

# A LO\$ING BET

*Gambling can be entertaining, exciting when practiced wisely*



I'm going to throw something at you penniless students infomercial-style, so watch your head. I have one simple solution for you to try and become a millionaire (without having to marry someone you've never met), or at least be able to pay for two tacos at Amigo's instead of one.

The solution isn't some tricky new-age hoax involving "karma rocks" or a crappy infomercial sham in which a certain Mr. Don Lupre tells you how to become rich by doing "virtually nothing from your one bedroom apartment."

I have news for Don and the karma rocks - the obvious and simple answer to your money problems is to simply and obviously gamble.

That's right, take the money you don't have and turn it into a gold mine.

Disclaimer: I do not take credit for and am not responsible for losers who lose their money.

My mother taught me several invaluable lessons concerning the secrets to gambling success that have worked so well for her. These "lessons" have kept me going back to the casinos in Omaha every day for the past three weeks.

Lesson #1: Mom says, "Never leave the casino unless you've made enough money to pay for my new car, or if you're so broke that you need to drop out of school and stay up late watching that Don Lupre infomercial on how to become a millionaire from your one bedroom apartment. I hate that guy."

Lesson #2: Mom says, "The world of gambling yields a 50/50 chance of success. The other half is failure. Love is like that. Don't ever gamble with love; stick with money."

I'm not sure what she meant by that one, but I'm single and rich, so I think I interpreted the use of the word 'yield' correctly.

Lesson #3: Mom says, "If you find yourself addicted to gambling, just keep goin' till someone (usually a good friend) makes you follow either an 8 or a 12 step program (your choice) and refuses to speak to you until you're all better."

With these tips in mind, I was ready to push the almighty quarter into a tiny slot repeatedly until the machine "showed me the money."

The truth is, I didn't walk away empty-handed my first time. I felt the rush (comparable to that of heavy drug stimulation) and I had 15 extra dollars to prove it. I don't really want to brag, but 15 dollars isn't that easy to come up with without actually going to work.

It's always been my philosophy never to start something unless there is help available for the people who get out of control.

This is why gambling is a good idea - if you get addicted, no problem. Simply call a number and someone will help you! (But if you see these people with a straight jacket in hand, exit your back door promptly).

I am immune to such losses of control, but I soon realized, after feeling the allurements of the casino and seeing its dizzying effects, that my mother is one of these people. She is one of the addicted, and it was time that I "stop the insanity," as infomercial guru Susan Powter used to cry out to the audience.

When Mom asked me if she could borrow a quarter, that's when I knew she had hit rock bottom.

I grabbed a handful of brochures to help familiarize myself with the warning signs of a

gambling addict, so I wouldn't falsely point my finger at her.

It was all there in print; as I read the warning signs I realized that my mother could have been the poster child for gambling addiction. The next day I vowed that when I was done at the casino, I would help her with her problem.

I blame my mother's addiction on the fact that she is a lonely librarian who is cooped up all day long in western Nebraska with dusty, censored books and the bitterly forgotten Dewey Decimal System. It's not her fault that there's nothing in Kimball to do but ride oil wells and tip cows.

When I first presented my mother with her "problem," she pulled my hair and kicked me. Then she denied it with everything in her power - namely an empty purse filled with empty lies.

In the end, I realized it wasn't a gambling problem at all, but instead she has some communicable disease. Her edginess wasn't at all because she was bankrupt (like I once thought), but due to a new medication she has to take to survive.

Long lunches were due to taking the medication intravenously, not to go gamble a quick one. And the loss of money? It was simply a result of the expensive nature of the drug, not because she believed she was blessed with good luck and destined for greatness and riches.

Basically, gambling is a fun way to entertain yourself - if you do it wisely. As we all know, winners may be big losers in the future if they can't stop gambling.

I sort of felt bad for the incessant accusations against my poor, withered, librarian mother. But then again, she did teach me how to gamble.

As a good daughter should do, I treated her to a night out on the town as a way to apologize for the little scare I put her through.

I even volunteered to take her to the casino for a "quick one."

After all, on the back of the "How to Help a Compulsive Gambler" brochure it says, "No one will be denied services due to an inability to pay."

Ca-chink!

*Riverboat casino experience proves gambling to be a risky pastime*



As the car sped eastbound down Interstate 80, I realized there was no turning back. I was on the road so many others have taken when they wanted to gamble, find a strip club in an affordable price range or look at the finest in foreign "adult" cinema. I was headed to Council Bluffs. I had just gotten my paycheck, and instead of doing something stupid like putting it in a bank, I did what any reasonable American would do: I tried to make it into more money.

The idea of putting money into a machine, pulling a lever and getting back a substantially larger amount of money definitely seemed questionable to me.

But I was reassured by a billboard that Harvey's slots are "the loosest in Council Bluffs!" I thought this would be a sure-fire way for me to make some easy money.

Before my trip to C.B., I had to do a little research on gambling. I started attending the weekly Gambler's Anonymous meetings and bet some guy five bucks he couldn't give me a winning strategy for slot machines. He was hesitant at first, but eventually he came around.

Here is what he told me: Scout out the room and find someone who has been playing consistently on the same machine and hasn't been winning. When that person leaves, take that machine. Your chances of winning are higher because that sucker has been losing frequently. If you are having trouble, go play

the machines closest to the aisle. These get the highest amount of traffic; many people will play unsuccessfully and move on. And don't start on a machine that just paid off big for someone.

