

# STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

## GAMBLING ADDICTION

It can be hard trying to help someone who gambles, especially if they do not think they have a problem or do not want to stop. Many people find it difficult to talk to someone close to them about gambling issues because they often do not know what to say and it can feel confrontational.

### TIPS FOR TALKING TO A FELLOW MARINE OR LOVED ONE ABOUT GAMBLING

- First, be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about the gambling problem.
- ASK them directly if they are gambling and if it's causing other problems in their life.
- Talking about it openly and directly builds hope and encouragement. It may keep them from escalating the problem to increased levels of other risky behaviors (alcohol, drugs, violence, suicide, etc.).
- Be willing to listen. Let them express themselves.
- Do not judge! Do not debate whether gambling is right or wrong, or whether they should feel guilty or not.
- Get involved. Be available. Show concern and support.
- Do not be sworn to secrecy. Seek support for your fellow Marines.
- Offer hope by letting them know that help is available.
- Take action. Talk with them about available options and services.
- Conclude the conversation with information that helps them take the next step in resolving the issue.

#### **You can also:**

- Be vigilant! Remain observant and aware of potential problems.
- Greet the Marine. Ask how he/she is doing.
- Use active listening skills to facilitate conversation. Pay attention to both verbal content and body language.
- Use open-ended questions such as "If you woke up tomorrow and your problem was fixed, what would be different?"
- Reflect back on previous statements that the Marine has made, using their own words, to help them gain an understanding of their situation. For example, "Sounds like you are having problems with..." or "So what you're saying is..."

#### **If further information or clarification is needed, say:**

- "What did you mean by xxxx?"
- "What happened?"
- "Have you told anyone in your command?"

### WARNING SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

Addiction is a common term heard in the media. It is frequently associated with alcohol and drugs in current reporting. However, there are other types of addiction. Gambling may begin as a fun activity with friends and family. That behavior becomes an addiction when it is a habit that the person feels they must do. The following symptoms may be observed in someone addicted to gambling:

- Increase in time spent gambling
- Gambling for a long periods of time (more than a year)
- Need to gamble with increasing amounts of money
- Restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop
- Repeated, unsuccessful efforts to cut down or stop
- Often gambles when feeling distressed
- Returns another day to get even after losing money
- Lies to conceal the gambling
- Problems in relationships, job or education due to gambling
- Relies on others to provide money to meet financial obligations after losing

There are also emotional symptoms associated with gambling addiction, such as anxiety, depression and even suicidal thoughts. These symptoms can result in actual physical symptoms such as lack of sleep, weight loss/gain, paleness of skin and dark circles under the eyes.

### SUPPORT & RESOURCES

If you or a family member appear to be experiencing any of these symptoms or other significant issues due to gambling, contact your installations' Substance Abuse Counseling Center (SACC). SACC staff are professionals who can help you evaluate the problem and learn alternatives to deal with the problem. Visit your local MCCS website for SACC contact information.

