

Casual Gambling Could Lead To Addiction, Personal Tragedy

NOT all football games are played in a stadium, or even by athletes. Many "games" are betting pools or other gambling played by people who would never consider themselves to be habitual gamblers.

These games go on in homes, offices, stores and public buildings where they may be forbidden by policy, if not by law. Just as social drinkers may become alcoholics without intending to do so, a certain number of those who gamble for fun will become gambling addicts, ultimately losing their jobs, their homes and families.

It is estimated that the number of confirmed alcoholics and the number of compulsive gamblers are just about equal, with around 10 million of each in the United States. Gamblers Anonymous tries to persuade gamblers to hold their money, much like Alcoholics Anonymous works with drinkers to keep them sober.

Harold C. Swanson, Oklahoma's

new FBI chief, says massive gambling operations are flourishing in the state because of lack of adequate anti-betting statutes. It's against the law to bet on cockfights, horse races and dog races, but the law doesn't keep people from betting on people.

That includes gambling on sports, which is a matter of some concern to coaches, because rabid football or basketball fans sometimes become irate when game scores don't match their betting odds.

It doesn't take long to make a casual gambler into an addict. Recently, Jim Reid, Baptist chaplain on "The Strip" in Las Vegas, Nev., told of a young construction worker who had saved \$3,000 to remodel his home. He needed \$4,000, so he flew to Las Vegas to win it.

Reid said it took the young man half a day to lose the \$3,000. Then he cashed out and lost three air tickets sent him by relatives trying to get him to come home. The disillusioned gambler was ready to commit suicide when Reid finally got him out of town.

Gambling interests and syndicates are expanding and may be operating in Oklahoma. Worst of all, state governments are now big gambling operators. Thirteen states now operate some kind of lottery, although records show that legal systems do not displace illegal gambling. They just make it easier for crooks to operate.

When Congress passed the Organized Crime Act in 1970, it also created a National Commission on Gambling Policy to study the issue and report in 1976. Congress cut the commission's budget some, however, when it proposed four treks to Las Vegas, with writers at \$100 a day to look into the "history, mythology and astrology of gambling". The Commission also wanted \$63,000 for "overhead".

If Congress is considering gambling as a means of balancing the budget or paying off the national debt, forget it! The subject already has been researched by thousands of individuals who found that the way things are rigged, it just doesn't pay off.

In addition, one authority points out that, even in gambling, private enterprise is always more efficient than government bureaucracy.

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