

Transcript of John a UK Online Gambler being Interviewed.

Interviewer: "Hi John, when you first started to gamble, what type of gambling did you engage in?"

John: "Well I first started playing on fruit machines in cafes and amusement arcades when I was quite young. Over the years I moved on erm to gambling on horses and dogs in high street book makers when I was about, round about fifteen years old. I also played poker machines in erm that I would find in pubs. In the late nineties I started gambling online as well as in the betting shops."

Interviewer: "And what prompted you to start gambling online?"

John: "Erm, I think I just fell into it really. I got my first computer in the mid nineties and a little while after that I discovered that it was possible to place erm, place bets online without having to walk to the betting shop. It was a long time ago now, it's hard to remember but erm I don't really remember if there was any particular reason why I started to gamble online, apart from the convenience. It was erm, I was already addicted to gambling by this time and it was just so easy to erm, it was just so easy to do."

Interviewer: "And what did you initially find enjoyable about gambling online?"

John: "Again, I would say it was probably the erm convenience factor. I didn't have to leave the house to gamble erm, I didn't have to run to erm the bank to, to get more cash every time I lost which I did when I was in a betting shop. Erm, I could simply reload and carry on. It also helped that I could gamble in, in secret. My family knew that I was erm a gambler and they had often said that I had a problem with it. Gambling on line, I could do it without them knowing."

Interviewer: "And at what point did you identify that gambling was becoming a problem for you?"

John: "Well this initially manifested itself with, with erm the obvious money problems. I was getting deeper and deeper into debt. I'd get paid at the beginning of each month and it would all be gone within a few days. I was becoming more and more isolated from my friends and family. I would say that my lowest point came when I had lost all my money three weeks before Christmas one year. I realised I couldn't carry on like that, you know I can't stress how bad I felt erm, I couldn't see a way out of it. It seemed to be a never ending self destructive spiral and I couldn't see any way forward so I tried to, to end my life really. And that was, was without a doubt my lowest point. Erm I knew I'd had a problem and, and it was a big one but even then I, I still wasn't strong enough to stop gambling."

Interviewer: "What impact did your gambling have on other areas of your life?"

John: "Well I would say that the most visible aspect of my gambling was that I was often without money. I erm, I'd been tens of thousands of pounds in debt, I've had court judgements made against me, I've had bailiffs calling round trying to take away my belongings and ultimately I've been made bankrupt. Having these persistent money troubles meant that I was staying at home more and more and loosing touch with my friends. This kind of isolation made me feel quite low and in a strange way gambling helped to take away some of those feelings. So it really was, was a bit of a vicious circle. Gambling made me feel bad so I gambled to take away those feelings at least

temporarily. At the time I really didn't appreciate how much this would affect me but I would say that it was the most serious aspect of my addiction which would take a very long time for me to accept."

Interviewer: "And what prompted you to stop gambling?"

John: "Well I'd known that I had a problem for a long time but I didn't feel that I was able to do anything about it. I'd tried going to Gamblers Anonymous meetings, I'd seen counsellors erm, I even saw a psychiatrist. But erm, none of them were able to help me at all really or, or at least I wasn't able to accept the help that was being offered. I finally took action to stop after I was made redundant from my job, erm, you know, I had worked in the same organisation for, for over twenty years and I received a very large redundancy payment. I thought this was an opportunity and I thought that I would be able to find a new job, a better job I'd be able to finally have some money so that I could put a deposit down on a flat of my own. Inevitably though I ended up losing pretty much all of that money within six weeks, all my plans had really, well they hadn't really been plans at all they'd just been pipe dreams. While I'd got a gambling addiction you know nothing is possible for me. I could feel when this was happening that erm that things were going very bad for me, you know, I didn't have a job to go to, I was on my own a lot of the time and I was losing all this money, tens of thousands of pounds every day erm and I could feel myself descending into a very bad place and I was very afraid for my own safety. Erm, I had to do something about it and I really didn't care what it was, I'd really completely given up."

Interviewer: "So you'd made the decision to stop gambling, how did you go about that?"

