

“It saved my life. I realized I wasn’t the only one like me.”

—Edna, 71-year-old retiree



gamble compulsively after her husband died, seeking assistance saved her life. But before she reached out for help, she lost all of her retirement savings to her compulsive gambling problem.

Edna points out how responsible she was with money before her addiction took over; she had always managed her and her husband’s finances without a problem.

Trained problem gambling counselors confirm Edna’s observation, and explain that compulsive gambling can afflict even the most responsible individuals.

When Edna called for help, she found the caring assistance that

she had needed all along, “It saved my life, I realized I wasn’t the only one like me.”

No matter how responsible you were before you began to gamble compulsively, don’t fall suspect to one of the great myths of compulsive gambling and think that you can just stop gambling on your own. Call the FCCG to get the support you need to reclaim your life. Like Edna, you’ll feel better when you learn you’re not alone.

**Confidential Help
is available 24 hours a day.
CALL 888-ADMIT-IT**



Florida Council on
Compulsive Gambling, Inc.
237 Lookout Place
Suite 100
Maitland, Florida 32751

SENIOR FOCUS

Concerning Seniors with Gambling Problems

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About the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling

More than 500,000 Floridians suffer from problem and compulsive gambling difficulties. Helping those individuals and their families is the mission of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG). It was established in 1988 as a not-for-profit educational and advocacy organization under contract with Florida State Government. The agency operates the State’s crisis helpline, develops prevention and education programs, and trains health care professionals to assess and treat problem gamblers. It also assists industry, governments, schools and others in establishing problem gambling awareness initiatives. The FCCG offers a Speaker’s Bureau and programs for impaired professionals, seniors and adolescents.

In 1992, the FCCG set up a toll-free, 24-hour, confidential problem gambling helpline. Since the Helpline’s inception, the agency has fielded more than 60,000 calls, confirming the need for problem gambling assistance and trained professional treatment.

What Seniors Need To Know About Recreational Gambling

Many older adults gamble for recreation. Unfortunately, for an estimated one in twenty, this hobby will become a problem.

Problem gambling counselors say there are two types of problem gamblers: “action” gamblers, who thrive on the thrill; and “escape” gamblers, who use gambling as an emotional escape. Older adults tend to be “escape” gamblers.

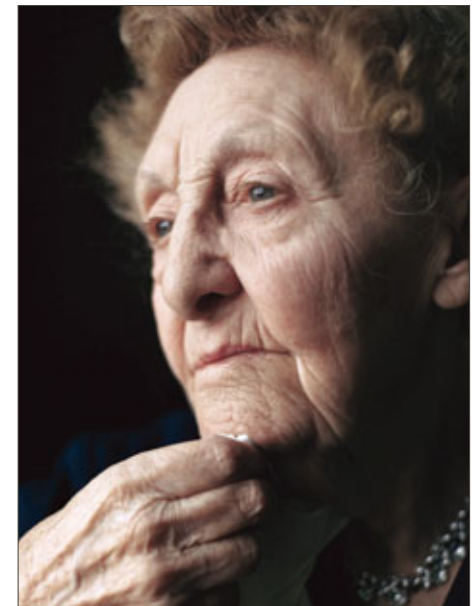
Warning Sign –

*“Secrecy, avoidance,
or lying when
questioned about
gambling habits.”*

The onset of retirement and the loss of a spouse or close friend are two of the most common life-changing situations with which older adults find hard to cope.

As a result, older adult recreational gamblers may find themselves developing compulsive gambling habits as a way to alleviate their underlying emotional pain.

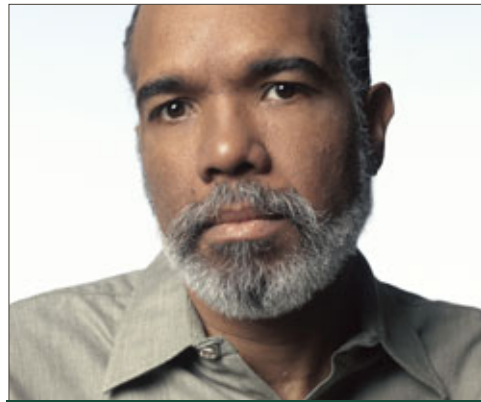
This doesn’t mean older adults should avoid gambling activities, they simply need to keep an eye on their gambling habits.



To stay in control of your recreational gambling, see “How to Gamble Responsibly” (pg. 2) and the “Warning Signs of Senior Problem Gambling” (pg. 3).

An awareness of one’s gambling habits and an understanding of how those habits can become problematic are your best allies when gambling.

