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## review

# Hooked: A Gambler's Nightmare (1996)

*Running time: 15 minutes*

*Producer: Loose Change Film Associates and Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse*

*Commission (AADAC)*

*Distributor: Kinetic Canada 511 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ont., M5S 1Y4*

*Phone: (416) 538-6613, 1-800-263-6910*

*:<http://www.kineticvideo.com>*

*Cost: \$99.00*

Winning, Losing, Desperation and Exhaustion: these are the four parts of *Hooked: A Gambler's Nightmare*, a video profiling the progress of the problem gambler. This well-paced video combines professional commentary with the perspectives of both casual and problem gamblers to highlight the major elements that lead to problem gambling.

*Hooked* is comprehensive in the types of gambling considered - from bingo to casinos to VLTs. It shows that contributing factors to the increased risk of problem gambling are similar to those for alcohol and other drug use problems: early exposure, social difficulties, emotional or mental health problems, and for young people, problems at school.

Starting off with a montage of Las Vegas-style images of the gambling world, *Hooked* conveys some of the excitement of having the chance to win big. The high reward value of winning is another important factor, especially for beginners. The video suggests that this early phase is important; it contributes to an increasing commitment - like upping the ante in an attempt to relive the excitement of the first win. As the gambler's commitment progresses, he or she devotes more resources to

betting, and may continue or escalate betting to pay off debts. In more extreme examples, again like the problem alcohol user, the gambler becomes isolated from friends and family, may lie to hide the extent of the problem or steals money or sells valuables to finance continued gambling.

*Hooked* outlines two case histories and examines the destructive impact of problem gambling on family life. One family speaks of both damaged relationships and serious financial losses. The painful emotions and loss of trust are evident when the family appears together onscreen and in highly emotional moments clearly shows their great pain suffered from loss of trust. In another story, a single man relates how his inability to control his gambling, even though he knew he was in trouble, resulted in the loss of his family through divorce.

Strategies for getting help are mentioned briefly, from attending Gamblers Anonymous meetings to seeking professional counselling. More time could have been devoted to the kinds of treatment available and this area may have to be enlarged upon by a resource person. Though this is a weak point in the video, *Hooked* is never the less well-produced. Generally it moves at a fast pace, the slower segments where gamblers talk about their lives are emotional and have high impact.

Another issue some presenters may want to deal with is the close parallel made between problem gambling and alcohol or other drug use problems. The implication is that the pharmacological effects of substance use (e.g., tolerance and dependence) have some behavioural equivalent in the process of becoming a problem gambler.

This is a good video for presenting the major issues in problem gambling. Given its rather short running time, *Hooked* covers a great deal of material and would serve as a discussion-starter for general adult audiences, workplace presentations and senior students.

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