

# FREEDOM

from **PROBLEM GAMBLING**

Self-help Workbook

**UCLA**

**Gambling Studies Program**

OFFICE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



# Freedom From Problem Gambling

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State of California

Version 1.3  
May 2014



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# INTRODUCTION

**T**his self-help workbook will help you understand your gambling behavior, why you gamble, how it may have become a problem, and will teach you ways to help stop or reduce your gambling.

The book is divided into five chapters, each of which focuses on a different aspect of your gambling. The chapters are further divided into different sections or topics. Each contains several paper exercises. The purpose of these exercises is to ensure that you think in detail about how each of the topics relates to your particular situation.

To get the most out of this workbook, go through this workbook at your own pace and complete all of the exercises.

You can complete this workbook, by yourself, with your spouse or with the guidance of a therapist.

This workbook is **NOT** a replacement for professional help or for Gamblers Anonymous.

If you feel that you need more help, call 1-800-GAMBLER or visit [problemgambling.ca.gov](http://problemgambling.ca.gov) to access, no-cost, professional treatment for problem gambling.

Sincerely,

UCLA Gambling Studies Program  
Office of Problem Gambling

# OVERVIEW

## ***What is gambling?***

Gambling involves risking something of value (usually money) on an activity or event in which the outcome is uncertain. The risk is undertaken in hopes of an immediate reward. Skill may be involved, in which case it may reduce the uncertainty but does not eliminate it.

Popular forms of gambling today include casino games, slot and video poker machines, internet gambling, the lottery, horse racing, and betting on team sports such as football or baseball. Other types of gambling include betting on individual skills, real estate speculation and stock market trading.

## ***Who is a problem gambler?***

A problem gambler is a person who is spending time and money gambling in such a way that it is harmful to him or her.

A severe problem gambler is known as a **compulsive or pathological gambler**. The main symptom is a loss of control over gambling.

Loss of control can be described in the following ways:

1. Gambling will escalate, as one needs to take greater risks to maintain a certain level of excitement or to try to win back one's money.
2. Some can't stop gambling when they are ahead. If they win money, they feel they can win more by betting again. But, eventually, luck runs out and problem gamblers will continue gambling until all their money is gone.
3. There are those who say they won't gamble again and find themselves gambling again, no matter how hard they try not to.

As gambling problems grow, there can be an increase in feelings of shame, guilt, and depression.

A person may be a problem or pathological gambler but have problems with only one form of gambling. For example, some problem gamblers may buy a lottery ticket each week and never have problems with that form of gambling but have substantial problems with sports betting.

There are also “binge gamblers”, who don’t have urges or think about gambling between episodes. They may only bet one sport, and show no interest in gambling the rest of the year, or they may go to Las Vegas three or a half dozen times a year, and have no urges or desires the rest of the year. These gamblers can still cause problems in their lives due to large betting losses created by just a few days of gambling.

***What are some of the signs of problem gambling?***

Common signs include gambling longer than intended; betting “over one’s head,” and then “chasing” after losses; lying to family or others about how much you are gambling; missing work or family commitments because of gambling; being distracted from these other aspects of your life by the time spent thinking about gambling.

***What is the difference between a problem gambler, a social gambler or a professional gambler?***

**Social gamblers** gamble for entertainment, and typically with friends. They don’t risk more than they can afford. They accept losing as “part of the game,” and don’t “chase” their losses. Their gambling doesn’t interfere with their work or life with their family.

**Professional gamblers** bet to make money, not for the excitement or to avoid or escape problems. They show tremendous discipline and don’t take unnecessary risks. They usually stop when they are ahead. Many problem gamblers claim to be professional gamblers but the reality is that professional gamblers do **not** have problems caused by gambling. At the end of the month or the year, they are always ahead, whereas people with gambling problems are almost always behind. Many “professional gamblers” become problem gamblers over time.

