

New York Council on Problem Gambling

October 9th-11th 2018 Annual Conference

What are some characteristics of a person who is a compulsive gambler?

1. **INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT REALITY.** Hence the escape into the dream world of gambling.
2. **EMOTIONAL INSECURITY.** A compulsive gambler finds he or she is emotionally comfortable only when "in action". It is not uncommon to hear a Gamblers Anonymous member say: "The only time I felt like I belonged was when I was gambling. Then I felt secure and comfortable. No great demands were made upon me. I knew I was destroying myself, yet at the same time, I had a certain sense of community."
3. **IMMATURITY.** A desire to have all the good things in life without any great effort on their part seems the common character pattern of compulsive gamblers. Many Gamblers Anonymous members accept the fact that they were unwilling to grow up. Subconsciously they felt they could avoid mature responsibility by wagering on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card, and so the struggle to escape responsibility finally became a subconscious obsession.

Also, a compulsive gambler seems to have a strong inner urge to be a "big shot" and needs to have a feeling of being all powerful. The compulsive gambler is willing to do anything (often of an anti-social nature) to maintain the image he or she wants others to see.

What is the dream world of the compulsive gambler?

This is another common characteristic of compulsive gamblers. A lot of time is spent creating images of the great and wonderful things they are going to do as soon as they make the big win. They often see themselves as quite philanthropic and charming people. They may dream of providing families and friends with new cars, mink coats and other luxuries. Compulsive gamblers picture themselves leading a pleasant gracious life, made possible by the huge sums of money they will accrue from their "system". Servants, penthouses, nice clothes, charming friends, yachts, and world tours are a few of the wonderful things that are just around the corner after a big win is finally made.

Pathetically, however, there never seems to be a big enough winning to make even the smallest dream come true. When compulsive gamblers succeed, the gamble to dream still greater dreams. When failing, they gamble in reckless desperation and the depths of their misery are fathomless and their dream world comes crashing down. Sadly, they will struggle back, dream more dreams, and of course suffer more misery. No one can convince them that their great schemes will not someday come true. They believe they will, for without this dream world, life for them would not be tolerable.

GA WEBSITE: gamblersanonymous.org

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