



HELPING HANDS



Gambling addiction signs and symptoms

(excerpts from helpguide.org)

Gambling addiction is sometimes referred to as a “hidden illness” because there are no obvious physical signs or symptoms like there are in drug or alcohol addiction. Problem gamblers also typically deny or minimize the problem—even to themselves. You may have a gambling problem if you:

Feel the need to be secretive about your gambling. You might gamble in secret or lie about how much you gamble, feeling others won't understand or that you will surprise them with a big win.

Have trouble controlling your gambling. Once you start gambling, can you walk away? Or are you compelled to gamble until you've spent your last dollar, upping your bets in a bid to win lost money back?

Gamble even when you don't have the money. You may gamble until you've spent your last dollar, and then move on to money you don't have—money to pay bills, credit cards, or things for your children. You may feel pushed to borrow, sell, or even steal things for gambling money.

Have family and friends worried about you. Denial keeps problem gambling going. If friends and family are worried, listen to them carefully. It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. Many older gamblers are reluctant to reach out to their adult children if they've gambled away their inheritance, but it's never too late to make changes for the better.

Self-help for gambling problems

The biggest step to overcoming a gambling addiction is realizing that you have a problem. It takes tremendous strength and courage to own up to this, especially if you have lost a lot of money and strained or broken relationships along the way. Don't despair, and don't try to go it alone. Many others have been in your shoes and have been able to break the habit and rebuild their lives. You can, too.

Learn to relieve unpleasant feelings in healthier ways. Gambling may be a way to self-soothe unpleasant emotions, unwind, or socialize. But there are healthier and more effective ways of managing your moods and relieving boredom, such as exercising, spending time with friends who don't gamble, taking up new hobbies, or practicing relaxation techniques.

Strengthen your support network. It's tough to battle any addiction without support, so reach out to friends and family. If your support network is limited, there are ways to make new friends without relying on visiting casinos or gambling online.

Join a peer support group. Gamblers Anonymous, for example, is a 12-step recovery program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous. A key part of the program is finding a sponsor, a former gambler who has experience remaining free from addiction and can provide you with invaluable guidance and support.

Seek help for underlying mood disorders. Depression, stress, substance abuse, or anxiety can both trigger gambling problems and be made worse by compulsive gambling. Even when gambling is no longer a part of your life, these problems will still remain, so it's important to address them.

How to stop gambling for good

For many problem gamblers, it's not quitting gambling that's the biggest challenge, but rather staying in recovery—making a permanent commitment to stay away from gambling. The Internet has made gambling far more accessible and, therefore, harder for recovering addicts to avoid relapse. Recovery from gambling addiction or problem gambling is still possible if you surround yourself with people to whom you're accountable, avoid tempting environments and websites, give up control of your finances (at least at first), and find healthier activities to replace gambling in your life.

Addressing Problem Gambling

(Excerpts from www.helpguide.org, Authors: Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., Melinda Smith, M.A., and Lawrence Robinson)

One way to stop gambling is to remove the elements necessary for gambling to occur in your life and replace them with healthier choices. The four elements needed for gambling to continue are:

A decision: For gambling to happen, you need to make the decision to gamble. If you have an urge: *stop* what you are doing and call someone, *think* about the consequences to your actions, *tell* yourself to stop thinking about gambling, and *find* something else to do immediately.

Money: Gambling cannot occur without money. Get rid of your credit cards, let someone else be in charge of your money, have the bank make automatic payments for you, close online betting accounts, and keep only a limited amount of cash on you.

Time: Even online gambling cannot occur if you don't have the time. Schedule enjoyable recreational time for yourself that has nothing to do with gambling. If you're gambling on your smartphone, find other ways to fill the quiet moments during your day.

A game: Without a game or activity to bet on there is no opportunity to gamble. Don't put yourself in tempting environments. Tell gambling establishments you frequent that you have a gambling problem and ask them to restrict you from entering. Remove gambling apps and block gambling sites on your smartphone and computer.

Contact your EAP Representative listed below for more information and resources and problem gambling

IAM Peer Employee Assistance Program



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

American Airlines CLT IAM EAP Coordinators

Kenny Geis

704-770-5069, E-mail: Kenneth.geis@aa.com

Phillip Skaar

704-650-3401, E-mail: phillipskaar@aol.com

IAM EAP Director, District 142

Paul Shultz

Cell: 704-907-3563 E-mail: pmschultz@att.net

Tips for family members:

You have a right to protect yourself emotionally and financially. Don't blame yourself for the gambler's problems or let his or her addiction dominate your life.

To ensure the gambler stays accountable and to prevent relapse, consider taking over the family finances. However, this does not mean you are responsible for micromanaging the problem gambler's impulses to gamble. Your first responsibilities are to ensure that your own finances and credit are not at risk.

Problem gamblers often become very good at asking for money, either directly or indirectly. They may use pleading, manipulation, or even threats to get it. It takes practice to ensure you are not enabling your loved one's gambling addiction.

Gam-anon is an organization that help families and friends of problem gamblers. Contact them at: www.gam-anon.org