

FACT SHEET



NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE GAMING
Advancing Research, Education and Awareness

DIAGNOSING A GAMBLING DISORDER

KEY FACTS

- The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders–III (DSM-III)* first recognized pathological gambling in 1980.¹
- The *DSM-IV* currently classifies pathological gambling as an impulse control disorder and defines it as “persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior ... that disrupts personal, family or vocational pursuits.”²
- According to the *DSM-IV*, an individual who exhibits five or more of the following behaviors likely suffers from pathological gambling.²
 1. A preoccupation with gambling (e.g., preoccupation with reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble)
 2. A need to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired level of excitement
 3. Repeated, unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling
 4. Feels restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling (withdrawal symptoms)
 5. Uses gambling as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g., feelings of hopelessness, guilt, anxiety and depression)
 6. After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing” one’s losses)
 7. Lies to family members, therapist or others to conceal the¹ extent of one’s involvement with gambling
 8. Has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft or embezzlement to finance gambling
 9. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job or educational or career opportunity because of gambling
 10. Relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling

REFERENCES

1. American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association; 1980.
2. American Psychiatric Association. *DSM-IV: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association; 1994.

The fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's DSM is expected to be published in 2013. For the upcoming version, the work group has proposed changes for classifying and diagnosing gambling disorders. More information on the proposed changes is available in the National Center for Responsible Gaming's (NCRG) white paper “The Evolving Definition of Pathological Gambling in the DSM-5.”