

A scenic landscape featuring a two-lane asphalt road that stretches into the distance. The road is flanked by green fields and trees. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a dramatic sky with orange and blue hues, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

**IF GAMBLING IS AFFECTING YOU,
OR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT**

**THERE IS HOPE.
WE CAN HELP.**

TREATMENT SERVICES (SEE PAGES 4 - 6 FOR DETAILS)

- CalGETS Individual & Group Treatment
 - www.calgets.help/providers
- CalGETS Intensive Outpatient or Residential Care
 - www.calgets.help/treatment
- Certified Gambling Counselors
 - <http://www.calpg.org/ccgc>
- Gambler's Anonymous
 - <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations>

PREVENTION SERVICES (SEE PAGES 7 - 8 FOR DETAILS)

- Ban yourself ("self exclude")
 - https://oag.ca.gov/gambling/exclusion_self
 - CALL 916-559-6084
- Disable your credit/debit cards in most casinos
 - <https://www.everi.com/everi-cares/>
- Software to block Internet gambling
 - <http://www.gamblock.com/> or <https://gamban.com/>

PROBLEM GAMBLING HELPLINE

- CALL 1-800-gambler (426-2537), TEXT 'support' to 53342, CHAT at www.800gambler.chat

We would like to congratulate you for making the decision to seek help. That choice was, and is, a very difficult one – and you have now taken the first and hardest step!

Within this booklet, you will find information about CalGETS treatment options throughout California. These programs are provided *at no cost*, do not require insurance, and are available to any resident of California in need of help. You will also find some important information to help you better understand gambling addiction, and the elements of recovery.

Of the thousands of clients who have been surveyed after their treatment, a vast majority have reported that *their urges to gamble have decreased*, they have *gained more control over their gambling*, and their *overall 'life satisfaction' has improved significantly*.

Since the inception of CalGETS in 2009, over ten thousand (10,000) California residents have received help *at no cost* through the program. Here are a few quotes from former clients of the program:


- *“It’s never really too late. Going to treatment is the tool; you can learn how to handle things again.” – client treated for gambling*
- *“With the support and therapy, you can come out on the other side.” – client treated for gambling*
- *“This doesn’t mean you are loved or valued less. It means this person is suffering from a serious addiction that doesn’t allow them to make rational decisions.” – loved one of a gambler*

If you would like more information about these topics, please call 1-800-GAMBLER (426-2537) or visit the following websites:

- www.calgets.help
- www.calpg.org

CalGETS is available for you if you are a resident of California, aged 18 and over, and have been affected by gambling problems – whether the problem is your own, or that of someone you care about.

Again, we congratulate you for making this difficult decision and thank you for the opportunity you’ve given us to help you through this difficult time.


Terri Sue Canale-Dalman
Interim Assistant Deputy Director, CCDPHP
California Office of Problem Gambling


Robert Jacobson
Executive Director
California Council on Problem Gambling

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL	4
COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUPS	5
INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT.....	6
RESIDENTIAL CARE	6
OTHER OPTIONS.....	7
ORGANIZATIONS THAT HELP	8

GAMBLING & ADDICTION

HOW CAN I TELL IF I, OR SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT, HAS A PROBLEM?	9
NODS-SA: DO YOU HAVE A GAMBLING PROBLEM?.....	9
GAM-ANON: ARE YOU LIVING WITH A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?	10
SELF-TEST FOR TEENS.....	11
WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CHANGE?	12
WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GAMBLING ADDICTION?	13
WHO DOES IT AFFECT?	13
WHY IS IT CALLED THE “HIDDEN DISEASE”?	13
WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF PROBLEM GAMBLING?	14
MAINTAINING RECOVERY	15
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	17

The CalGETS program offers several options, available at no cost for problem gamblers and those who care about them. Any resident of California in need of help, aged 18 and over, can receive services – there are no income restrictions!

Services are provided as a stepped-care approach from brief interventions, to self-help workbooks, to one-on-one counseling and even residential care, and you will be offered the option to choose the services that best fit your needs.

All treatment services are confidential, and provided by licensed health providers specially trained in both the treatment of gambling addiction and the treatment of those affected by the problem gambling behaviors of someone they care for.

TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL

HELPLINE

The 1-800-GAMBLER (426-2537) Helpline is staffed by Masters-level or above Counselors, who answer your calls directly 24/7/365. Helpline counselors can provide immediate crisis intervention, and help put you directly in contact with a counselor, therapist or treatment facility to provide continuing care.