***How many people in America are problem gamblers?***

Research shows that 4-5% of Americans are problem gamblers and about 1% of Americans are severe problem gamblers (pathological gamblers). Among those who gamble regularly, the percentages are higher.

In California, a survey done in 2005 showed that close to 4% of those who live in California could be classified as being a problem or pathological gambler. This means that approximately one million Californians will have a gambling problem in their lives.



# CHAPTER I

## DO YOU HAVE A GAMBLING PROBLEM?

### 1. What kinds of gambling do you do?

List your top three, preferred forms of gambling:  
(Rank them in order of preference)

**Most preferred:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Second:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Third:** \_\_\_\_\_

What do you like about these types of gambling?



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### 2. Do you have a gambling problem?

This questionnaire has been used to evaluate for problem gambling. You can use it to help decide if you have gambling problem. Other sections of this workbook will help you identify what specific concerns you have.

#### South Oaks Gambling Screen

Please fill out the questions below:

|   | YES / NO |
|---|----------|
| When you participate in gambling activities, do you go back another day to win back money you lost? |          |
| Have you ever claimed to be winning money from your gambling activities when in fact you lost?      |          |
| Do you ever spend more time or money gambling than you intended?                                    |          |
| Have people ever criticized your gambling?  |          |
| Have you ever felt guilty about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble?           |          |

|   | YES / NO |
|---|----------|
| Have you ever hidden betting slips, lottery tickets gambling money, or other signs of gambling from your spouse or partner, children, or other important people in your life? |          |
| Have you ever argued with people you live with over how you handle money? If "yes," have these arguments ever centered on your gambling?                                      |          |
| Have you ever missed time from work or school due to gambling?  |          |
| Have you ever borrowed from someone and not paid them back as a result of your gambling?  |          |
| Have you ever borrowed from household money to finance gambling?  |          |
| Have you ever borrowed money from your spouse or partner to finance gambling?   |          |
| Have you ever borrowed from other relatives or in-laws to finance gambling?   |          |
| Have you received loans from banks, loan companies or credit unions for gambling or to pay gambling debts?  |          |
| Have you ever made cash withdrawals on creditcards such as Visa or MasterCard to get money to gamble with or to pay gambling debts? (Not including ATM cards.)                |          |
| Have you ever received loans from loan sharks to gamble or to pay gambling debts?   |          |
| Have you ever cashed in stocks, bonds, or other securities to finance gambling?   |          |
| Have you sold personal or family property to gamble or pay gambling debts?  |          |
| Have you ever borrowed money from your checking account by writing checks that bounced to get money for gambling or to pay gambling debts?                                    |          |
| Do you feel that you have ever had a problem betting money or gambling?   |          |

**To calculate your score: count one point for each "yes" response.**

**0 = no problem    1 – 4= mild to moderate problem    5 – 20 = significant problem**

**My score is: \_\_\_\_\_**

Adapted from South Oaks Gambling Screen, 1992, South Oaks Foundation, Henry Lesieur and Sheila Blume.

### 3. Consequences of gambling

In order to understand how gambling is impacting your life, take a minute to fill out the following questions. Think about how your gambling behavior impacts your life in both positive and negative ways. Please fill in the blanks.

Gambling has affected my life in the following ways:

#### **Physical Health**

Positive

Negative

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#### **Emotional Health**

Positive

Negative

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#### **Work**

Positive

Negative

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#### **Financial**

Positive

Negative

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#### **Social**

Positive

Negative

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**Legal**

Positive

Negative

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**Family Life**

Positive

Negative

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**4. What's happening to me when I gamble?**

People who gamble regularly may be detached from their feelings or themselves. They may react impulsively or out of habit and not pay attention to circumstances that precede or influence their gambling.

