



You Bet Your Life: The Burdens of Gambling

Neil D. Isaacs

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We are a nation of gamblers: pari-mutuel wagering at horse tracks; blackjack in Las Vegas; the NCAA basketball office pool; even day trading on the internet. Gambling is both our national pastime and our predominant cultural metaphor?play the field; beat the odds; take a chance on love. Yet gambling poses serious risks to individuals and to society as a whole.

Neil Isaacs?sports historian, licensed clinical social worker, English professor, and a gambler himself for more than fifty years?seeks to shatter the myths interfering with our understanding of gambling addiction, its causes, and its treatment. He begins by systematically debunking several commonly held beliefs, demonstrating that there is no such thing as the law of averages, that gambling is not inherently sinful, immoral, or criminal, and that money is not always the prime motivator for gamblers.

Isaacs shows how habitual gambling can lead to compulsive gambling, but avoids oversimplifying this condition. Arguing against a undifferentiated interpretation of pathological gambling as a simple impulse control disorder, he draws examples from fiction, film, and his own practice to demonstrate additional ways gambling can be abused. A radical departure from established views, *You Bet Your Life* identifies the costs?in dollars, people, families, and credit ratings?of society's failure to address adequately the burdens of gambling.

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