Services are provided by counselors fluent in English, Spanish and Chinese, and translators and telehealth are available for more than 200 other languages and for the deaf and hard of hearing.

You can also receive many of the same services, provided by the same Helpline counselors, by visiting www.800gambler.chat on the web or texting the word 'SUPPORT' to the number 53342.

INDIVIDUAL & GROUP TREATMENT

The CalGETS program offers more than 200 therapists throughout California. Therapists are licensed professionals who have received extensive training in general mental health treatment and diagnosis, and are held to a list of rules and ethical standards. Examples include Psychologists (Psy.D, Ph.D.), Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC). Providers authorized in the CalGETS program have received additional training to work with gamblers and their families.

CalGETS providers can help you at no charge. To find a therapist or group near you, you can call the Helpline, or visit:

- www.calgets.help/providers

In addition to 1-on-1 treatment, some of these therapists may also offer group treatment sessions.

TELEPHONE

While most Californians can find hope with a treatment provider near their home, the distance to travel may be further in some parts of the state than others. If you do not want to travel to a provider, or cannot travel there for any reason, telephone counseling is also available.

At no charge, you can schedule a 1-on-1 telephone conversation with a masters-level or above counselor who has been trained to help people with gambling problems – both their own, and those of someone they care about – by calling 1-800-GAMBLER.

HELP IN OTHER LANGUAGES

If you are not comfortable speaking in English, or would just prefer to speak your native language, services are also available in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin and several other Asian languages.

To search for a provider who offers service in your preferred language, visit:

- www.calgets.help/providers

CCGC

While therapy focuses on your overall mental health, counseling focuses more on specific problems (such as gambling). California Certified Gambling Counselors (CCGCs) have completed a rigorous training process, designed to help them work with gamblers and their families.

Please note that CCGCs are not part of the CalGETS program, and may or may not be licensed by the state of California (unlicensed CCGC's work within local or regional treatment centers.) Some CCGCs are able to provide services at no charge through local or regional grants, while others may request a fee for service. To find a CCGC near you, call 1-800-GAMBLER or visit:

- <http://www.calpg.org/ccgc>

COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUPS

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS (GA)

Gamblers Anonymous (GA) is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem, and help others to recover from a gambling problem. This free twelve-step support group is for both men and women. Meetings are held throughout the entire state, a list of which can be found here:

- <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations>

GAM-ANON

Gam-Anon is a self-help fellowship of people who have been affected by the gambling problem of another. With the help of Gam-Anon, you can find your way back to a normal way of thinking and living, whether or not your loved one continues to gamble. This free twelve-step support group is for both men and women. Meetings are held throughout the entire state, a list of which can be found here:

- <https://www.gam-anon.org/meeting-directory>

THE CALIFORNIA YOUTH CRISIS LINE

This free, confidential, 24-hour crisis line is for youth, ages 12-24, and families in California. Professionally trained peer and adult ally counselors are available to talk with non-judgmental, non-advice crisis intervention counseling, and can provide local resource referrals for problems including runaway and homelessness, thoughts of suicide, teen pregnancy or substance abuse. For assistance:

- [Call 1-800-843-5200](tel:1-800-843-5200)

INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT

Intensive outpatient (IOP) offers an increased depth and frequency of treatment, and serves as a bridge for clients moving from residential to outpatient treatment, or for those who require more than one day a week of treatment.

IOP includes 3-hour sessions, three days per week, and is offered at select facilities licensed to treat substance addiction (such as drugs or alcohol), which also have experience in treating gambling addiction.

For more information about IOP, and a list of treatment centers, call 1-800-GAMBLER or visit:

- www.calgets.help/treatment

RESIDENTIAL CARE

Residential treatment is the highest level of care available. It is offered at select facilities that are licensed to treat substance addiction (such as drugs or alcohol) and have experience in treating gambling addiction.

Residential clients will live at the facility and receive fifteen (15) hours of gambling related treatment each week during their stay, which usually lasts at least thirty (30) days. For more information about Residential Care, and a list of treatment centers, call 1-800-GAMBLER or visit:

- www.calgets.help/treatment

OTHER OPTIONS

BANNING YOURSELF

Self-exclusion is a voluntary “ban” from gambling activities for a set amount of time. You can request to self-exclude from any casino in California. Once on the exclusion list, you are not permitted to return to that casino until you have been removed from the list. Violating your exclusion will result in forfeiting any jackpot winnings and can also result in an arrest for trespassing.