Think back to the last three times you gambled and complete the chart below – an example is below

| Where/Situation                                       | Feelings before                         | Thoughts before and during  | Amount of \$ |
|---|---|---|--------------|
| Stopped at a casino while looking for a job downtown. | Frustrated, discouraged, feeling broke. | If I made a big win then I wouldn't need a job. This would solve my problems. | \$60 [lost]. |
| 1.  |   |   |              |
| 2.  |   |   |              |
| 3.  |   |   |              |

# HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Make blank copies of this chart and use it to monitor your gambling.

Review it each week, paying special attention to the thoughts and feeling that precede impulses to gamble, whether you win or lose, and how you feel afterwards.

Blank copies of this chart are available in the Appendix section.

## 5. Identifying your reasons for gambling

Check the box that most applies to you for each reason for gambling.

| Reason for Gambling                               | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|---|-------|-----------|-------|
| Need for excitement                               |       |           |       |
| To make money quickly                             |       |           |       |
| To feel like a big shot                           |       |           |       |
| Felt shy and gambling was a way to be more social |       |           |       |
| To not think about problems                       |       |           |       |
| To feel more powerful                             |       |           |       |
| To numb my feelings                               |       |           |       |
| To avoid people                                   |       |           |       |
| Boredom   |       |           |       |
| Felt depressed or lonely                          |       |           |       |
| Pleasure, entertainment                           |       |           |       |
| Out of habit                                      |       |           |       |

After completing the checklist, go back to the beginning of the chapter where you listed your favorite forms of gambling and described what you liked about them. Would you change or add anything to your original answer?

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## **6. Wins and losses**

Problem gamblers typically remember their wins, which feel good. However, they also forget, minimize, or make excuses for their losses.

Have you kept accurate records of your wins and losses?

Some gamblers do in the beginning, but stop when losses start to accumulate.

**Reconstruct a calendar for the past month, with frequency of gambling episodes, outcome for each episode, and a total for how much money was won or lost.**

Try to remember how much cash you had at the beginning of the month, and any attempts to borrow or otherwise get additional funds.

Think about these questions:

1. Was this last month typical? How would it have compared with the same month from a year ago? Or from a typical month earlier in your gambling career?
2. Over the length of your gambling career, how much would you say you've won or lost?
3. In figuring what gambling has cost financially, have most of the losses come about more recently? How accurate is your estimate of the monies you've lost?

# LAST MONTH

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |          |

**7. Indebtedness**

Most problem and pathological gamblers have gambling-related debts and are behind in meeting their financial obligations.

Make a list of all debts, including credit card balances, money borrowed from family and friends, payments overdue, checks written for which funds aren't available and money owed to casinos.

**List all of your creditors and the amounts that you owe them**

| CREDITOR | AMOUNT THAT YOU OWE |
|----------|---------------------|
|          |                     |
|          |                     |
|          |                     |
|          |                     |
|          |                     |
|          |                     |



# CHAPTER II

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

### 1. Costs and Benefits

Before making changes in your behavior it is important to think about the positive and negative consequences of your decision. Gambling has caused problems, but it also has its benefits. This is an opportunity to directly compare the two.



Write down the benefits and costs of your gambling. Then write down the benefits and costs of not gambling.

Looking back at what you wrote in chapter one should be helpful.

| <b>Benefits of Gambling</b>  | <b>Benefits of <u>NOT</u> Gambling</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>(examples)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I love the feeling of excitement after a big win.</li><li>• I can have money fast.</li><li>• I have fun when I gamble.</li><li>• It helps me escape from other problems or forget my troubles.</li></ul> | <p>(examples)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I will save money.</li><li>• I will have more time to do other things.</li><li>• I will be less stressed.</li></ul> |
| <b>Add your own reasons. . .</b>   | <b>Add your own reasons. . .</b>  |
|  |   |

| Costs of Gambling  | Costs of <u>NOT</u> Gambling   |
|--|--|
| (examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am in a lot of debt.</li> <li>• I can't control my gambling.</li> <li>• I am depressed and anxious.</li> </ul> | (examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will be bored.</li> <li>• I might miss a big win.</li> <li>• I will have to face reality.</li> </ul> |
| Add your own reasons. . .  | Add your own reasons. . .  |
|  |  |

After you finish this assignment, number them in terms of importance.

