Understanding gambling addiction and problem gambling

Gambling addiction, also known as compulsive gambling, is a type of impulse-control disorder. Compulsive gamblers can’t control the impulse to gamble, even when they know their gambling is hurting themselves or their loved ones. Gambling is all they can think about and all they want to do, no matter the consequences. Compulsive gamblers keep gambling whether they’re up or down, broke or flush, happy or depressed. Even when they know the odds are against them, even when they can’t afford to lose, people with a gambling addiction can’t “stay off the bet.”

Gamblers can have a problem, however, without being totally out of control. Problem gambling is any gambling behaviour that disrupts your life. If you’re preoccupied with gambling, spending more and more time and money on it, chasing losses, or gambling despite serious consequences, you have a gambling problem.

Myths & Facts about Gambling Addiction and Problem Gambling

MYTH: You have to gamble every day to be a problem gambler.

FACT: A problem gambler may gamble frequently or infrequently. Gambling is a problem if it causes problems.

MYTH: Problem gambling is not really a problem if the gambler can afford it.

FACT: Problems caused by excessive gambling are not just financial. Too much time spent on gambling can lead to relationship breakdown and loss of important friendships.

MYTH: Partners of problem gamblers often drive problem gamblers to gamble.

FACT: Problem gamblers often rationalize their behaviour. Blaming others is one way to avoid taking responsibility for their actions, including what is needed to overcome the problem.

MYTH: If a problem gambler builds up a debt, you should help them take care of it.

FACT: Quick fix solutions may appear to be the right thing to do. However, bailing the gambler out of debt may actually make matters worse by enabling gambling problems to continue.