occasional gamblers with different levels of intensity in their gambling behavior.

Casual Gamblers seldom gamble. Gambling is just one of many forms of entertainment for them. They would never miss gambling if they suddenly stopped.

Serious Gamblers gamble as a major source of entertainment. They gamble regularly, eagerly, and intently.

However, gambling is still just a form of recreation to them even if it is their major one. They could stop gambling, but if they did, they would miss it.

Determined Gamblers are usually looking for relief from life's pressures or even trying to escape from them. They are gambling more than just casually. Gambling has begun to control their lives. Their gambling usually gets between the gambler and their families and their occupations.

Most gamblers could stay in the casual category forever with no temptation to increase their gambling. Some do go on to the serious category though without causing major problems for them or their families.

Some go all the way to the determined category. Some Determined Gamblers never experience any family or job related problems, but many do.

Any one of the types of occasional gamblers could become compulsive with the greater likelihood being the serious and even more so the determined gamblers. Even then, the result of an emotional or physical crisis in their lives will push them into compulsion.

Compulsive Gambler

Compulsive Gambling is a term, which has different definitions to different people. The range of definitions goes from a person who gambles frequently all the way to someone addicted to gambling.

Compulsive Gambling is a condition that happens when gamblers reach the point where their gambling is damaging the emotional and even physical health of themselves and others. They are powerless to stop their destructive behavior.

Their urge to gamble causes problems in every area of their lives. It leads to possible destruction of their family, friends, job, and even their lives.

To compulsive gamblers, gambling is all there is in life. They ignore their families, friends, and jobs. Many times when they get to the Desperate or Hopelessness Phases, they turn to illegal actions to support their compulsion.

They cannot stop without treatment, no matter how hard they try. They will self-destruct if they do not get help.

No one ever begins to gamble with the thought or goal of becoming compulsive. A description of that unknowing slip into compulsion is in Chapter Seven.

This book will describe two types of compulsive gamblers.

Gradual Gamblers begin gambling often at an early age and gamble casually sometimes for many years before developing a problem.

Escape Gamblers possibly never gambled until they suddenly needed something to relieve the pressure in their lives. They look for anything that will give them escape from their troubles. Gambling does that for them but only for a short time.

Physical Illnesses Suffered by Compulsive Gamblers and Spouses

- Depression
- Stomach problems
- Insomnia
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Headaches or migraines
- Asthma
- High blood pressure
- Backaches
- Angina, heart pains, palpitations
- Hypertension, shortness of breath, rapid breathing
- irregularities
- Stiff neck
- Weak or nervous
- Excessive intake of fluids

Excessive urination
Dermatitis, hives, or rashes
Ulcers
Temporary amnesia
Various other ailments

Why?

Why do some people become compulsive gamblers and others do not? Why does one person become a compulsive gambler while none of his or her siblings ever do? Why can a person go until the age of fifty, sixty, or even seventy before becoming a compulsive gambler?

This chapter will not answer all of those questions. There will be much more information on this subject throughout the rest of the book. You will still have some unanswered questions when you finish this book. Do not feel bad. No one has all the answers. It is encouraging that we do not need to know all the answers. Christ has all the answers, and He is the one who will bring victory to compulsive gamblers.

Some say that genetics can cause compulsion or addiction. Simply put, they are talking about an addictive personality. There has been much study on this subject, and there is no agreement. We do not need to decide.

Some who do not agree there are addictive personalities say that certain personality traits make it easier for someone to become compulsive. Some of these traits are low self-esteem, poor coping skills, and nervousness.

Home life can be a cause. Their family's attitude toward money could be one. Dysfunctional families often receive the blame.

Starting gambling at an early age is asking for trouble. Most males begin gambling long before they are of the legal age.

Family members or friends often influence them to start gambling.

Some try gambling when a new casino opens nearby.

One of the most common ways is for someone to experience an emotional or painful event. This may force them to look for that relief or escape they need so badly.