How do the cost and benefits compare? Does continuing to gamble make more or less sense at this point?

## **2. Setting your gambling goal**

Before you start to change your gambling, it is important for you to decide on your goal.

Do you want to stop gambling altogether or do you just want to reduce the amount of time or money spent ?

Once you have made the decision to make a change, there are three options to choose from:

### **I. Abstinence (no gambling, at all)**

Many people find that not engaging in any form of gambling is the safest option of all for them.

### **II. Quitting a specific type (or types) of gambling**

Some people quit the types of gambling that have caused them difficulty, but continue to play other types (for example they quit playing slot machines but continue to play the lottery).

This choice requires continuous work. You must always watch to see if a problem is developing with another type of gambling. This may be a tougher choice than quitting entirely, because problems often develop slowly before we actually recognize them as problems.

If this is your choice, then decide what you are eliminating and what types of gambling you can continue.

### **III. Cutting back on gambling**

Many people attempt to reduce, but not stop, their gambling. This is usually the toughest choice because they have had problems controlling their gambling in their past and this approach may not be supported by friends or family.

**We strongly recommend** that you attempt to quit gambling completely for three or four weeks before making your final decision.

During this period of not gambling, you will discover how you cope on your own with urges or temptations to gamble.

If you decide to cut back on your gambling it is important to consider the following guidelines:

- Set a budget for how much you will spend in one session and in one week
- Develop ways to avoid “chasing your losses” (that is, trying to win back what you have lost)
- Limit the time you will spend gambling

- Keep a daily diary to record your gambling (use a notebook to record the amount of time gambling, number of occasions, wins and losses, etc.)
- If you are exceeding your gambling limits, in either frequency or amounts, and are still experiencing problems, you should stop gambling altogether.

### **3. Commit to your goal**

Choose ONE of the following options as your goal, circle it and sign your name.

This will act as a personal contract to yourself that will help you remain committed to your goal.

## **I. Abstinence from gambling**

### **II. Quitting a specific type (or types) of gambling**

Types of gambling allowed

\_\_\_\_\_

Types of gambling NOT allowed

\_\_\_\_\_

### **III. Cutting back from gambling**

The number of days a week I plan to gamble: \_\_\_\_\_

The maximum amount of time per session: \_\_\_\_\_

The maximum amount of \$ per session that I am willing to lose: \_\_\_\_\_

The maximum amount of \$ per week that I am willing to lose : \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. Strategies for limiting your gambling

##### A gambling budget

Research has shown that if an individual spends more than 2% of his or her annual income on gambling, this could be a sign of problem gambling.

If you have chosen to cut back on your gambling or limit your gambling to a specific type, please complete the following calculations:

A. Your gross annual income (estimated):

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B. 2% of your annual gross income: (multiply by .02) =  
(This is your estimated gambling budget per year):

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C. Estimated gambling budget per month:  
(Divide total of line B by 12)

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D. Actual amount of money lost to gambling last year:

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##### Limiting access to gambling

These are steps gamblers have taken to help regain control over their gambling. Please check any that you have tried and mark any that you might consider trying now:

Self-Exclusion (barring yourself from the casino)

Limit access to transportation used to get to casino

Move farther away from the casino

Eliminate Internet access

Remove your name from casino marketing lists; cancel player's card membership

Spend less time with friends or colleagues who gamble

Other Strategies Not Listed:

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## Limiting access to money

Many people find that if they have cash in their pocket they are more likely to gamble. Those who have successfully stopped gambling say that getting their cash flow under control is critical.

