

Stuart: My gambling addiction

Stuart Adams talks about how his gambling addiction developed, what its consequences were and how he dealt with his problem.

SA: I knew this wasn't good, this was not good, but I loved it. I love horses. I think it's the most wondrously beautiful sport, it appeals to my sort of analytical mind, you know, it's all about – there's a history and lineage of the sires and the dams and the breeding, there's the analysis of the form, you know, you can study it, and it gave me the illusion of control. It is very much about control, however out of control you get.

My name's Stuart Adams, I am 37 for what it's worth, and I guess that I would be classified as unemployed, but I'm attempting to become a writer, an established writer, and break through into working in the media industry. I guess I'm here because I have, you know, I am connected through to GamCare, I sought counselling and support for a gambling addiction, and I have a history of addictive behaviour throughout my entire adulthood and, you know, dating back to my teens.

I started betting when I was 12 and it was very much social. My brother, who's four years older than me, I used to hang around with them, and it was another world and I could speak the lingo and I could get away with it and it made old and it made me feel included in my brother's world. We were also starting to bet a bit at cards, a bit of poker and it was I guess our way of sort of becoming men in a way. I was getting carried away in it all, started to get carried away with the gambling and at 17 I knew I'd got a problem. It was a horse called Nomadic Way. This is 20 years ago and I can tell you it was at Haydock, I can tell you it was heavy ground and I can tell you it was trained by Martin Pipe, and I can tell you that it was the end of my first love or my first relationship when I blew all the money that was going to take us away on a romantic weekend on this one bet to give us a bit of extra spends. And I was ashamed of it and guilty of it, you couldn't help but be, because you've got this money and it's gone and you're responsible and you don't care.

I went to Newcastle University and suddenly got a bank account, so I used to just bounce around the bookmakers of Newcastle. And I was signing off cheques £50 at a time, which was the limit, and that was getting to a point where I could just about get up to about £500 a bet. And I lost about £5000 in two weeks. And got charged with fraud and all of a sudden I was having to explain to my parents and my girlfriend and the police what I'd done. And for the first time at 19 I had to sort of say to my mum and my dad and my brother that I'd got a gambling problem.

I knew I needed the support, I knew it wasn't going to stick if I didn't get counselling because it's – you know, it's symptomatic, gambling is symptomatic of deeper issues of self-worth and control, and so that's why I'm in front of the camera talking to you now. You know, and I've stuck with it and it's been great, I'm a different bunny rabbit to the person who was here, I don't know when we started, it must have been around September, October, yeah, that sort of time. And I'm bigger, brighter, wider, faster, leaner, I've done everything that I couldn't do because it was so debilitating.

[End of transcript]