John: "Well I chose to apply to Gordon House, erm, Gordon House is an organisation that provides residential treatment for erm addicted gamblers. I'd know about them for quite a while but I'd never had the courage to actually call them and ask them for help. This time was, was different I was prepared to do anything. That was back in June of 2009 and I've been gamble free since then. I also make a lot of use of the Gambling Therapy website it's, it's very important to me to keep in touch with, with erm people who are recovering from their addiction and it does me a lot of good. I'd become a very erm, closed person, someone who would isolate myself away from people for a long long time and what I learned and Gordon House was that I didn't have to do that anymore. And it was ok for me to open up about my feelings and to speak about them and to ultimately confront them and that, you know, that allowed me to, to work towards, you know, stopping gambling and hopefully, you know, for good. I've now got a very good support network of people who understand me because they've been in a similar position and they're people that I trust. It's something that I really didn't have in the past and it's something that I am very grateful for having now."

Interviewer: "Can you give me an insight into why you feel that you developed a problem with gambling?"

John: Well it's very hard to pin point erm, my particular addiction to just one cause. I have an idea there's a combination of things that conspired together. My home life when I was a child wasn't as good as it, as it could have been and things that I was dealing with then combined with access to fruit machines and also access to betting shops. As my mother worked in a betting shop I would often go and visit her there and that, I feel, has, has worked to throw me into the world of gambling at a younger age than is appropriate I think. I'll give you an example, when I was about eleven years

old I would, I had a paper round and I would regularly lose erm, all the money that I got paid playing the fruit machines within an hour or two after actually being paid on a Saturday morning. So even back then I was losing all that I had.....gambling. Online gambling erm, as far as I can see, it just speeds up the whole process and the limits seem to be well, there, there aren't as many limits erm as you would find in a betting shop or when you are playing on a fruit machine. When I lost, gambling online I would lose thousands in minutes and that escalated, you know, in quite a serious way. When I, when I was playing poker online you know, a seemingly insignificant loss would mean I would switch over to online roulette very quickly which is where I lost the majority of my money. It seemed to me that it was like there was just no limits to what I could win or lose online. As I wasn't using cash it seemed like I wasn't using real money it didn't seem real almost. I would regularly self exclude but I'd be back the next day opening up a new account with a different company. It was very easy to do. Although I wanted to stop I really didn't have any idea of how I could do it on my own."

Interviewer: "And how are you now?"

John: "Well now erm, there's, I'm much happier, much happier with myself erm, I'd been gambling for so long that I couldn't really see at time when, when I wouldn't gamble. It seemed impossible that I could walk down the street and simply choose not to walk into a betting shop and, and that's what I do now, I do it every day. I've realised that I don't have to have a bet if I don't want to, I don't have to put the computer on and go to, go straight to a poker site or an, or an online casino. It's not been easy, it's, in fact it's been the hardest thing I've ever done. I still have plenty of things to work on and there are some aspects of myself I have to keep a close eye on in order to remain gamble free. In the past money issues have dominated most of my waking hours, whether I'm trying to find money to gamble with or I'm trying to find ways of dealing with, dealing with debt. But that's gone now and I'm, and I'm much more relaxed as a result of it. I have a very much better relationship with my family these days, in the past I'd isolate myself even to them and I'm a regular visitor to them and I talk to them on the phone much more regularly than I ever did in the past."

Interviewer: "And having gone through all, how do you now view gambling?"

John: "Well I realise that gambling is just not for me. I can't gamble, I can't gamble responsibly, I can't gamble safely, I can't gamble at all. I can't even watch gambling related events because there's no point. More importantly, I really don't want to. You know, gambling itself isn't a problem I realise that there are many many people who will gamble with there, with money that they can afford, they will have a great time and they really won't worry about it but I'm not one of those people erm, and I have to accept that. However, there is a small but significant number of people who, who can't control themselves for whatever reason and I do feel that erm gambling companies have a responsibility to acknowledge these peoples existence and to provide a reasonable level of assistance to those whose actions indicate that they're out of control."

Interviewer: "Ok John, thank you very much for your time"

John: "Thank you"

Interviewer: "Bye"

John: "Bye"