Check the strategies that you might consider doing:

- Cancel your credit cards or give them to a family member for safekeeping.
- Cancel your bank card or limit ATM access
- Take out only the cash needed for the day's expenses.
- Make sure checks are automatically deposited in your bank account.
- Have your wages collected by spouse or partner.
- Limit the amount of money you can withdraw in a week (by making arrangements with your bank).
- Tell family and friends NOT to lend you money.
- Have someone else pay your bills
- Keep a record of all money spent and earned (budgeting)
- Arrange for someone to co-sign all of the checks that you write

# CHAPTER III

## CHANGING OLD HABITS

### 1. *Recognizing one's triggers*

Triggers lead to an urge, craving or desire to gamble. There are basically two kinds of triggers:

- (1) **Internal (thoughts or feelings)**
- (2) **External (situations)**

An internal trigger is most likely caused by one of the following:

- (1) Feelings of uncertainty or helplessness
- (2) Feelings of guilt or shame
- (3) Strong negative feelings such as depression, anger or anxiety
- (4) Personal demands and expectations of yourself.

Gambling can be a way to avoid or escape such uncomfortable or painful feelings.

Can you think of a recent situation that triggered such feelings for you and led to an urge or desire to gamble?

(please describe below)

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External triggers are objects, words, or images that remind you of previous gambling experiences. Examples might include a billboard advertising Las Vegas, a televised poker game, or the freeway exit for the racetrack. They can also be situations that are associated with gambling. For example, a woman might typically gamble when her daughter is at her dance lesson or when her husband is out of town.

Can you think of something you experienced, saw or heard recently that triggered an urge or desire to gamble?

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Of the two kinds of triggers, which leads you to gamble?  
How have you dealt with it?

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## **2. Dealing with cravings**

Cravings are extremely common, especially when one is trying to stop gambling. They are not mysterious or unpredictable. Each time one is able to resist, one accomplishes something. The cravings will become weaker in both intensity and frequency over time. Just because you have an urge or craving to gamble, doesn't mean you have to act on it. There are a number of techniques for dealing with cravings.

### **Technique #1: Identification**

This is nothing more than the recognition that one is having a trigger. This is the first step in managing urges.

People experience cravings in different ways. It may consist of a thought telling them to gamble; or a visual image in which they see themselves gambling; or an experience made up of sounds, smells associated with gambling.

Cravings may also be accompanied by physical symptoms such as a rapid heart beat, sweaty palms, queasy feeling in the pit of the stomach. These may also feel like the rush experienced before gambling.

Please describe how you experience gambling urges:

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Now, remember to connect those thoughts and feelings with the bad outcomes you wrote about in technique #3. Each time you think about gambling, think of those bad outcomes before you make the decision about whether or not to gamble.

### **Technique #5: Postpone Gambling**

Tell yourself you are not going to do anything about it for the next hour, or ten minutes, or one minute, and wait it out. Break it into the smallest time increment you need to, then postpone taking any action.

What are some things that you can do to postpone gambling?

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### **Technique #6: Support**

It also helps to call someone, especially someone who has gone through similar problems. Many recovering gamblers utilize their religious or spiritual beliefs to help them deal with cravings. The important thing is to deal with one's urges and cravings in an active manner. Try each of these tools and techniques.

Try talking to a friend or a family member whenever you have the urge to go gambling. Another place to get more support in dealing with cravings is to go to Gambler's Anonymous and ask the other members how they deal with cravings.



### 3. Dealing with Distorted Thoughts about Gambling

In between the triggering event, the urge or craving to gamble, and the act of gambling, there can be false statements that gamblers tell themselves in order to justify their decision to gambling.

Examples of some of these distorted thoughts about gambling are included below – check which ones that you have used to justify your gambling.

