

Online Gambling Related Harm

It was just for fun

My husband is always on his mobile phone, even when eating. He doesn't pay attention to the children or me. He used to be more involved and engaged, especially with our children.

Some days my husband stays in the bathroom with his mobile phone for ages. He doesn't seem to have time to talk to our children because he's spending so much time looking at his screen, which upsets me.

I thought he might have been secretly seeing someone else. I decided to talk to him when our children were at school. At first, he refused to tell me why he was so preoccupied with his phone, so I asked to see it to check whether he was cheating on me. I didn't find anything that showed he was having an affair. Instead, I found something else. I saw the text messages that said our bank account was overdrawn by \$2500.

My husband always looks after our finances and I hardly ask or check because he is very responsible with money. To find out our account was overdrawn was a shock to me.

I was angry and disappointed with what I found, especially when he withdrew over \$2,500, sometimes a few hundred in a day and all of it has gone to an online gambling site.

I finally asked my husband whether he had been gambling? He finally told me he has been online gambling. At first it was just for fun but somehow, he finds it hard to stop. Fear of me finding out, he hides to gamble, including pretending to go to the bathroom. At the time, he was trying to win back the money he had lost.

He told me that when he lost \$2500, he worried about me finding out and didn't sleep well for several days. He borrowed money from friends to pay for bills to cover his tracks.

I was angry and feeling sad at the same time. I couldn't believe what he had done to jeopardise our family. We agreed to get professional support and contacted Asian Family Services to rebuild our trust and address his gambling problems.

We met a wonderful counsellor who speaks the same language and understands Chinese culture and values. She helped my husband understand what harmful gambling is and how it changes his brain function, making it hard to stop. Through the counsellor, my husband also came to understand that those online gambling apps are designed to get people hooked. She also introduced an app that can block those gambling sites.

At first my husband had thought it was just a way to kill time and did not intend to spend money on gambling. The counsellor taught me why people might get hooked on gambling and helped me forgive my husband. Most importantly, I can see that my husband is working through the strategy he agreed with the counsellor to prevent further online gambling.

Alongside that, I also realised we need family activities that everyone can enjoy—making time to watch a movie together at home or go hiking as a family helps to make our family stronger.