



HELP SHEET

IS SOMEONE ELSE'S GAMBLING AFFECTING YOUR LIFE

Sometimes it is the gambling behaviour of a member of your family, partner or friend that begins to negatively impact on your life. Often it can be hard to tell whether or not the concerns are actually related to gambling or not. People experiencing gambling problems often go to great lengths to cover up their behaviour. Sometimes even taking post office boxes to hide overdue bills, not declaring all debts and often just deceiving others because they are so fearful of the consequences of their own behaviour. This denial is very much part of the syndrome but can be frustrating for others and hard to bear the consequences of someone else's health problem.

It is important for friends and family to seek help and information for themselves so they can choose how to respond to the situation rather than just react to the circumstances they may be placed in. Family members are often involved financially and sometimes to their own detriment. It is important to protect family assets and look after yourself in the face of your partner/family member's health problem.

Getting financial and sometimes legal advice is helpful, as is knowing how and where to set boundaries on your family member's behaviour. Sometimes women who are in relationships with men who gamble may find they a "bailing out" their partner's debt or covering up to hide the problem from others. This can be very isolating and lead to your own health problems and financial insecurity.

It is important to understand that the person with the gambling problem needs to get help for themselves but that you are also entitled to feel safe, secure and

protected from their problem. Getting advice from a professional counsellor may help you learn new ways to understand the problem and its affects upon you. It may assist you to communicate these to your partner/family member and help you plan how to secure your future. This is especially important when there are children involved.

Partners in particular often find themselves experiencing extreme mood swings as they deal with the frustrations, stresses and lack of trust often experienced by those living with someone affected by this problem (refer chart on the Effects of Problem Gambling On The Spouse this manual). It is important to recognise that you are not alone and there is considerable support available to the family and friends of people who are having problems with gambling. You don't have to wait for the person who has the gambling problem to get help first.



Problem gambling affects not just the person with the gambling behaviour but their family too. Support to

family members can increase the opportunity for the whole family to develop increased coping strategies and learn new ways of dealing with the affects of problem gambling. It can be a great healing process for all involved. It just means taking that first step.