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  | I'll just play for a little while.           |  | I deserve to gamble.  |
|  | One bet won't harm me.                       |  | I might actually win this time. And, how can I win if I don't play?     |
|  | Gambling is an easy way to earn money.       |  | My gambling is under control, I've just had a lot of bad luck recently. |
|  | I'm smart, I have a system to beat the odds. |  | Gambling will be the solution to my problems.                           |
|  | I will pay it back.                          |  | Gambling makes me feel better.  |
|  | Someday I'll score a really big win.         |  | I can win it back.  |
|  | I can't lose on my birthday.                 |  | I am smarter than the other gamblers.                                   |
|  | Other:                                       |  | Other:  |

#### **4. "Chasing"**

Chasing involves the abandonment of one's gambling strategy, and/or the increase in the size of one's bets, in an effort to win back what one has lost. Gamblers will go back another day or may keep going back, attempting to recoup their losses.

Although practical reasons (rationalizations) are given, the behavior is usually irrational. It results in greater losses, as the gambler buries himself or herself even deeper.

There are three common patterns or explanations for chasing.

See if any of these apply to you.

- 1) Some gamblers are extremely competitive. They take losing personally and it is intolerable for them. In fact, it is inconceivable. The casino has "their" money, and they must get it back.
- 2) Some gamblers are desperate to replace the money they lost before they are found out. They fully expect their spouse to leave them and their families shun and abandon them once their shameful secret is discovered.
- 3) Some gamble more desperately out of a sense of guilt. They believe that, if they can win back what they lost, it not only erases the debt, but it is as if they had never gambled in the first place.

Has chasing been a part of your gambling problem? Do you see it contributing to your loss of control? Would it be accurate to describe yourself as desperate when you are chasing? Do any of the three explanations for chasing apply to you?

#### **5. Money is the problem, money is the solution**

Problem gamblers often have fixed ideas about money. The first is that money is the solution to all one's problems. The second is that gambling is the way to get money.

##### **a) Money is the solution to all one's problems.**

It certainly may seem that way, particularly if your payments are overdue, creditors are calling, and if you have gambling-related debts.

##### **b) Gambling is the way to get money.**

Haven't you lost more often than you've won? And wasn't it gambling that put you in debt and caused most of your current financial problems. If you could have gambled in a disciplined manner, not taken unnecessary risks, quit while ahead, wouldn't you have been doing that all along?

How will you know when you have enough money?  
(please describe below how you view money in your life)

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**6. Self-deceptions basic to gambling**

Our brains are conditioned to look for patterns and to make predictions based on what has happened.

This does not work for gambling. It is hard not to believe that a machine is “due”, although each play is an independent event. The slot machine, dice and cards do not have a memory. If heads came up eight times in a row on a coin flip, the ninth flip of would NOT favor tails. However, it’s hard to accept that the odds are still only 50-50.

Additionally, the amount of skill involved in gambling is often overestimated, while luck is something people believe they can influence or change. Many gamblers are extremely superstitious. For example some believe they can control the dice, while some refuse to gamble on the 13th day of the month

What are your superstitions? Please write them below and try to provide evidence that they can influence the outcome.

| My Superstitions About Gambling | Evidence |
|---------------------------------|----------|
|                                 |          |
|                                 |          |
|                                 |          |

# CHAPTER IV

## DEVELOPING NEW HABITS

### 1. *Avoiding avoidance*

Gambling is often used to avoid or escape from especially painful feelings (shame, guilt, helplessness, depression) or from some problem in one's life that seems unsolvable.

While gambling, did you feel you were escaping the stresses of your life? Did you value the fact that you didn't have to think about anything, that nothing else existed?

Gambling, of course, creates other problems (financial, emotional, work, and family), but these serve to distract one even further from one's original problems.

What were you avoiding by gambling and how well did it work for you?

| What I was avoiding | Outcome of avoiding |
|---------------------|---------------------|
|                     |                     |
|                     |                     |
|                     |                     |
|                     |                     |

Avoidance, as a way of coping with problems, is habit-forming.

People develop a repertoire of different ways they avoid dealing with uncomfortable or difficult situations.