Most compulsive gamblers have an escape plan for what they would do if caught, where they would go, and how they could leave in order not to face the effects of their behavior. Often, suicide will be part of that plan, so continuous suicide risk assessment is important.

Causes of Compulsive Gambling

Gambling is exciting while the gambler is in action. The adrenaline high feels good, and it is easy to become obsessed with these good feelings.

Gambling may temporarily fill a void for many people with other problems. This void could be in any area of their lives. Poor social life, loneliness, job dissatisfaction, empty-nest syndrome, boredom, and lack of purpose can all contribute to compulsive gambling.

A big win at the casino is the worst that could happen to anyone who may already be vulnerable to compulsion. The adrenaline high of a huge jackpot can cause them to want this feeling to continue. In fact, they will expect it to happen again and often. If they gamble enough, all people eventually lose the winnings from their jackpot, plus much more.

Emotional pain and psychological distress can cause people to want to escape, and think gambling is the answer. This is especially true for Escape Gamblers who mostly gamble at slot machines, the lottery, or on the internet.

For Gradual Gamblers, the craving for action and feeling important or even superior to others can cause a gambling

problem. Gradual Gamblers are mostly male and usually bet on sports, poker, or at the racetrack.

Dreams of winning huge sums of money can cause a gambling problem, especially if they have a long string of wins when they begin to gamble.

Gamblers suffering from anxiety or depression usually wind up as Escape Gamblers.

Close relatives who gamble often, even if they are not compulsive, may entice someone to gamble who is prone to compulsion.

These are only some of the more common causes of compulsive gambling, however, there are many more as well. In addition, each individual will develop a gambling problem in different ways, and no two sets of circumstances are the same.

Summary

Chapter One is a general description of gambling, then compulsive gambling, and the two major types of compulsive gamblers.

The three types of gamblers are Professional, Occasional, and Compulsive.

It includes a definition of compulsive gambling including the two major types of compulsive gamblers, the Gradual Gambler and the Escape Gambler.

Chapter One also lists some physical illnesses suffered by compulsive gamblers and their spouses as possible causes of compulsive gambling.

Chapter Two

The Early Years for the Gradual Gambler:

Coasting Until He Finds Euphoria and a False Sense of Security

Almost all Gradual Gamblers are men and most men gamblers are Gradual Gamblers. He usually seeks action, and that is why some call this gambler the Action Gambler. Although action is what they seek and what they eventually wind up doing, they arrive at that point after a gradual period of coasting. Gradual describes the time that he goes through before becoming compulsive. Seeking action is merely a symptom representing the form of gambling he likes to do.

The Gradual Gambler often starts gambling at an early age and does not usually become compulsive until after he leaves home. The rules change once he has more money and more time to gamble.

As he gets older, he gradually gets deeper into gambling until he finally becomes compulsive. Most Gradual Gamblers will get steadily deeper into gambling for anywhere from ten to thirty years before taking action to stop their compulsive gambling. An end to their gambling does not always come through a recovery program. Some turn to suicide or other drastic measures. Some have the decision taken away from them by a judge.

Many Gradual Gamblers are domineering, controlling, and manipulative men with inflated egos. They see themselves as friendly, outgoing, and generous. They are energetic, assertive, persuasive, and often above average intelligence. Conversely, they usually have low self-esteem. They often begin gambling early in life, in their teen years or sometimes even younger. As adults, they can become rather domineering and controlling.

Gradual Gamblers become obsessed with the thrill of risk-taking. Gambling itself is like a drug to them. They gamble to beat anyone who will gamble against them. Many Gradual Gamblers believe they have developed a way to allow them to win more often than they lose. They mostly gamble at games of skill such as poker or other card games, craps or other dice games, horse or dog racing, and sports betting. Many become involved in both legal and illegal betting. For a few, the stock market provides the same challenge

Their gambling habits or preferences usually change the closer they get to compulsion. For example, during the Desperation Phase, Gradual Gamblers often begin to gamble specifically for escape. The gradual destruction of their lives causes them to try to medicate the pain they feel. The narcotic-like effect of slot machines or more likely, video poker or keno machines give them that release.

