

Do you recognise any of the following?

- Uncontrolled spending.
- Significant amounts of time spent gambling.
- Concealing or lying about gambling behaviour.
- Gambling impacting on relationships with family and friends.
- Withdrawal from family activities.
- Spending excessive amounts of time on a computer.
- No apparent interests or leisure pursuits.
- Absence from school, college or work.

Are gambling and its consequences getting in the way of the life you want to live?

GamCare offers advice, information and practical help by phone and online. Post messages on the Forum, chat online, or talk to an adviser who'll let you know about local support, including counselling services, and sources of advice about related issues, like debt.

GamCare provides personal counselling to help you explore and consider situations relevant to your gambling in a safe environment over a period of time. GamCare Counselling is offered free of charge, although we accept donations.

To find out more, talk to one of GamCare's specially trained advisers. They'll listen, won't judge you, and it's completely confidential.

Cost of calls to 0845 numbers varies by operator.

0845 6000 133
www.gamcare.org.uk

Gamblers Anonymous

A support fellowship for problem gamblers.

020 7384 3040

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Gordon Moody Association

A residential treatment centre for problem gamblers.

01384 241292

www.gordonhouse.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Free, independent and confidential advice and information.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

National Debtline

Free, independent and confidential advice on money and debt problems.

0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Relate

Relationship counselling and advice to couples and individuals.

08451 30 40 16

www.relate.org.uk

Samaritans

Confidential, emotional support for anyone in a crisis.

08457 90 90 90

www.samaritans.org.uk

Gambling problem?

A guide to help and support



GAMCARE

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GAMCARE

Many people find themselves unable to explain why they continue to gamble

Callers to the GamCare Helpline often ask a number of questions. This leaflet is designed to help you to manage your feelings and cope with the issues associated with gambling. It is not designed to replace the support and guidance available from seeing a GamCare counsellor or attending a support group. Contact the GamCare Helpline on **0845 6000 133** or log on to our website www.gamcare.org.uk to find out about the counselling and support services available in your area.

Why do I gamble?

Many people find themselves unable to explain why they continue to gamble despite the problems it causes in their day-to-day lives. The most obvious answer is "for the money", but is this true? When you win, do you spend your winnings on more gambling? Do you continue to gamble until you have little or no money left?

In our experience, even though winning money may have attracted you at first, most people who have a gambling problem are using gambling as an opportunity to escape from other problems or pressures in their lives – problems at home or at work, boredom, loneliness or anxiety. Understanding what role gambling is playing in your life can be an important first step in beating the problem.

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How do I stop gambling?

There is unlikely to be one single answer that will enable you to stop gambling. Gambling problems are complex and it can take time and effort to overcome them.

Remember:

- You will probably need to use a number of different strategies to help you stop.
- You are more likely to succeed with support from others.
- Nearly everyone has relapses along the way – in order to stop gambling for a decent length of time, you'll need to be prepared to learn from these and try again.

What can I do to deal with my gambling?

GamCare counselling provides a safe, confidential way for you to talk about your situation. It offers an opportunity to explore the causes of your gambling behaviour and the effects gambling has on your life, and helps put it in context of your life experiences.

- Schedule alternative activities at the times you're most likely to gamble.
- Make it harder to access your money. Ask someone you trust to handle your money for an agreed period of time (e.g. 3 months).
- Self-exclusion (banning yourself from gambling venues) can be very helpful in reducing your opportunities to gamble.

If you feel strong enough, consider writing your feelings down, e.g. in a diary. If you are not gambling, note how you are feeling and how you have coped. If you have gambled, think about the events that led up to the gambling episode and record your feelings before, during and after.

Contact the GamCare Helpline during times of crisis for emotional support and consider joining a self-help support group, such as Gamblers Anonymous.

Get Help

Take Steps

- Try to stop all gambling while you are breaking the dependency. You need to do this in order to break the habit.
- Look for patterns in your behaviour. Do you gamble, or need to gamble, when you feel bored, stressed, or under pressure?

- Using a calendar, mark each day you do not gamble. This gives you a visual marker of your progress. If you have a bet, use the calendar to see how many days up to then you had managed to stay clear of gambling. Set a target to beat that number.
- Reward yourself after a period free from gambling, by spending some of the money you have saved on yourself. Buy something personal that is not related to gambling. If you feel uncomfortable handling money, take a friend along with you.

Take Care

- Take one day at a time. If you do this, you'll find it easier to break your gambling habit.
- Be prepared for withdrawal symptoms. You may feel depressed, irritable, shaky and you may get palpitations.
- There will be times when you may feel desperate to gamble – don't! Call the GamCare Helpline or log onto the GamCare website to talk to someone about your feelings.
- Develop your range of interests, especially those that involve other people. Try to do things with friends and family who are not gamblers.
- Dependency on gambling can be replaced by a range of activities and interests that will meet similar needs.
- Try out some sports or activities which have a strong element of competition or involve taking calculated risks.

Take Heart

- Be positive. The key is to ensure that any changes you make are manageable and realistic. Then, with each goal that you achieve, you will grow in confidence and self-esteem. You will also find you have the incentive to reach the next goal. If you have been gambling for many years, don't expect your life to improve immediately. It will take a lot of hard work and motivation from you to change.
- If you have a 'slip', do not punish yourself – breaking a dependency is very difficult. Instead, reflect on the day and think about what you have learnt from it. Congratulate yourself for abstaining for so long.
- Be optimistic – you can overcome a gambling dependency. Some gamblers find it impossible to go back to gambling without losing control, whilst others are able to gamble again at a later stage but in a controlled way.