Problem Gambling Family Activity Sheet

Discussion topic:

Gambling has been around for thousands of years.

While ancient gambling often had religious purpose, modern gambling is different. Most gambling today is against a commercial business- like a casino, racetrack, bingo hall, sports book or the Lottery- often called "the house". The house is in business to make money, and it does so by keeping a mathematical advantage in all the games it provides. The law of averages explains that, when betting against the house, it is possible to win once in a while, but it's impossible to win over the long run.

Discussion topic:

Gambling can become addictive.

Governments tend to ban gambling when the negative consequences of gambling (including addiction) become more apparent. Generations that grow up free of gambling problems tend to make it legal, until the problems resurface. Gambling is now more readily available than at any other time over the last 100 years. What gambling activities is your family exposed to? Have you known someone with a gambling addiction?

Discussion topic:

Problem gamblers gamble too much and have negative consequences as a result of their gambling.

They often incorrectly believe that their wins are due to their skill at gambling and their losses are due to bad luck. They also incorrectly believe that money will solve their problems or make them happy and that their history of past outcomes will impact the next outcome in a game of chance. The truth is that most gambling involves completely random events with results that can never be predicted accurately.

The Odds

1. When betting against the house, what type of gambling allows you to make money in the long run?

Answer: None. Your only choice is how much money you want to lose and how fast you want to lose it.

2. Who is more likely to throw a pair of sixes?
A. Someone who has just thrown a pair of sixes
B. Someone who has not thrown a pair of sixes in the last ten throws.

Answer: It's a trick question! Both are equally likely.

3. If someone says he or she has won money at the casino (or playing bingo, etc.) at least 50 times, what are the possible explanations?

Answer: Either that person is lying, or he or she has also lost at least sixty times.

4. You flipped a coin and it came up heads 100 percent of the time. How many times did you probably flip it?
A. Ten times
B. Two times
C. Equally likely to be two times or ten times

Answer: B. Two times. The law of averages tells us that the more times something happens, the closer the average result will be to its true odds. It is not unusual to flip a coin twice and get heads both times. However, it is very unlikely for heads to come up ten times in a row.

Adapted from: Stacked Deck; A Program to Prevent Problem Gambling Grades 9-12. By- Robert Williams, Ph.D., and Robert Wood, Ph.D.