The Gradual Gambler goes through the first two phases of compulsive gambling in a different way than the Escape Gambler. Thus, Chapter Two will describe these first two phases of the Gradual Gambler, and Chapter Three will describe the first two phases of the Escape Gamblers.

Every Gradual Gambler will not experience all the symptoms or move through the phases in the same order or at the same rate. Some may return to a previous phase for a short time. This often happens after his friends, family, or employer pays off loans or bills to help him get back on track, which in reality only enables him to gamble longer before needing to seek help.

Coasting

Once a Gradual Gambler places his first bet, it may take many years for him to reach the phases usually associated with compulsive gambling. Once he starts through the phases, he will normally go through them at a slower pace than will the Escape Gambler.

If he begins to gamble casually as a child, he will work his way up through his late preteen years, into his teen years and finally into adulthood. Even then, he may not begin his spiral to the bottom for up to thirty years. Some Gradual Gamblers reach the age of fifty or even sixty before becoming compulsive.

The action or adventure of gambling draws the Gradual Gambler even as a young boy. During these early years, he will only get occasional opportunities to gamble until he gets out on his own. He will coast along doing as much gambling, as outside influences will allow. His environment will influence how much and how often he gambles.

Many different circumstances may affect a Gradual Gambler during his early years.

Beginning with this phase of compulsive gambling each chapter will describe how the gamblers act in each of the following areas of their lives, gambling, relational, emotional, financial, and legal.

How does the Gradual Gambler interact in each of the following ways during the Coasting Phase?

Gambling:

The Gradual Gambler usually finds gambling in an accidental way that feels right to him. His first experiences with gambling usually are the harmless bets among boys on the playground. As soon as he realizes that he wins more often than the other boys do, he begins to make use of that supposed advantage.

Though he is too young to realize the full potential for his gambling, he takes every opportunity to play games of skill such as cards, especially poker. In the early years, these games are harmless games, which do not usually involve money or other valuables. He probably wins so often that others may refuse to gamble with him.

He will learn the value of betting on sports events even if he is not a sports fan. Most Gradual Gamblers are sports fans because of their love for games of skill. They naturally turn to betting on sports events, and other kids begin to come to them for a friendly bet.

The older he gets, the more his opportunities increase as his responsibilities to others decrease. Once he is on his own, the potential for his gambling becoming a problem increases as well. He will begin to create opportunities to gamble more often and with more money, especially when he is winning.

When a Gradual Gambler marries, his gambling opportunities usually decrease, especially if children come along.

He will gamble as much as time and finances allow, but seldom desperately yet.

Relational:

Parents:

He will usually have good relations with his parents at an early age. As he gets older, he may begin to resent his parents who, in his eyes, are hindering his doing what he loves the most. Therefore, stressful relations with them begin. Although he may be so efficient at hiding his true feelings that he will have a good relationship with his parents, at least on the surface.

He may have time on his hands with both of his parents working which will provide less parental supervision. This will provide more opportunity for his gambling to develop.

As he gets older, the Gradual Gambler will begin to look around and convince himself that he could be doing much more gambling if not hindered by living with his parents. Parental supervision will limit him too much. He will begin to resent his circumstances. He may threaten or even try to run away.

Friends:

He may have less supervision than his friends do. This gives him more freedom even in the early years to expand his gambling. However, it is never enough for him. He will always want more.

As he gets older, his circle of true friends will begin to get smaller. No one will be able to compete with his inflated image of himself. Therefore, he will put others down for their alleged faults until they begin to avoid him.

School:

At school, sports and other extracurricular activities will limit his gambling. Then there is always homework to get in the way. He may take money from his gambling ventures to pay other kids to do his homework for him.

