

Randomness and Risk of Gambling

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Understanding Randomness -Why the Machine is NEVER “Due” to Pay Out by John Lee.

People often believe that a slot machine or video lottery terminal that has not paid out for a long while becomes ‘due’ to pay out. This belief can lead a person to continue to gamble for long periods of time while awaiting the expected big payoff to come. Machines programmed to be random, however, never become ‘due’ no matter how long the interval between substantial pay outs.

Here’s why.

Randomness

Each time you pull a slot machine handle you have exactly the same odds of winning as you did on every other occasion that handle was ever pulled.

These machines are programmed using random number generators. These generators produce millions of number combinations and thousands of these number combinations cycle past every second. The results that pop up on the screen depend on the number combination that rolls over at the split second that you press the bet button. No matter how long the machine has gone since paying out, you have the same odds of hitting a ‘big payday’ sequence of numbers from the random number generator chip as you did on every other bet.

The Gambler’s Fallacy

Over the long term, over thousands and thousands of spins, a coin will land head 50% of the time and tails 50% of the time, and a roulette wheel will pay red as often as it pays black. Over the short term, however, things are not so stable. When betting on something with a fixed probability, like a coin toss, a slot machine or most forms of casino wagering, past events do not influence future outcomes. The roulette wheel does not remember that it just landed on black 5 times in a row and when it’s set spinning again, it has exactly the same odds to land on black or red as it did in the 5 preceding spins.

You Don’t Have a System

If you gamble, do it only as a recreational pastime and never bet more than you can afford to lose. Remember that no machines ever come ‘due’ to pay, and that in a casino, no matter how many times a past event has occurred, future events are not affected.

Risks of Gambling

Although it may not seem as destructive as the effects of drugs or alcohol, gambling can impact on many aspects of your life including family and relationships, your finances, your work and even your health

Family and relationships

Problem gamblers spend more time gambling or thinking about gambling, and it can become extremely difficult to maintain a normal family life. This creates stress and has a negative impact on relationships and family life

- Families usually have more arguments over money and get hounded by debt collectors.
- Problem gamblers might miss family activities, including meals, birthdays, and other important events.
- "Casino kids" sometimes are left in cars at gambling venues while a parent bets.
- Increased arguments within the family.
- Compulsive gamblers more often provoke reactive violence in their spouses.
- Children of problem gamblers typically have lower grades, higher substance abuse rates, and more frequent suicide attempts.
- Children of problem gamblers could be more likely to develop gambling problems themselves.
- Problem gamblers are more likely to become separated or divorced.

Financial Risk

Problem gamblers' finances will fluctuate from time to time as they experience periods when they win regularly but also experience high levels of loss. Although a problem gambler may occasionally experience "big wins" they should also expect to see an increase in financial difficulties.

- Increasing debts.
- "Maxed out" credit cards.
- Overdue utility bills might result in cut-offs.
- Borrowing from family and friends.
- Pawning personal and family valuables.
- Passing bad cheques.
- Eviction and forced home sales.
- Bankruptcy.

Problem gamblers are more likely to commit crimes to support their habits. This can include tax evasion, cheque forgery, stealing credit cards, fraudulent loan applications, insurance fraud, theft, embezzlement, fencing stolen goods, unlicensed bookmaking, arson, and even armed robbery.

Health Risks

Most people may not see a connection between their gambling and their health, however problem gambling is associated with a range of emotional, physical, and psychological health problems.

- Self-esteem declines as losses increase.
- Problem gamblers suffer more from stress, anxiety, moodiness, attention deficit hyperactivity, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and manic and clinical depression.
- Some physical problems experienced by problem gamblers include muscular tension, fatigue, stomach ailments, insomnia, colitis, high blood pressure, heart disease, migraines, and skin problems.
- Problem gamblers are more likely to smoke
- Problem gamblers are likely to use alcohol or other drugs to cope with the guilt or desperate situation.
- High proportions of problem gamblers seriously consider or even attempt suicide.

Job Risk

Problem gambling can also have an adverse effect on an individual's ability to perform well at work, college or school.

- Problem gamblers often show up late for work.
- Some problem gamblers skip entire workdays to gamble.
- They are more likely to take sick leave.
- Problem Gamblers usually experience decreased productivity, as they often daydream about gambling or use the Internet at work to gamble.
- They are more likely to ask employers for pay advances, borrow money from fellow employees, steal from work, and embezzle.
- There is a real risk of losing your job as a result of your gambling behavior due to high levels of sickness, absenteeism and misuse of company time