

ON THE WRONG TRACK

The 4 Phases of Problem Gambling

Phase 1: The Winning Phase. Most problem gamblers experience a “big win” in the beginning, which results in more frequent gambling and increased wagers. This tends to inflate the gambler’s self-esteem and they begin to fantasize about future winnings. Losses are chalked up to “bad luck”. (Not all gamblers experience phase 1.)

Phase 2: The Losing Phase. Losses eventually outweigh the winnings, and the gambler starts to “chase losses”, or try to catch back the money lost. During this phase the gambler always thinks about gambling, and can no longer control it. Relationships with family, friends and employers begin to deteriorate.

Phase 3: The Desperation Phase. At this point, the gambler is considered a compulsive gambler. They can no longer pay debts and they look for legal and illegal bailouts. They then use this new money to try to recover money lost. The gambler’s belief is that a winning streak is right around the corner. Depression, irritability and thoughts of suicide are usually present.

Phase 4: The Hopeless Phase. Serious consequences begin to occur, such as arrests, alcohol or substance abuse problems, divorce or failing out of school. They realize that catching back their losses is not possible, but they no longer care. Studies show that 20% of gamblers, during this phase, attempt suicide.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Helping Someone with a Problem

How do you know if your friend or loved one has a problem with gambling?

Warning signs

- Increased credit card bills
- Money or valuables that have disappeared
- Disappearing for long periods of time
- Frequently asking to borrow money

When talking to someone with a gambling problem, try using these techniques:

Plan out a caring confrontation instead of explosive responses

Don’t come across too strong by screaming or being pushy. This puts people off and they will stop listening to you.

Switch from “You” to “I”

Instead of saying something like “Why is there no money in our checking account? Did YOU spend it all again?”, try saying “I was out shopping today and I was stuck at the register with no money in our account. This is not fair for any of us.”

OUT OF CONTROL

Getting Help

If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be having gambling related problems, help is available. Don’t be afraid to admit that you have a problem. You can get help at one of the following resources:

- Gamblers Anonymous (12 step self-help group): www.gamblersanonymous.org
- Gam-Anon, International Service Office (A 12-step self-help group for family members of problem gamblers): www.gam-anon.org
- National Council on Problem Gambling: www.ncpgambling.org

GAMBLING & RECOVERY



STAY SAFE SERIES

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IT'S NOT TOO LATE

PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING

Do you have a problem?

What is Pathological Gambling? Pathological Gambling is when someone is unable to resist the urge, or impulse to gamble. This usually leads to severe personal, social and financial consequences.

Are you a compulsive gambler? Let's find out! Honestly answer these 20 questions.

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling? ● YES ● NO
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy? ● YES ● NO
3. Did gambling affect your reputation? ● YES ● NO
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling? ● YES ● NO
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties? ● YES ● NO
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency? ● YES ● NO
7. After losing did you feel you must return as soon as possible and win back your losses? ● YES ● NO
8. After a win did you have a strong urge to return and win more? ● YES ● NO
9. Did you often gamble until your last dollar was gone? ● YES ● NO
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling? ● YES ● NO
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling? ● YES ● NO
12. Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures? ● YES ● NO
13. Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family? ● YES ● NO
14. Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned? ● YES ● NO
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry, trouble, boredom or loneliness? ● YES ● NO
16. Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling? ● YES ● NO
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping? ● YES ● NO
18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble? ● YES ● NO
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling? ● YES ● NO
20. Have you ever considered self-destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling? ● YES ● NO

Most compulsive gamblers will answer YES to at least seven of these questions.

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EARLY STAGES OF RECOVERY

Here are some recommended methods to help you in your recovery.

Accept your past

You've probably done some pretty bad things as a result of your gambling. Let go of the guilt so that you can take the necessary steps to recovery.

Take responsibility for hurting others and make amends

Make a list of those who may have been affected by your gambling and take the appropriate time to fully express yourself to each person. Remember, making amends is not about you, it's about repairing the damage you have done to your relationships with others. Start with those you may have hurt the most, but only approach them if making amends will benefit them, not you. If your attempts are rejected, you need to accept that fact and move on.

Accept yourself for who you are now

Recovery doesn't happen overnight, and if you relapse, don't look at that as a failure. Early recovery is about building a foundation for your future.

Eliminate stress in your life

Life always has its ups and downs, but don't give in to your urge to gamble. Always have a healthy mix of work and leisure time. Create a daily schedule of your activities and schedule in free time with things to do, like taking a walk or enjoying a hobby. Try to avoid alcohol when going out, as it can often lead to a gambling relapse.

Be proud of yourself

You've come a long way. Continue to believe in yourself. With a plan to help you make better decisions, you now have the tools to cope with your urges to gamble.

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

There are 4 key strategies, tested by clinicians, found to be very successful during recovery.

Protect Your Money

- If possible, have your income directly deposited into your bank account.
- Create a joint bank account that requires two signatures for withdrawals.
- Create a specific budget for weekly expenses
- Carry a minimum amount of money in your wallet or purse
- Ask your partner to monitor your finances
- Cancel all credit cards

Build a Support Network

- Go to self-help groups and consider rehabilitation programs
- Reach out for help to someone close to you
- Get private counseling for personal issues
- If needed, obtain financial counseling

Avoid Gambling Venues

- Take a different route to avoid the impulse to gamble
- Don't go to gambling venues, even as a spectator
- Ask to be barred from the casinos

Manage your Free Time

- Explore new hobbies that do not involve gambling
- Join a volunteer group
- Learn to play an instrument
- Exercise and eat well
- Most importantly, pinpoint times you usually gamble and replace it with another activity or someone's company

IN RECOVERY?

Let's Keep it that Way!

Problem gambling is an addiction. A common problem for someone who is recovering from a gambling problem is relapsing. Here are a few tips that can help you stay on track:

- Keep a picture of your children or loved one in your wallet and car
- Keep a record of how many days you have avoided gambling
- Ask a loved one to help you save money to reward yourself
- Call a friend daily to talk about your day
- If possible, see a counselor and join a self-help group