His teachers will either think he is a demon or an angel, depending on how good a liar he is at that age. He is the one who can usually maneuver the teacher and other students into doing what he wants them to do.

On His Own:

Once away from home and working, he becomes disillusioned. Finally, he is out from under his parents' supervision, but he has to keep a job. He thought he would have more opportunities to gamble, but it even seems as if he has fewer now.

He will have to arrange his gambling time around his work schedule. Thus, he will begin to maneuver at work the same way he did in school, getting other workers to bet with him.

Family:

If not married, he will usually have women around him. He will keep them happy by his exaggerated show of kindness and generosity.

If married, relations are good at first. He usually has money, which he wisely spends on his family. However, he may begin to resent his wife for the time he has to spend with her. She will probably not realize this for some time.

Before long, he will begin to feel stifled. His wife and possibly children are demanding too much of his free time. Suddenly, he has even less time than he did before to seek his own pleasures. Other family responsibilities will also complicate matters causing him to become frustrated again.

Emotional:

He is usually happy, but will begin to experience mood swings with some signs of a temper usually passed off as growing pains by others.

Even now, he will begin to withdraw into himself where no one else may enter. Those close to him may not realize it as a problem yet.

As he gets older, that emotional wall he has built around himself will continue to grow, causing him to show a macho, extroverted image to others. In reality, he is becoming an introvert with low self-esteem. However, his early successes will give him a feeling of invincibility. He may even begin to feel himself superior to others, especially in intelligence. All of this may result in his becoming a loner, but he will try to convince himself that he likes it that way much better.

Financial:

The Gradual Gambler may begin to gamble when he is too young to have access to much money. He may gamble with friends for possessions rather than money at first. Nevertheless, he will play for money as soon as he possibly can. This problem does not always go away with age. He may still have to struggle to find the money that he feels he needs for gambling.

Not having a job will limit his finances to what his parents give him. Depending on his gambling success, he will be the kid with all the money or the kid with no money.

Some Gradual Gamblers are so successful when young that they lend their possessions or even money to their classmates for a fee. The other kids will begin to go to him whenever they need anything.

Once he leaves home and gets a job, he will learn how to manage his money or he will constantly be short at the end of each pay period.

Marriage complicates his finances, especially if they have children.

Legal:

He will probably not have any legal problems as a child or teenager. If anything, he may steal money from his parents or siblings. He will be either too smart or too afraid to steal from anyone outside the home.

After leaving home he will usually not gamble beyond his means for some time.

A Case Study

For a better understanding of the Gradual Gambler, each phase will include the case study of a fictional man named Butch. Butch is a composite of many real gamblers.

Butch began by betting on minor events. The first bet Butch remembers making was when he was nine years old and his friend Billy's big sister was going to have a baby. He bet Billy a dollar that it would be a boy and he won. He would always remember having won that first bet. He would later use that as proof of his gambling skill.

Butch's dad was a sports fanatic who had excelled in football and baseball when he was young, and had his own method of picking winners. Butch also excelled in football and baseball and became a big sports fan. It was therefore natural for him to bet on sports too. He began by betting on his favorite teams. Most of them had winning seasons so he came out ahead on his early betting which further reinforced his belief that he was good at gambling.

By the age of twelve, Butch began copying his father's method of researching all the teams to pick the winners. He used the newspapers and sports magazines that his dad always had around for that purpose. Thus, he started betting on whichever team he thought would win, no longer letting sentiment rule. He soon developed his own method of deciding which team had the best chance to win. He claimed his method was far better than his dad's ever was.

During Butch's high school years, he would bet with anyone he could talk into it. He did not usually care what the bet

was, and he was even giving odds based on his, by then, elaborate method of picking the winners.

Butch continued to gamble this way when he went to college. For the first time in his life, he had a taste of freedom though still limited. He went to a university about one-hundred miles from his home and lived in a dorm surrounded by many new gambling prospects. He also found easy pickings in his classes.

