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This Weeks Poll

Mosquitoes

Have you been bitten by a Mosquito this year?

- Yes
- No

Do you spray around your home to reduce swarms?

- Yes
- No

Do you use spray or lotion repellent when spending time outside?

- Yes
- No

Did you know there are at least 3,500 known species of mosquitoes?

- Yes
- No

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Gambling Addiction

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Tuesday, Jul 21, 2009 @06:10am CST

Recent studies show that a growing number of young people are compulsive gamblers, particularly obsessed with gambling on the Internet. And now, Canadian researchers say that you may be able to discover who will become an addict one day by studying the behavior of kindergartners. How can you prevent your teen from getting hooked?

Daniel was a compulsive gambler.

Over the course of two years he racked up 18 thousand dollars of credit card debt.

"So on a typical night, my gambling at its worst, say here Oct. 25th," Daniel says looking at his bank statement, "I deposited \$50, I deposited another 50, another 50, a 100, another 100, 50, and then 200. So all-in-all that's 6- \$600."

But was he an impulsive child years ago?

Researchers at the University of Montreal say there is a direct correlation: the more impulsive kids are, the more likely they will become gambling addicts.

And, experts say, because of the Internet, addiction is a greater problem today than ever.

"So whereas 15-20 years ago you have to get into a car, drive to a casino, might take you an hour or two hours or three hours to get there, now you can just pick up your cell phone and be gambling while you are waiting in the doctor's office, or while you're waiting at the bus stop," explains Dr. Timothy Fong, Addiction Psychiatrist.

That's why, experts say, parents need to be proactive.

According to psychologist Dr. Larry Rosen that means, "Familiarize yourself with what potential problems your kids might come up against, and sit them down and talk to them."

Daniel doesn't play online poker anymore, but he does gamble on sports.

That makes his girlfriend, Carlee Schaper, nervous. "When it comes to watching him online, sports betting and things like that, I don't like to see him doing that, because I feel like it's a slippery slope, and, um, it's possible for him to go back to his old ways."

"Should I be gambling?" says Daniel, "Probably not. But for the time being I'm in a good place."

Tips for Parents

Three-quarters of a million teens have a serious gambling problem, according to research from the University of Buffalo. That includes stealing money to gamble, gambling more money than initially planned, or selling possessions to gamble more. Another 11 percent of teens admit to gambling at least twice a week. Evidence shows that individuals who begin gambling at an early age run a much higher lifetime risk of developing a gambling problem.

Some individuals and organizations support teaching poker to adolescents as a real-life means of instructing on critical reasoning, mathematics and probability. They say teaching the probability of winning is the most important aspect of the game and that the mathematics behind the reasoning that will show kids they won't win in the long run.

The legal gambling age in the United States is 21. Poker sites enable minors to play by clicking a box to verify that they are the legal age and entering a credit card number. Age is verified further only if suspicions are raised.

Some researchers call gambling the fastest-growing teenage addiction. Teens are especially vulnerable to gambling because of the excitement, the risk and their belief that skill is involved. The Arizona Council on Compulsive Gambling and the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling lists the following warning signs that a teen may be struggling with a gambling problem:

- Unexplained need for money: Valuables missing from the home and frequently borrowing money
- Withdrawal from the family: Changes in personality, impatience, criticism, sarcasm, increased hostility, irritability, making late-night calls, fewer outside activities, a drop in grades and unaccountable time away from home
- Interest in sports teams with no prior allegiance: Watching televised sports excessively, exhibiting an unusual interest in sports reports, viewing multiple games at one time, running

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Gambling paraphernalia: Betting slips, IOUs, lottery tickets, frequent card and dice games at home and the overuse of gambling language, such as "bet," in conversation
 Coming to parents to pay gambling debts
 Using lunch or bus money to gamble
 Ask yourself the following questions if you suspect your child has a gambling addiction:

Is your child out of the house or confined to a room with a computer for long, unexplained periods of time?
 Does your child miss work, school or extra-curricular activities?
 Can your child be trusted with money?
 Does your child borrow money to gamble with or to pay gambling debts?
 Does your child hide his or her money?
 Have you noticed a personality change in your child?
 Does your child consistently lie to cover up or deny his or her gambling activities?
 Compulsive gambling is an illness, progressive in nature. There is no cure, but with help the addiction can be suppressed. Many who gamble live in a dream world to satisfy emotional needs. The gambler dreams of a life filled with friends, new cars, furs, penthouses, yachts, etc. However, a gambler usually will return to win more, so no amount of winning is sufficient to reach these dreams.

The compulsion to gamble can easily lead to self-destructive behavior, especially for teens. If you are concerned that a young person you care about has a gambling problem, encourage him or her to contact a gambling help line in your area or to seek professional help at a gambling treatment facility.

References
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