

"If your conclusions are wrong, check your premises."
Ayn Rand

Now, why did I gamble right after I went to the stop gambling meeting? The people there were wonderful. They were supportive, sincere; they gave out their phone #s and said to call anytime we had the urge to gamble and they would support us and help us. They were giving freely of their time. No one was profiting from this. It wasn't a scam; that was for sure. These people had the noblest and highest of intentions. I respected them all and appreciated them so much. But they were all gamblers, and according to their own definition, even though the group leader hadn't gambled one iota in over twenty years, he was still a gambler who could relapse at any moment so he had to keep going to the meetings every week for the rest of his life. I just felt something was wrong with their assumptions about addiction.

I realized the saying, "My name is Gerard, and I am a compulsive gambler," just didn't work for me. It made me depressed. So I asked myself, what can I say that will make me feel more comfortable, and I came up with "My name is Gerard and I am Not a gambler." I based this on the Shakespeare quote, "Assume the virtue, if you have it not." I wanted to place myself in the future, and start believing today that I would eventually be a non-gambler. This gave me hope.

How do you view yourself? Try different approaches and see what feels most comfortable for you to say about yourself.

My exploration into the study of gambling addiction led me on a path that took me to the realm of quantum physics. There is some wild and crazy stuff going on in the world of subatomic particles. We used to think that the atom was the smallest particle in nature. Now, we know that there is a whole lot going on in things smaller than atoms. If physics can change its views as time goes by and it does experiments and learns new things, why can't our understanding of addictions evolve over time?

I read about something called the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. This then led me to something called the "Observer Effect." Here is a passage quoted from Wikipedia.org:

In science, the term **observer effect** refers to changes that the act of observing will make on the phenomenon being observed. For example, for us to "see" an electron, a photon, must first interact with it, and this interaction will change the path of that electron. It is also theoretically possible for other, less direct means of measurement to affect the electron; even if the electron is simply put into a position where observing it is *possible*, without actual observation taking place, it will still (theoretically) alter its position. In physics, a more mundane observer effect can be the result of instruments that by necessity alter the state of what they measure in some manner. For instance, in electronics, ammeters and voltmeters need to be connected to the circuit, and so by their very presence affect the current or the voltage they are measuring.

This made me think that what if we as a compulsive gambler affect our gambling situation based upon the way in which we observe it? We can't get outside of ourselves to see ourself in an independent, objective manner. Our thoughts, emotions, our ups and downs, all get in the way of recovery. We can't just 'do recovery' like solving a math problem, "ok, so two plus two equals four, I'm done." It doesn't work like that. We are part of the recovery, we affect it daily, it's not something that we can put in a drawer like a school report, we constantly affect our outcomes by the very process of being inside the process. We can't do anything about that, what we can do is change the way we observe by changing the questions we ask ourself and the way we feel about ourself. The way

we interact with the situation, determines the direction of the situation, like in the statement above about the electrons. This is related to the concept of free will.

The problem, in my opinion, is that there is no 'magic cure.' But why should there be? We are all slightly different and so must forge our own paths of life.

Remember the serenity prayer,

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.

Now, the way most people view the gambling addiction is that some people are born as compulsive gamblers, that this is in the category of the 'thing I cannot change.' So they seek recovery methods that will recognize this fact and seek ways to never gamble again. They know that they will always have to resist the urge to gamble because once they start gambling they will be powerless over it, because that is the way they are.

What if, however, we think of gambling addiction as being in the category of the type of thing that you can change, that you just need the courage to do so? What if, indeed! Who's to stop us from doing that. There is no law against thinking of things differently. If you take this approach to recovery you will look for ways to change the gambling nature inside you and learn how to become a non gambler, one who can take it or leave it, one who, if given the opportunity to gamble will be able to say, 'sure I can gamble if I want to, but I don't have the urge to any longer. I don't have to resist the temptation, the temptation is gone.'

I can't say for certain which approach will work for you, but for me, the second approach worked. I can now go through my days without any desires to gambling. I have from time to time tested myself. I go spend a few dollars on lottery tickets and see if the compulsiveness returns, but it doesn't. I can lose \$5 and walk away anytime I wish to. I say to myself "I am Not a gambler." I look at the situation differently now than I did when I was an addict. I don't feel the same love for gambling as I once did. I don't really care about it at all, one way or another. It's a nice feeling to have.

I hope for you that you can find a method that works for you, so that you feel happy about life again, and enjoy waking up in the mornings without worrying how you're going to make it through the day without gambling. There is so much more to life.