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has a gambling problem,
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How to Gamble Responsibly...

For retirees who no longer have a steady income, a life's worth of savings lost to problem gambling is nearly impossible to regain.

Follow these rules to make sure you're not gambling more than you can afford to lose:

- Set a dollar limit and stick to it. Decide before you go what you can afford to lose, and do not allow yourself to go over your budget if you do lose.
- Set a time limit and stick to it. Decide how much of your time you want to allow for gambling and leave when you reach your time limit, whether you are winning or losing.
- Expect to lose when gambling. That way, if you lose, you'll be less likely to beat yourself up about it. And the desire to "chase" or make up for your losses will be lessened.

When you adhere to these helpful guidelines, you'll be a winner regardless of the outcome of your gambling adventure.

For Those Affected by a Senior's Problem Gambling

The stigma once associated with gambling is vanishing. Today, senior centers and churches have regular outings to gambling sites. As a result, seniors are gambling in record numbers. The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling reports that since 1992, senior citizen callers have accounted for approximately 20% of their problem gambling helpline calls each year.

Aside from being easily accessible, many older adults gamble for other reasons, such as a need for excitement or a way to escape boredom, loneliness, and even reality. All of which often relate to the emotional traumas associated with retirement and the aging process. For these reasons, older adults risk developing unhealthy gambling habits and even worse, becoming compulsive gamblers.

"The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling reports that since 1992, senior citizen callers have accounted for approximately 20% of their problem gambling helpline calls each year."

Compulsive gambling is a form of addiction, a progressive



behavior disorder in which an individual has a psychologically uncontrollable preoccupation and urge to gamble. It can affect any individual, no matter what their age or background.

The effects of compulsive gambling can be devastating. And devastating not only for the problem gambler, but also for family and friends.

Since recognizing and responding to a relative's or friend's gambling problem is difficult, anyone concerned with an older adult's gambling habits should be acquainted with the "Warning Signs of Senior Problem Gambling" (pg. 3).

If you are the relative or friend of an older adult who enjoys gambling, take the time to discuss with that person the detrimental effects of problem gambling.

And if you suspect a problem in an older adult close to you, or are currently affected by another's problem gambling, contact the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling at 888-ADMIT-IT.

Intervention: When is it Appropriate?

Because compulsive gambling is a serious addiction, because its effects are so devastating, and because the problem will not simply disappear on its own, caring assistance is what older adult problem gamblers need more than anything else.

However, as is often the case with other addictions, it may be impossible for an older adult to get help without intervention from family and friends. Unfortunately, for the spouses and children of older adult gamblers, addressing the issue can be extremely difficult. Spouses often feel hopeless and too ashamed to

discuss the problem with children or others, and children often feel uncomfortable with the role reversal needed to confront the parent.

Still, when one witnesses a loss of control in an older adult due to a gambling problem, it is imperative that family and friends intervene to protect the problem gambler from the destructive effects of the addiction.

For Florida residents, the FCCG provides a sure source of caring support. Trained counselors are available 24 hours a day, and will provide the experience and knowledge you need to confront a loved one's gambling problem.

For Problem Gamblers, Help Starts with FCCG

Left untreated, a compulsive gambling addiction will eventually rob an older adult of everything that's important in life. But, as a gambling addiction is often referred to as the "hidden addiction," the problem can go unnoticed for some time—time that is too valuable to lose for an older adult who should be enjoying retirement.

When an older adult gambler is ready to admit that he or she may have a problem, or if the family and friends of an older adult gambler suspect a problem, the trained counselors of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling are ready to lend assistance.



Even if your personal situation seems hopeless, the FCCG can provide the support that problem gamblers so desperately need to get their lives back on track.

If you or someone you care about has a gambling problem, call the toll-free, 24-hour FCCG helpline at 888-ADMIT-IT.

Warning Signs of Senior Problem Gambling

- Withdrawal from family, friends or regular activities.
- Neglecting personal needs or health.
- Mood swings based upon winnings and losses.
- Depression or withdrawal anxiety resulting from gambling excursions.
- Sudden need for money or loans.
- Secrecy, avoidance or lying when questioned about gambling habits.
- Unaccounted blocks of time.
- Missing possessions or assets, including pawning or sale of personal items.
- Using retirement funds or cashing in an insurance policy to fund gambling.
- Needing to gamble larger and larger amounts of money to experience the thrill.
- Gambling to calm nerves, forget worries or reduce depression.
- Preoccupation with gambling.

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Confidential Assistance
with a gambling problem.
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