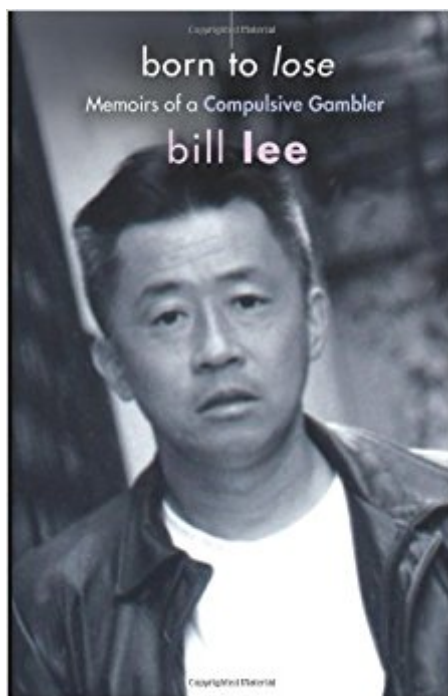


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Born To Lose: Memoirs Of A Compulsive Gambler



Synopsis

"My history of gambling really began before I was born." So opens Bill Lee's self-told story of gambling addiction, which is set in San Francisco's Chinatown and steeped in a culture where it is not unheard of for gamblers to lose their children to a bet. From wagering away his beloved baseball card collection in third grade to forfeiting everything he owned at blackjack tables in Las Vegas, every new and terrifying loss validated Lee's feelings of worthlessness. With gritty honesty and true humility, Lee describes what gambling addiction feels like and looks like from the inside. "Everything was a blur to me," Lee writes about a gambling jag that brought him to financial ruin. "I was in such a reckless and self-destructive frame of mind that I would have bet my life if required. In a way, that's what I was doing. I was that far gone from reality." In the end, however, *Born to Lose* is a memoir of hope as Lee reveals how recovery from his gambling addiction has been possible through the Twelve Step program.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A gambling addiction can be as destructive and as life-altering as any other addiction, and former human resources exec and Lake Tahoe regular Lee has a story to prove it. Breezily written and compelling, Lee's book chronicles his slow descent. He starts by reminiscing about his 1950s and '60s San Francisco childhood, about the genetic aspects of such addictions (Lee's Chinese grandfather was sold as a young boy to pay off his own father's gambling debts), and about Lee's father's struggles with gambling. The author's own addictions flare up when he plays the stock

market (which he persuasively describes as legalized gambling), and when he needs to escape the emotional pressures of his high-stress consulting job. After falling tens of thousands of dollars into debt, Lee finally finds the strength to attend a Gambler's Anonymous meeting, and the remainder of the book describes his difficult recovery. As a memoir of addiction, this work is hardly as lurid as some other, more popular chronicles. What sets it apart are the details about the ways in which Lee's Chinese heritage played into his addiction and healing, providing an unusual look at the issue. Agent, Susan Rabiner. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Although the title of this book makes it sound like it might be a movie-of-the-week, true-confessions type of tearjerker, it is not. In one sense, it's a very straightforward account of a man's self-destructive tendencies and his battle to find some way to live with them. But look more closely, and you will find the deeply affecting, often frightening story of a man who was doomed almost from the day he was born. Lee came out of the kind of family few of us can imagine: an alcoholic, sexually abusive, compulsive-gambler father; a suicidal, possibly schizophrenic mother; an older brother who beat the author "to a bloody pulp" on a regular basis. By the time he was 8 years old, Lee had developed an -obsessive-compulsive disorder; by age 10, he was playing (very badly) blackjack and poker on a regular basis. The author's perceptiveness, his ability to see his own flaws and to avoid falling into the trap of self-pity (or blaming others for his own actions), make this story of self-destruction and redemption surprisingly powerful. David Pitt Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

