

#08-17 © Copyright 2009, all rights reserved worldwide. GAMBLING AND THE LAW® is a registered trademark of Professor I Nelson Rose, www.GAMBLINGANDTHELAW.com.

Gambling and the Law®: More Pathological Poker

A couple of columns ago, I listed the 15 questions I developed to test whether a poker player is a compulsive gambler.

Based on the comments I received and my own observations of professional poker players, I would like to add an additional question:

16. Do you feel you always have to be in action, even when you are not playing poker, so that you often bet on games and propositions that are more luck than skill?

Readers wondered at my reasoning behind some of my questions. My columns have a short word limit, so I could not go into detail on the questions. Here are some additional comments:

1. Play for stakes you know are too high – I think a compulsive gambler plays mainly for the thrill of gambling. If he were merely a poor player, he would not recognize that he is out of his league.
2. Can't quit when behind -- Chasing is probably the single most common characteristic of problem gamblers.
3. Can't quit when ahead -- This is less common, but the operative word is can't in "feel you can't quit." Compulsive gambling is classified as an impulse control disorder. A winner who has an irrational, irresistible urge to continue while ahead is as much of a compulsive gambler as the loser who chases.
4. Losing because of bad beats -- Compulsive gamblers usually blame others for their losses.
5. Often get angry at other players -- A major symptom of compulsive gambling is anger.
6. On tilt more than once -- I should have worded this, "Have you gone on tilt often?"
7. Increasing bets when losing is the definition of chasing.
8. Often stay in too many hands -- Again, I was trying to find players who are more attracted to the risk, rather than the cerebral, side of poker.
9. Drinking -- there is a very high correlation of problem gambling with problem drinking.

10. Forget important social obligations -- Compulsive gamblers put gambling first, at the expense of the rest of their personal lives.
11. Misled or lied about how much poker you played. Compulsive gamblers are liars.
12. Increasingly using the ATM in casinos -- Getting cash beyond what the player had budgeted. Considering the outrageous fees and interest rates on cash withdrawals from these machines, I would say that anyone who used an ATM in a casino more than once is either a compulsive gambler or a very poor poker player.
13. Lied to get money. Compulsive gamblers are constantly conning others to get money.
14. Feel bad about things you have done because of poker. My first draft had as an example failing to pick up a child from school. I am trying to get to the compulsion to continue playing, even at the cost of personal obligations.
15. More interested in poker than sex. I didn't mean thinking about it 8 hours a day. Gambling to a compulsive becomes more important than everything else. Spouses often complain that they thought the compulsive gambler was having an affair. The problem gamblers' response is that they did not want to take the time away from gambling to have sex.

END

© Copyright 2009. Professor I Nelson Rose is recognized as one of the world's leading experts on gambling law and is a consultant and expert witness for players, governments and industry. His latest books, INTERNET GAMING LAW (2nd edition just published), GAMING LAW: CASES AND MATERIALS, and BLACKJACK AND THE LAW are available through his website, www.GAMBLINGANDTHELAW.com.