Exclusion is statewide within California Gaming (“cardrooms”) and may be requested by mail or in-person. You can exclude from every California Gaming Establishment in the state by submitting one form. Information on the California Gaming Exclusion Program, and/or to download the form, please visit:

- https://oag.ca.gov/gambling/exclusion_self

Because tribal casinos are on sovereign land, each one has their own self-exclusion program. To exclude from a tribal casino(s), you should contact the gaming commission for that tribe’s casino.

DISABLE YOUR ATM/DEBIT/CREDIT CARDS AT SOME CASINOS

By enrolling in the Self-Transaction Exclusion Program (STeP), you can disable your ATM, debit and credit cards at many of the casinos in California.

The program is offered by a gaming equipment manufacturing company called Everi, which supplies cash-access machines to a majority of casinos in California. Enrolling in the program will disable your cards only at machines made by Everi, and does not affect your cards at any other cash-access machine. For more information, or to enroll, visit:

- <https://www.everi.com/everi-cares/>

SOFTWARE TO BLOCK INTERNET GAMBLING

GamBlock© and Gamban© are programs you can install on your computer to block access to many internet gambling websites. Because each person has different needs, we do not recommend either company above the other – instead we suggest that you review each program, and select the one that works best for you. For more information, visit:

- <http://www.gamblock.com/> or <https://gamban.com/>

MOTIVATIONAL TEXT MESSAGING PROGRAM

Through this program, you can receive two text messages per week for twelve weeks. The text messages are tailored to your personal needs, and designed to motivate you to enter or remain in treatment, or to sustain your recovery.

Text messages are available in English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese, for both the gambler and those affected by the gambling of someone they care for. To enroll in the program:

- [Call 1-800-GAMBLER](tel:1800GAMBLER), visit www.800gambler.chat on the web, or text 'support' to 53342.

“FREEDOM FROM PROBLEM GAMBLING” SELF-HELP WORKBOOK

This self-help workbook for problem gamblers, included with this packet, was developed by the UCLA Gambling Studies Program as a tool for assisting people who are motivated to stop or reduce the problems associated with gambling. *The workbook is not a substitute for professional help.* To get the workbook, in any of more than 20 languages:

- www.calgets.help/workbook (English) or email opg@cdph.ca.gov for other languages

ORGANIZATIONS THAT HELP

CCPG

The California Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) is a non-profit organization, founded in 1986, dedicated to assisting problem gamblers and their families by promoting awareness, education, research, prevention and treatment for problem gambling. CCPG is an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). To learn more about CCPG, visit:

- www.calpg.org

OPG

The Office of Problem Gambling (OPG) is part of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and is charged with developing and providing quality statewide prevention, education, awareness and treatment programs and services to address gambling addiction. To learn more about OPG, visit:

- www.calgets.help

Both CCPG and OPG exist to help those affected by gambling addiction, and have no opinion on the legalization or expansion of gambling.

UCLA GAMBLING STUDIES PROGRAM

The UCLA Gambling Studies Program (UGSP) is a non-profit organization within the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles. Their mission is to reduce the individual, familial, and societal harm caused by pathological gambling. Since 2005, they have been engaged in conducting research and assisting healthcare providers to provide cost-effective prevention and treatment services. To learn more about UGSP, visit:

- <http://www.uclagamblingprogram.org/>

HOW CAN I TELL IF I, OR SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT, HAS A PROBLEM?

On the following pages, you will find tests to help you determine whether your gambling, or the gambling of a loved one, is cause for concern.

It is important to understand that *these tests do not determine if someone has a gambling problem*, but are intended to help you decide if you should seek a face-to-face evaluation with a trained professional.

Please take the test that is most appropriate for you and, if you answer yes to one or more questions, consider discussing the results with a trained professional.

NODS-SA: DO YOU HAVE A GAMBLING PROBLEM?

YES	NO	1. Have there ever been periods lasting two weeks or longer when you spent a lot of time thinking about your gambling experiences, planning out future gambling ventures or bets, or thinking about ways of getting money to gamble with?
YES	NO	2. Have there ever been periods when you needed to gamble with increasing amounts of money or with larger bets than before in order to get the same feeling of excitement?
YES	NO	3. Have you ever felt restless or irritable when trying to stop, cut down, or control your gambling?
YES	NO	4. Have you tried and not succeeded in stopping, cutting down, or controlling your gambling three or more times in your life?
YES	NO	5. Have you ever gambled to escape from personal problems, or to relieve uncomfortable feelings such as guilt, anxiety, helplessness, or depression?
YES	NO	6. Has there been a time when, if you lost money gambling one day, you would return to get even?
YES	NO	7. Have you lied to family members, friends, or others about how much you gamble, and/or about how much money you lost on gambling, on at least three occasions?
YES	NO	8. Have you ever written a bad check or taken money that didn't belong to you from family members, friends, or anyone else in order to pay for your gambling?
YES	NO	9. Has your gambling ever caused serious or repeated problems in your relationships with any of your family members or friends? Or, has your gambling ever caused you problems at work or your studies?
YES	NO	10. Have you ever asked family members, friends, a bank, or anyone else to loan you money or otherwise bail you out of a desperate situation that was largely caused by your gambling?

