

Compulsive Gambling: More Than Dreidle by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski MD Quotes

I sometimes feel that it is my destiny to alert the Jewish community to things it does not want to know. First, that alcoholism is a problem among Jews, then drugs among young people, then spouse abuse. Now I must follow with the news that the incidence of compulsive (addictive) gambling is alarming.¹

Alcoholism and drug addiction are serious problems among Jews. However, my impression is that *compulsive gambling is even more widespread among Jews than alcoholism!* If, in fact, we are unaware of the prevalence of compulsive gambling in the Jewish community it is because it is hushed up. It is considered a shonde (absolute disgrace) to have a compulsive gambler in the family.²

The compulsive gambler is similar to the alcoholic or drug addict. For him, gambling is not a pastime or entertainment. It is the single most important thing in his life. He will do anything to continue gambling. He denies that he has lost control. He insists that he can recoup his losses. He may say that he is driven to gambling by his wife or employer. He may lose everything and resort to crime to sustain his gambling. He becomes a habitual liar. (One very

¹ Location 73 (Kindle).

² Location 134.

religiously observant woman said of her compulsive gambling ex-husband that he was simply unable to tell the truth. “If he would tell me that today is Shabbos, I would promptly put on the light, knowing for certain that it must be some other day.”)³

A crucial caveat! Even though I consider compulsive gambling and other addictions to be illnesses, whether physiologic or psychologic, this does not absolve the addict of responsibility for his actions. The claim that he was under a compulsion to gamble is not an acceptable defense. The Talmud says, “Adam muad l’olam,” a person is always responsible for his actions and for any damage these may cause.⁴

Buy the book and Kindle: <https://www.amazon.com.au/COMPULSIVE-GAMBLING-MORE-THAN-DREIDLE-ebook/dp/B002EVPE8Q>

³ Location 186.

⁴ Location 266.