In *Born to Lose: Memoirs of a Compulsive Gambler*, Bill Lee, a second-generation Chinese American, writes about his nearly life-long struggle with congenital dysfunctions, pathological gambling addiction, bipolar disorder, numerous anxiety disorders (e.g. OCD, PTSD), and (in my novice opinion) undiagnosed schizophrenia-particularly when discussing his or others' psychic abilities. Lee's story begins and ends in San Francisco, CA. In between he recounts business, pleasure, and addiction-induced journeys, oftentimes taken on less than 3 hours of daily rest. Lee does not shy away from explicitly writing about the abuse and neglect he suffered throughout his childhood, starting at the age of three when he was sold to an elderly couple to reduce the financial burden of his seven member family's single-income household. Lee discloses about the frequent turmoil he experienced within his family (a sexually abusive, alcoholic father with gambling addiction, an enabling, codependent, verbally abusive schizophrenic mother

who had frequent bouts of suicidal attempts, and a physically abusive older brother). Lee also writes extensively about the elements of his addiction (physical, mental, spiritual, and economical) and his struggles with duality (spiritual vs. physical self, morality vs. immorality, temperance vs. greed, kindness vs. malevolence, and corporate/social responsibility vs. illegitimate activity). Lee provides good insight into how his genetics, childhood trauma, and environmental and parental instability may have blunted his cognitive and emotional development, negatively impacting his self-worth and ability to make sound decisions throughout his adolescence and into young adulthood. How he gained and accepted this insight however was not particularly apparent and is an obvious weakness to this story. Lee devoted the majority of his attention and therapeutic significance to the Gamblers Anonymous (GA) 12-step model, however he did note that working with a psychotherapist in conjunction to completing (not just attending) all GA Step courses was nearly imperative to relapse prevention and recovery. Although Lee mentions how much he valued his time with his therapists, Lee neglects to detail the type, length, and extent of work that was completed under their guidance. I would have liked to have learned more about Lee's adjunct individual sessions. Overall, Lee's book was a lengthy albeit entertaining and inspiring read from the perspective of a severely addicted gambler who was born to lose but ultimately learned to win.

This book is painful at times to read, but there's something about the straightforward, unvarnished way that Mr. Lee tells his story that makes it such a compelling read. He also ties his addiction-driven adulthood seamlessly into his traumatic childhood--not in a way to gain sympathy or excuse his behavior, but to show how easy it is for that kind of childhood to lead so frighteningly smoothly to such an addiction. After he finally breaks gambling's grip on him for the last time, he mentions how he went beyond even that to free himself of his obsession with money to achieve what sounds like an even greater level of peace of mind. I only wish he had gone into greater detail about this aspect of his recovery, because it seems like a life approach that would make his story relevant to a much broader swath of people than a "mere" story of someone who overcomes a destructive addiction to gambling. Kudos to Mr. Lee for baring his soul to share this experience.

Very good book. Well written and pages turn fast.

As a licensed psychotherapist in Beverly Hills, CA I specialize in providing therapy for addicted gamblers. I found this book to be a powerful & profound depiction of the mind of the compulsive gambler and the obsession that inevitably leads to destruction and loss in every area of their lives

and those of their families. Mr. Lee also describes his eventual recovery in Gambler's Anonymous, his desperate struggle to get there and the vital steps he takes to remain. His story provides insight and hard won wisdom that every pathological gambler will understand. This is a must read for all gamblers and for the psychotherapists who work with them. Thank you Mr. Lee. Sondra Brascia, Ph.D., MFTCA Office of Problem Gamblers Authorized Provider

My name is Dr. Eric Geffner and I am a psychologist in Los Angeles who specializes in the treatment of gambling addiction. I found this book to be an accurate portrayal of the PROCESS of recovery from a serious and potentially deadly mental disorder. Mr. Lee's long path from denial to recovery, back into denial and finally back into recovery is the exact process many people experience in struggling with this disorder. It is my belief that by reading this a person with a gambling disorder might shorten one of their relapse phases or even avoid making the same mistakes as Mr. Lee. I feel that this is one of the most honest and helpful books out there. I often suggest it to my patients. Although there was some minor issue I had with book, it has been several years now since I read it, and all that I do recall is that it is an essential read for the gambling addict or their family. I do recall that Mr. Lee's relapses were particularly painful and dangerous at times which is a more severe level of disturbance than many people will reach. For more information on gambling addiction please do visit my website at [...].

I couldn't put this book down. Coming from a person who doesn't have any particular interest towards gambling, this book captivated my attention from beginning to the end with the incredible stories and experiences the author experienced as a problem gambler. I recommend it to anyone who is looking for an entertaining and educational read. I've known a few problem gamblers growing up and heard stories about how their addiction ruined their lives, but I did not truly comprehend the depths of that addiction and the feelings they experienced until I read this book.

Everyone in Gam anon and GA should read this book. I could not stop reading it and can't wait to read Bill Lee's second book, Chinese Playground: A Memoir.

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