Please check which ones apply to you.

|  |                                 |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
|  | Drinking Alcohol                |  | Taking street drugs                   |
|  | Eating a lot                    |  | Watching Television                   |
|  | Surfing on the Internet         |  | Acting out sexually                   |
|  | Procrastination                 |  | Lying to people                       |
|  | Playing Video Games             |  | Reading a book, magazine or newspaper |
|  | Talking to someone that I trust |  | Spending more time at work            |
|  | Going to a support group        |  | Exercising                            |
|  | Going to church                 |  | Writing in a journal or diary         |
|  | Cleaning my house               |  | Meditation                            |
|  | Other                           |  | Other                                 |

## 2. Developing Ways to Cope

If gambling has been used to avoid or escape from some underlying problem, it would seem that, having now stopped (or gained control of your) gambling, that you have a choice. You can find other ways to avoid or escape problems, or you can confront them, and find healthy ways to deal with them.

Which of the following strategies might be helpful?

Check how helpful you think each of these would be for you.

|   | Not Helpful at All | Somewhat Helpful | Very Helpful |
|---|--------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Talking to a friend, family member or therapist       |                    |                  |              |
| Writing, keeping a journal or diary                   |                    |                  |              |
| Using new ways to relax, (meditation, yoga, etc. . .) |                    |                  |              |
| Regular exercise                                      |                    |                  |              |
| Gamblers Anonymous                                    |                    |                  |              |
| Getting 6-8 hours of sleep                            |                    |                  |              |
| Anger management                                      |                    |                  |              |
| Taking medications as prescribed                      |                    |                  |              |
| Making more time for myself                           |                    |                  |              |



The development of new coping skills is a process. It doesn't have to be done all at once. Nor do most problems have to be solved all at once. Many people early in recovery have unrealistic expectations for themselves.

### 3. Developing new activities

Many gamblers have a problem with boredom, especially when they've recently stopped or cut down on their gambling.

They may have used gambling to give meaning to their lives. Once they are less preoccupied with it, they find they have much more time on their hands. They may feel under-stimulated.

Boredom can also mean that they are uncomfortable being in the presence of their own company, and specifically with their feelings.

For these reasons, there's a need to develop new interests and activities, to create meaning and purpose for oneself. This in itself is exciting! But it may feel strange and uncomfortable.

Make a list of non-gambling related activities or hobbies that you enjoy that can fill your time. These can be activities that you used to enjoy but have given up or new activities that you have always wanted to learn or try.

Old Activities:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_



New Activities:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

If you are taking recovery seriously, you will be relating to people differently, having new experiences, learning new things daily.

Practice living in the present, as opposed to dwelling in the past or anticipating the future. Gamblers Anonymous recommends living one day at a time. This is not as easy as it sounds. You might try a smaller interval of time, like one hour at a time.

#### ***4. Forgiving yourself***

An extremely important part of any gambling problem is the feeling of shame and guilt that can persist long after stopping gambling. Gamblers Anonymous and an individual therapist can be helpful in helping to improve relationships with family members and others who have been hurt by the gambler's behavior.

Equally important, but often neglected in the recovery process, is the need to forgive oneself. While this involves a series of steps, it can start now. The first step in forgiving oneself is to put one's gambling and other hurtful behaviors in the past.

To be able to say: "I used to do such-and-such, but I don't do it any more."

The second step is to try to make sense of what was irrational, self-destructive, and harmful behavior. "It was hurtful, it was stupid, but I'm starting to understand why I thought I needed to do what I did."

Hopefully, by reading this manual, completing the exercises, and thinking about your answers, you are beginning that process of self-forgiveness and acceptance.

# CHAPTER V

## REVIEWING YOUR PROGRESS

### *1. Reviewing progress*

In Chapter 3 you set a goal for yourself, to either control your gambling by setting limits or by abstaining from certain games, or you would stop gambling altogether.

What is your goal now?

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As you review the previous four chapters, what if anything seems most different to you? How would you summarize what you've learned?