I kept this man's advice in mind as I walked into Harvey's. Inside, the hotel lobby was nicer than I thought. I expected Confederate flags and coonskins to be hanging on the wall, but there were luxury accommodations and an \$8 buffet.

"Casino," I thought to myself, "I am going to dominate you."

I walked for awhile, trying to scout out a good place to start the winning. There are three levels, all basically the same. Each level was rectangular, with slots and video poker around the perimeter and assorted blackjack and poker games in the center.

I found a suitable machine to start at, a quarter slot game, and I put in \$10. This gave me 40 plays.

I then proceeded to lose \$10 without winning once, at four different machines. This had to be the worst start in the history of gambling. What's worse is that the pay-back rates are posted on the machines, and they're always some ridiculously high number like 97.5 percent! You have to be stupid not to win. I had blown through \$10 of my allotted \$26 in about 10 minutes.

I decided to play a game I was more experienced at, one I knew I could win.

I headed to the bar.

Drink prices were dirt cheap, and games were built right into the bar so alcoholic gambling addicts wouldn't have to get up. I stayed at the bar for awhile, contemplating my next move.

"If there were a game called getting drunk, I would be a big winner tonight," I said to the bartender.

We enjoyed a laugh, and I went out to try the quarter slots again. I put \$10 in and hit the button. Magically, I had won \$5. I pushed the button again and won \$15. I pushed the button again and won \$1.

Three in a row!

I looked over at the blackjack tables and saw many solemn faces.

"They were all the victims of some crooked poker game," I thought to myself.

But I was going to beat the odds. I got all of my quarters in a cup and set out to win big. I envisioned the night ending in the high-rollers suite with me sleeping on a pile of money. I had the fever, and the phrase "quit while you're ahead" didn't enter my mind (thanks to those cheap whiskey and Cokes).

The rest of the story is a predictable one. Of course, I lost every last cent to various slots and poker machines. The temptation to withdraw money from one of the countless ATMs was high, but I remained strong and walked out the door.

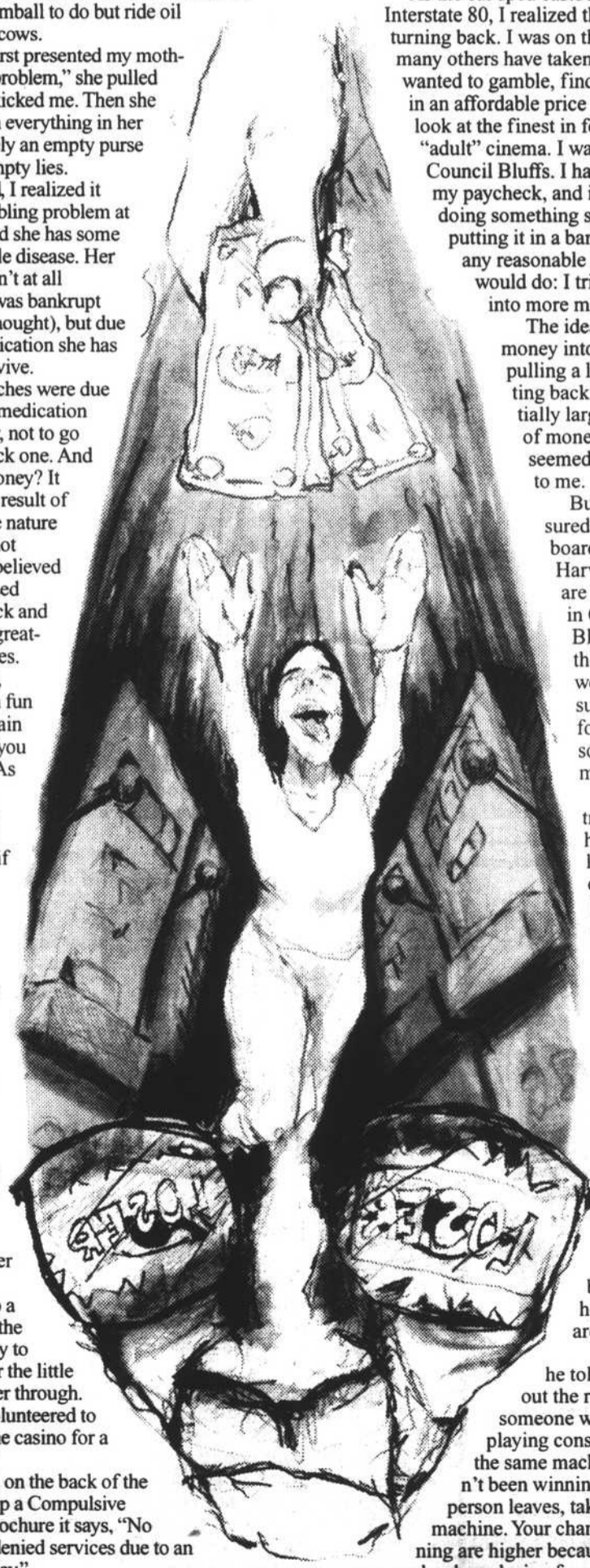
On the way out, there was a man who said good night to everyone exiting. What a slap in the face.

They just took all of my hard-earned money, and then they rub it in that they're making so much they can afford to employ a man to tell me good night.

For those of you who may not be old enough to go to the casino yet, I have something you can do that's very similar: Go into your bathroom, take the money out of your purse or wallet, throw it in your toilet and flush.

If you are old enough to gamble, I would encourage you to do something productive with your money.

Go to a fortune teller, have your palm read or call a psychic hotline, but don't throw it away at the casino.



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