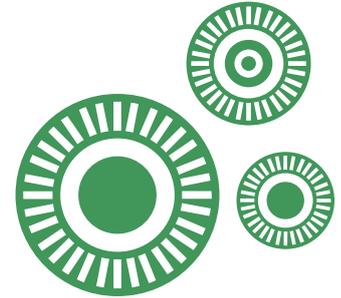


There are many reasons why people may find themselves involved in gambling

Here we look at some of the triggers that could occur in people's lives which can be the catalyst for gambling and look at the effects and consequences this can create in their lives, both now and in the future.



Why people gamble

Gambling can be a fun hobby, something to dip into occasionally, maybe with friends visiting a casino or a bet on the grand national or sporting event. They can take it or leave it. If they win then it is a bonus, if they lose, it's not a problem and there is always next time.

However there are life events which can happen at any time which can be a trigger for young people to turn to activities or new activities in an attempt to escape from their current situation or get some relief from whatever is on their mind. These can include:

Traumatic events

This could be family such as a parent separation/divorce/bereavement/moving away - The sudden change in a young person's life can be a trigger as they look for an escape. Something that helps them focus on anything other than what is happening in their life and how they are coping with it. If they start off successfully and win money it makes them happy and so they continue as they seek that feeling of happiness.

Stress

Young people can face many stresses in their life. Add in changing hormones and emotions and this can be a difficult time. Whether they feel pressure to do well at school and complete work, find themselves getting stressed with the pressure of exams/choosing the right career or university course/ stress of moving to university or even the pressure to live up to expectations they may want to find a way of releasing that stress.

Stress impairs the brain function which can affect the brain's ability to function properly. The brain also responds to rewards and creates feelings of pleasure, which gambling can provide through the anticipation and joy of winning. A young person will want to continue experiencing those pleasurable feelings so can engage in more and more gambling activities.

Anxiety/depression

Whether this has been brought on by life changes/stresses or a chemical imbalance, it can cause your brain to release stress hormones. To relieve feelings of depression they choose to engage in an activity which releases feelings of pleasure and cause their mood to lift. It can provide them with an escape.

If a young person suffers with anxiety due to being out and about or around people, participating in on-line activities can feel a safer way to participate and feel part of something.

Loneliness

Some people find it hard to make friends. Others may have moved to a new place and are struggling to make new friends. Whatever the reason, entering an on-line casino/bingo hall etc can provide someone with the opportunity to socialise. That aspect along can release rewards in the brain which they want to continue to experience. A popular activity for university students includes joining bingo or bongo bingo, casino or poker nights as these provides them with a social activity and the gambling comes second. However, they continue participating for the social aspects but the reward chemicals the brain releases encourages them to also start coming back for the gambling aspect as well.

Time

For some young people when studying, they can have a lot of extra time on their hands and to relieve boredom they get involved in gambling.

Other addictions

If, due to genetics, someone has an addictive personality there is a strong chance they will develop a gambling addiction. The brain stores pleasurable emotions on a subconscious level and as they receive more of this, the brain makes more space so a person can search for other ways to continue to satisfy the brain and turn to other forms of addiction.

Research has shown there is a 50% higher risk of developing an addiction if another family member has an addiction.

This does not need to be an addiction to gambling, it can be a different type of addiction such as alcohol or drugs etc

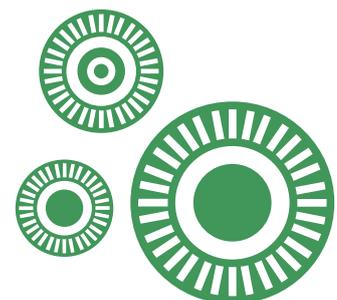
Success

If a young person feels they are not doing well at school, in their job, at university or in a relationship they may turn to gambling as, especially if they win, as see it as a form of success. If, however, their luck runs out they may continue as they chase their loses as they do not want to feel they are a failure at this as well as aspects of their life. Gambling can provide illusions of success, so if they are failing in their studies for example, this can help them feel they are doing something right.

Money worries/debts

More for students at university but can be at a younger age. Some students find themselves in debt early on in their student life and so look at methods such as gambling as a way to get them out of debt or making easy money.

Young people see adverts, such as the national lottery, and believe they can have a better life if they have money and so start gambling in order to achieve the illusion of a successful and fulfilled life.



Consequences

Like many things in life there are consequences to actions. With gambling it can cause short term consequences, however it can lead to longer term consequences which could affect a young persons future.

Health effects

Addiction can effects peoples physical health through Sleep. Whether they are staying up all night gambling, or having trouble sleeping, lack of sleep can cause feelings of fatigue and lack of concentration in classes/ lectures/work.

If they have neglected their school work this could affect their grades, which in turn could affect their future prospects, whether that be finding an apprenticeship, getting into university, getting a job. This in turn could lead to mental health issues.

Casinos do not have any windows, games of poker tend to be indoors and if they are playing on-line people will likely to be indoors which means a lack of fresh air or sunlight can cause health implications, poor skin, lack of vitamin D, lack of exercise can all effect a persons health both physically and mentally.

Stress due to loss of money, owing money, paying bills can affect people physically through weight loss, losing hair or mentally leading to anxiety, depression or even suicide.

Longer term consequences

46% of gamblers have stolen to finance their habit. (gla.ac.uk)

If caught stealing or engaging in criminal activities to fund their habit young people can end up with a criminal record. This can have effects on their career as they will have to declare this on job applications.

1 in 2 people have sold possessions to pay gambling debts. (gla.ac.uk)

Debt can lead to bad credit which can affect you later on in life when you are trying to purchase something on credit or getting a mortgage to buy a house.

There can be many other triggers and consequences. Being aware of issues your child may be going through can help to identify potential risks and harm they could turn to as a way of coping. Looking out for changes in your child's behaviour, chatting to your child, ensuring they have a good support network and monitoring their behaviours and actions can help identify any issues sooner than later.

Speaking to your child regarding how gambling can be safe if approached in the right manner, however helping them to become aware of the risks and consequences if they can't play in a safe manner.