Dear Alice,

Do you know of any sites that deal with gambling addictions? My boyfriend's mother is very addicted and needs serious help. She just recently refinanced the house that we are to live in when we're married. I'm scared one day we'll come home and everything will be gone. If you can give me some info that can help that would be great. Or if you know some sites, it would help, too.

Sincerely,

LA

Answer

Dear LA,

Your concern about your partner's mother's gambling is understandable. Gambling, in its different forms, has been popular for a long time. Many people are able to enjoy gambling once in a while, without much of an impact on their work, family, or finances. Some different forms of gambling include:

- Casino games
- Lottery games
- Slot machines
- Bingo
- Card games
- Dog and horse racing
- Stock market
- Sports betting

Gambling addiction, in a lot of ways, is quite similar to substance addictions to alcohol and other drugs. It's often overlooked since many forms of gambling and betting are legal, and, indeed, are encouraged by such governmental programs as the lotto. A person's gambling can be defined as compulsive or out of control when some or all of the following start happening:

- Gambling is all s/he can think about
- S/he bets more money more frequently
S/he experiences intense frustration or discomfort when trying to stop
S/he continually tries to bet again in order to make up for losses
S/he continues gambling despite negative consequences

Compulsive gambling can cause strain in relationships, psychological stress, physical symptoms of stress or a lack of attention to one's health, problems with one's job and other responsibilities, and, of course, financial difficulty. Usually, people having trouble controlling their gambling need help recovering from their addiction. You can assist in this process by researching and suggesting some resources for support and treatment. Keep in mind, though, that your boyfriend's mother must acknowledge that her gambling is out of control, and want to change her behavior, for treatment to be helpful.

There are many self-help and professionally staffed programs available to both gamblers and their family and friends. People close to compulsive gamblers often find it helpful to talk and think about the ways the gambling has affected their lives, too. Many programs follow a twelve-step model similar to Alcoholics Anonymous. This, with the support of individual and group therapy, as well as the possibility of medication, may help your boyfriend's mother to overcome her gambling addiction. Here are some organizations to try:

- Gamblers Anonymous [3]
- Problem Gambling Education Association [4]

These organizations may have suggestions for beginning a conversation about the gambling behaviors you are concerned about. Best of luck addressing these issues and getting help for your mother-in-law to be.

Take care,

Alice!

Category:
- Emotional Health [5]
- Miscellaneous [6]

Related questions

- Addicted to shopping [7]
- Food addiction [8]
- Reaching out for help with a drug addiction [9]
- What's the difference between an addiction and a compulsion? [10]
- Fighting over money [11]
- Help! I think I have a TV show obsession! [12]

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Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

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Links