When Butch graduated from college, he took a job with a big corporation near his home. Finally, he thought, he would be free to gamble more, but he was wrong. His job took up too much of his time. He was soon working long hours and many Saturdays too.

Just as Butch was getting more comfortable financially, he met and married Mary. For the next seven years, his gambling took a secondary role in his life. He became the father of two daughters during this time. Butch stayed busy being a husband and a father. He still found time to do some gambling at work and with his friends, but not what he would call serious gambling.

After seven years of marriage, Butch began to grow dissatisfied. He wanted more out of life than just his daily routine of going to work then home to Mary and the girls. He felt stifled with no time that he called his own. Where had the last seven years gone?

One night he and a couple of his old friends wanted to try something new and one of the others suggested they go to a casino.

The moment Butch stepped into the casino, his friends faded from his mind. His wide eyes traveled from one corner of the room to the next letting the dazzling bright lights and the sounds surround him as he continued absorbing it all. Something happened, something that he did not realize until much later. It was as if he had finally come home. As if he had found what he had been searching for all his life without knowing he was searching.

He walked farther into the large noisy room. There were slot machines and video poker machines making clanging and dinging sounds along all four walls of the room. He barely gave them a passing glance. To him they were just noisemakers. However, when he stepped past the machines and saw the green velvet lined tables in the middle of the room, he smiled. The nearest Blackjack table drew him toward it as if he were in a trance. There was an empty stool at the table, and he was soon sitting on it. As if he were watching someone else, he tossed some money at the dealer and received a stack of tokens in return. With the tokens stacked in front of him, he watched with fascination as the dealer sent cards flying around the table with two eventually landing in front of him.

Two hours later his friends tried to get him to leave with them, but he ignored them, refusing to quit gambling. When he finally left hours later, several hundred dollars ahead, he felt great.

On the way home, he stopped and bought presents for his wife and daughters.

How do you help the Gradual Gambler when he is in the Coasting Phase?

How can you help the Gradual Gambler when he is at this point? Is there anything you can possibly do to stop him before he gets too deep into gambling?

More than likely, no matter who tries, he will not yet be willing to admit that he has a problem.

However, if you know the characteristics of a Gradual Gambler at this phase you might be able to predict that he will have problems in the future.

All you will probably be able to do at this phase is watch for some of the symptoms that would come next.

A Time of Euphoria

Next, the Gradual Gambler goes through a phase where his occasional gambling turns into more frequent gambling with some big wins. He wins more than he loses. He begins to credit this to his superior intelligence and skill. He may experiment with new types of gambling. This is when most Gradual Gamblers will begin to frequent casinos or racetracks. Internet gambling can make it possible for him to gamble without leaving his home or office, thus giving him more time to gamble.

How does the Gradual Gambler interact in each of the following ways during the Time of Euphoria?

Gambling:

He may begin fantasizing about that next big win, which will cause him to begin betting on everything he can. He will be gambling more and winning more, which will cause him to begin looking for bigger opportunities. This may cause him to begin to think that he could quit his job and become a professional gambler.

This phase usually lasts from three to five years. When he begins to lose and chase his losses, he will move to the Reality Phase. Chasing losses means the gambler feels he has to keep playing to catch up from all the losses he has experienced. The same is true of winnings. He will not want to stop when he is winning because he expects to keep on winning and even win a large jackpot.

He is now beginning to gamble every opportunity he can possibly create. He no longer gambles just for the fun of it or for the high that he gets. He is well on his way to becoming a compulsive gambler, and many Gradual Gamblers do become compulsive during this phase.

Relational:

Family:

He is splitting his time between gambling and family with family time steadily decreasing, causing relations with his wife to deteriorate. She probably suspects that he is spending too much time gambling. His time away from home is increasing, but he still thinks he can always make up for it with gifts.

Friends:

He is beginning to turn his old friends away with his constant bragging about his gambling skill and how much money he is winning.

