

ALL THE SIGNS WERE THERE.....

Debts were mounting. Loans were taken out. Lies were becoming evident. Mood swings—from euphoria to depression were often. There were angry outbursts for no apparent reason. Unexplained absences became frequent. Then came the bankruptcy, which I could not fathom because we both had good jobs. I was mortified. He explained that it was our lifestyle, which seemed to me to be no different than any other average American household. We did not take vacations. We lived in a modest 2-bedroom home. We had one car. We did not live extravagantly in any area.

I was a teacher—a working mother of two—who worked ten months of the year. The first week that I was off in June was a turning point—an awakening—for me! Apparently, my husband had regularly filtered the mail during the day so that I never received much of the mail that would have brought the light of day to what was wrong in our household. On my first day home that summer, I got the mail—all the mail. It was shocking to see that bills that I thought had been paid were in arrears and that our home, the mortgage on which I thought was paid through the summer until I returned to work in September, was indeed being foreclosed. When I confronted my husband, he, after a long time, said that he had a gambling problem! I had not known that he gambled at all. It was a shock, and I couldn't believe that a person could gamble himself into such a deep hole. Upon further discussion, he admitted to much more than what I had found in the mail that day. (Even what he told me then was not ALL that he owed!) I later found out that he had forged my name on loans that I didn't know existed, had written bad checks all over the town I taught in, had borrowed from family and friends as well as the loan companies and banks, and had stolen from the company he worked for. It was a nightmare!

The house was eventually foreclosed, and I had to move with our two sons to an apartment in another county. With all that I was going through, the worst was to have to uproot our sons from their home and their school—not to mention their friends. To add insult to injury, the movers of the few possessions we still had, told me that they were going to keep our TV and some of the furniture because my husband who had arranged for them did not pay them in advance as he said he would. (And now he was in a VA hospital in another state that was the only one who took gamblers as patients.) I didn't have the money to pay them. I was totally embarrassed but fought with them to leave what little we had left. I won, but it was humiliating. That month-long stay in the VA hospital did not end my husband's gambling; and so the next step was divorce, a thing I never believed in, which was now the only way for our sons and I to survive. It took a long time and much suffering for the gambler in my life to decide to choose to face his gambling problem. He finally did that, and now, through Gamblers Anonymous, a 12-Step recovery program, he has 13 years gambling free.

It makes me sick—and ashamed—to see our government pushing this addictive product through the Lottery and now wanting to have State casinos by amending the NY State Constitution. Please do all YOU can to see that this does not happen. The lives that will be negatively affected are the lives of real people—the problem gamblers, of course—but also the many spouses, children, parents, friends, employers, and even strangers.

--Anonymous, Northern New York