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Do you have a plan to change your gambling? What is it?

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Generally, most people find it helpful to tell others about their plan. What kind of help will you need? How will you get it?

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In addition to controlling your gambling, what are the other things that you need to work on?

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What potential problems do you anticipate? Will you need to make changes in your life style, in order to avoid situations that will act as triggers? For example, will your friends be supportive of you NOT gambling? If you were a sports bettor, do you continue to watch sporting events, read the sports section, listen to sports talk?

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## ***2. Dealing with slips and relapses***

You need to expect that problems will come back from time to time. If you do slip and gamble again, remember that you haven't failed and remind yourself of your past achievements.

You can often predict when problem gambling will reappear. You are more likely to lose control when you have bad times in other parts of your life.

You can learn from your slips by recognizing your triggers and risky situations.

Look at what happened and see if you can spot ways of stopping it next time. Re-read this manual and add your additional ideas.

**Learn from your mistakes, see what works, and brainstorm what could work in the future.**

| Description of relapse to gambling:   | How to avoid this from happening again   |
|---|--|
| (examples)<br>Went for lunch with co-workers and drove past the card clubs. | (examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bring enough money for lunch only</li><li>• Drive with a friend</li></ul> |
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |

**R**emember, change takes time. By completing this manual you have taken an important step toward regaining control of your life!

**Be sure to give yourself credit for each of your accomplishments along the way!**

**Learn from your mistakes.**

**Feel good about your accomplishments.**

**The most important day is today.**



# APPENDIX



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

***I. Blank copies of the gambling diaries***

|                                       |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Where/ Situation                      |  |  |  |
| Thoughts and feelings before gambling |  |  |  |
| Thoughts and feelings while gambling  |  |  |  |
| Amount of money won and lost          |  |  |  |
| Thoughts and feelings after gambling  |  |  |  |



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you feel you need more help or support, or if you have tried the techniques in this booklet and haven't been successful, then other resources are available. Many of these resources will be available in your area.

## **1. California Gambling Education and Treatment Services (CalGETS)**

- [www.problemgambling.ca.gov](http://www.problemgambling.ca.gov)

## **2. Gambler's Anonymous**

- [www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)

## **3. Gambling counselors and therapists**

- National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) <http://www.ncpgambling.org/>
- California Council on Problem Gambling [http://www.calpg.org/about\\_history.html](http://www.calpg.org/about_history.html)
- Office of Problem Gambling (OPG) <http://www.problemgambling.ca.gov/>
- UCLA Gambling Studies Program <http://www.uclagamblingprogram.org/index.html>

## **3. Resources: Books & Resources**

- Berman, Linda, M.S.W. and Mary-Ellen Siegel, M.S.W. *Behind the 8-Ball: A Guide for Families of Gamblers.* iUniverse, Inc., San Jose, 1998.
- Estes, Ken and Mike Brubaker. *Deadly Odds: Recovery from Compulsive Gambling.* A Fireside/Parkside Book. Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994.
- Lee, Bill. *Born to Lose: Memoirs of a Compulsive Gambler.* Hazelden. Hazelden Foundation, Center City, 2005.
- Petry, Nancy M. *Pathological gambling: etiology, comorbidity and treatment.* American Psychological Association Press, Washington DC, 2005.
- Lancelot, Marilyn. *Gripped by Gambling.* Wheatmark, 2013

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**T**his workbook was developed specifically for use as a part of a study that was funded by the California Office of Problem Gambling.

We would like to thank Dr. David Hodgins, Dr. Nancy Petry, Dr. Eric Geffner and Mr. Bruce Roberts for assistance and consultation with content, design and layout.

Some of the material presented is borrowed, with permission, from Dr. David Hodgins.

Hodgins, David and Makarchuk, K. *Becoming a Winner: Defeating Problem Gambling. A Gambling Self-Help Manual.* University of Calgary. June 2003.

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