He will have a new group of temporary friends, mostly at the casino or racetrack. Since he is usually rather generous with his winnings, he draws them to him with his enthusiasm and the money he spends.

Job:

He still works although he spends more of his time away from gambling planning his next gambling trip. His employer may be aware of his gambling by now, but it probably has not hindered his work performance yet. However, he may begin to gamble late at night. He may also begin to take time off from work to gamble.

Emotional:

He is beginning to get a new euphoric feeling almost every time he gambles, which leads to unrealistic optimism and a feeling of being unbeatable. He has begun to see himself as the big shot, and he brags about winning while playing down his losses. He believes that he cannot lose and that gambling is a quick and easy way to earn extra income.

This feeling of being almost invincible usually results from some major wins, which will justify his opinion of being smarter than everyone else and, of course, an expert gambler. This encourages the fantasy that he will continue to win and possibly even get rich off gambling.

He may begin to obsess on the idea of becoming a professional gambler. He begins to think he is that good. After all, that is what all his new friends tell him. A small percentage

of Gradual Gamblers do become professional gamblers during this time. (For a description of professional gamblers, please refer to Chapter One.)

This euphoria caused by winning gives him an overwhelming need to preserve that invigorating feeling. He fantasizes about winning and the prospect of more wins excites him, which causes him to spend more time gambling. He may feel an unrealistic sense of power and control. Therefore, he will gamble more often for longer periods of time and with larger amounts of money. For some, this produces such a high that they will pay any price to keep feeling it.

Financial:

He may not have a financial problem yet since he still gambles mostly with his winnings. His winnings make him feel rich, which he tries to prove by giving gifts to his wife and children or anyone else close to him.

Legal:

Since he may not be experiencing any financial problems yet, it is still too early for most Gradual Gamblers to get into legal problems although it does happen.

Butch's Story Continues

After Butch's first night at the casino, he couldn't wait to go back. He soon worked out a schedule of going to the casino one afternoon a week. Even though his normal quitting time was four o'clock, he usually worked until six each night. On his new schedule, he simply took one day a week where he quit work at four so he could spend the next two hours at the casino. He was also able to arrange one night a week that had always been his night out with his friends. Even when his friends didn't want to go to the casino, he went without them, thus causing him to drift away from them.

Butch soon developed a new circle of friends at the casino. Before long, they were meeting at the casino regularly.

Everyone else began to fade in importance to his new friends who shared his love of gambling.

He continued to win often enough to allow him to gamble only on his winnings from previous occasions. Therefore, he was able to keep from using any of his family money. He felt superior to all the other gamblers who were obviously not winning, as he was. His imagined skill at gambling gave him a sense of power.

One evening when Butch was at the casino with his new friends, one of them made a casual comment that startled him and made him think. The friend said that Butch was good enough to be a professional gambler. Over the next few weeks, all Butch could think about was becoming a professional gambler. He would not have to work for someone else ever again. He could set his own hours. Most of all, he could not stop thinking about what he could do with all the money he would win.

How do you help the Gradual Gambler when he is in the Time of Euphoria?

How can you help the Gradual Gambler when he is at this point? Is there anything you can possibly do to stop him before he gets too deep into gambling?

During this phase, it would be difficult to convince a Gradual Gambler that he needs to stop. He cannot or will not realize that he could ever become a compulsive gambler.

However, you can be aware of events that might happen later, which will confirm it to you. Then you may be able to catch him before he gets too desperate or begins to feel hopeless.

Summary

Chapter Three describes how the Gradual Gambler goes through a time of “Coasting” before he hits the first phase of compulsive gambling called a time of “Euphoria.” During this

phase, the Gradual Gambler experiences much more than simply winning. He gets so much satisfaction that he begins to have the feeling that everything is going great. He thinks that he has achieved euphoria. However, it is all part of his gradual decline into compulsive gambling.

A case study of Butch, a Gradual Gambler, will begin in this chapter to show how he went through each of the phases steps described in both Parts I and II of this book.