Counselor: Hi John. How are you today?

John: I'm all right.

Counselor: Good. So, if it's okay, I want to ask you some questions about why you are here.

John: Sure.

Counselor: So, what brings you in?

John: My wife. She wants me to get some counseling.

Counselor: So she's worried about you?

John: Yeah, I guess you could say that.

Counselor: Why might she be worried about you?

John: She thinks I have a little bit of a gambling problem.

Counselor: Can you tell me more about that?

John: I gamble a little bit. She doesn't like it.

[ Silence ]

Counselor: Can you tell me more about your gambling specifically?

John: You know, I put some money down here and there and, you know, when I lose, she gets a little upset.

Counselor: So, how often would you say you're losing?

John: Well, I mean, you can't win all the time. You know, it comes and goes.

Counselor: And, have you been winning lately?

John: No. I've been in a little bit of a slump, but, you know, it's going to come back around. I'm pretty sure.

Counselor: How often and how much are you betting?

John: It varies. You know, depends, kind of, on what I've got to work with.

Counselor: Tell me a little bit more about that. What might influence you to bet more or less.

John: Our money situation. You know, depending on how much money we have, that will kind of dictate what I do and if I'm on a roll, you know, I'll probably be betting a little bit more.

[ Silence ]
Counselor: How does your gambling affect your finances?

>> John: Well, when I win, it's very good. But, you know, when I lose, it can get tough.

>> Counselor: What is the money situation right now?

>> John: We owe kind of a lot of money. You know, I took some big losses on a couple of games lately. So --

>> Counselor: Was there any reason you took that bigger risk?

>> John: We were in a bit of a hole and it's an easy way to, you know, make some money and get out.

>> Counselor: So you feel like gambling is a way to get out of your financial problems?

>> John: Yeah. It's, you know, an easy way to make a quick buck and, you know, it's fun and exciting.

>> Counselor: It sounds like maybe your wife thinks differently than you on that.

>> John: Yeah. She gets a little upset. You know, she wants to save, you know, a little bit and pay it off little by little, and it just -- it takes way too much time.

[ Silence ]

>> Counselor: Have you ever tried to cut back on your gambling?

>> John: Yeah. You know I've tried to cut back a couple of times. But you know, it's just fun and, you know, I just kind of go back to it.

>> Counselor: What kind of stress has it caused in your relationship?

>> John: We fight a lot. We argue about money and gambling. She's threatened to leave me a couple times, you know, things like that.

>> Counselor: Have you ever been really desperate when it came to finances?

>> John: Yeah. I mean there's been some times we've been in a hole. I've had to, you know, raise the limits of our credit cards and, you know, sell off a couple things that I wish I hadn't. You know, that sort of stuff.

>> Counselor: What do you like about gambling?

>> John: The thrill. The rush. You know, you've got some money down on a game and it -- you know, when it comes down to the wire and you win, it's just -- it's a great feeling.

>> Counselor: And how do you feel when you're not gambling?
John: A little anxious. I do get the urge to gamble when I haven't done it in a while. But you know, overall, it's just something that I enjoy doing.

[ Silence ]

Counselor: Let's switch gears on you a little bit. Can you tell me about your childhood?

John: Well, parents are divorced. We split time with, you know, my mom; my dad. My dad was kind of a mean drunk. You know, abusive when he drank. Don't really have a good relationship with him. Don't talk to him; don't really want to. But I have a good relationship with my mom. And, you know, she still even bails me out from time to time.

Counselor: When did your gambling start?

John: Probably in high school. Played some cards with the boys. Kind of, you know, waited until I was old enough then got into casinos. You know, I won a lot when I was younger. I was really good, so, yeah.

Counselor: Any drinking or drugs when you were in high school?

John: Yeah. I drank, yeah I, you know, smoked some weed. That sort of stuff, but nothing major.

[ Silence ]

Counselor: So what's going on with you now? Your family, what you do outside of your family?

John: Well, we got two kids, five and eight. My wife and I, times are tough. We argue and we fight a lot. She's threatened to leave me quite a few times but, you know, mainly it's just the money situation and gambling stuff.

Counselor: How long have you guys been married?

John: About ten years.

Counselor: What about friends?

John: I got some friends, not really any close friends. I kind of, you know, I get my social stuff from people at work.

Counselor: What about drinking and smoking now?

John: Yeah, I drink a little bit and smoke. I should probably stop smoking but, yeah. I mean the drinking isn't that much.

Counselor: Do you have any physical or medical conditions?

John: Doc says I have some high blood pressure. Also, you know, a little overweight, don't exercise enough. I used to play sports in high school though.

Counselor: Do you ever feel depressed or anxious?
John: No, not really. I have some trouble sleeping at night but don't really feel anything, any depression or anything like that.

[Counselor: Silence]

Counselor: Have you ever sought the help of a counselor before?

John: Yeah, I did a while ago.

Counselor: What did you work on with them?

John: Nothing really. Didn't really get anything out of it.

Counselor: Did you tell them about the gambling?

John: No, not really.

Counselor: So, why are you here now and what do you want to get out of this?

John: My wife. She's threatened to leave me and, you know, I want our marriage to work. I want to work on it. So really, just kind of want to, you know, get her to calm down a little bit.

Counselor: So it seems like you're a little bit ambivalent about stopping. Maybe you know you have a problem but you can't really see yourself stopping. Maybe you kind of control it and trying to control it is difficult?

John: I mean, it's hard to say that I don't have a problem but stopping altogether would be weird. You know, my wife thinks it's a little worse than it actually is but stopping altogether, I don't think that'd work.

Counselor: Okay. Well, John, thank you for all of that information. We can talk more at our next meeting if you like.

John: Thanks.