GAM-ANON: ARE YOU LIVING WITH A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

YES	NO	1. Do you find yourself constantly bothered by bill collectors?
YES	NO	2. Is the person in question often away from home for long, unexplained periods of time?
YES	NO	3. Does this person ever lose time from work due to gambling?
YES	NO	4. Do you feel that this person cannot be trusted with money?
YES	NO	5. Does the person in question promise that he or she will stop, plead for another chance, and yet gamble again and again?
YES	NO	6. Does this person ever gamble longer than they intended to?
YES	NO	7. Does this person immediately return to gambling to try to recover losses, or to win more?
YES	NO	8. Does this person ever gamble to get money to solve financial difficulties, or have unrealistic expectations that gambling will bring the family material comfort and wealth?
YES	NO	9. Does this person borrow money to gamble with or to pay gambling debts?
YES	NO	10. Has this person's reputation ever suffered due to gambling?
YES	NO	11. Have you come to the point of hiding money needed for living expenses, knowing that you and the rest of the family may go without food and clothing if you do not?
YES	NO	12. Do you search this person's clothing or go through his or her wallet when the opportunity presents itself, or otherwise check on his / her activities?
YES	NO	13. Does the person in question hide his or her money?
YES	NO	14. Have you noticed a personality change in the gambler as his or her gambling progresses?
YES	NO	15. Does the person in question consistently lie to cover up or deny his or her gambling activities?
YES	NO	16. Do they use guilt as a method of shifting responsibilities for their gambling upon you?
YES	NO	17. Do you attempt to anticipate this persons moods, or try to control his or her life?
YES	NO	18. Do they suffer from remorse or depression due to gambling?
YES	NO	19. Has the gambling ever brought you to the point of threatening to break up the family unit?
YES	NO	20. Do you feel that your life together is a nightmare?

SELF-TEST FOR TEENS

YES	NO	1. Do your friends gamble a lot?
YES	NO	2. Do you gamble at school?
YES	NO	3. Have you ever stayed away from school or work to gamble?
YES	NO	4. Is gambling more important than school or work?
YES	NO	5. Do you often spend your free time involved in gambling activities (poker, dice, etc.)?
YES	NO	6. Do you find gambling to be the most exciting activity you do?
YES	NO	7. When you are gambling, do you tend to lose track of time and forget about everything else?
YES	NO	8. Do you often daydream about gambling?
YES	NO	9. Do you feel your friends are envious of you when you win money at gambling and that you get extra attention because of gambling?
YES	NO	10. When you win, do you believe that you will continue winning?
YES	NO	11. When you lose, do you feel that you must bet again right away to win back your losses?
YES	NO	12. Do you gamble with money you intended to use for other things, like lunch, clothing, etc.?
YES	NO	13. Do you ever "borrow" money to gamble?
YES	NO	14. Have you ever sold a possession to get money to gamble or pay a gambling debt?
YES	NO	15. Do you try to prevent your family and friends from knowing how much or often you gamble?
YES	NO	16. Do you ever lie about your gambling? For example, do you ever tell people that you did not gamble or that you won money gambling when in fact you had lost money or possessions?
YES	NO	17. Do you get into arguments with your parents or friends over gambling?
YES	NO	18. Do you feel depressed, lose sleep, or feel guilty because you lost money gambling?
YES	NO	19. Have you ever thought of suicide as a way of solving your problems?
YES	NO	20. Does one or both of your parents do a lot of gambling?

WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CHANGE?

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, help is available! However, you/they are more likely to succeed in your/their recovery if you/they are ready and willing to seek treatment. Knowing the Stages of Change can help you understand why:

PRECONTEMPLATION (NOT READY)

Does not intend to take action within the next six months for reasons that may include: being uninformed or under informed about the consequences of behavior, or previous unsuccessful attempts at change.

CONTEMPLATION (GETTING READY)

Has started to become aware of the benefits of changing, and intends to make a change to behavior within the next six months.

PREPARATION (READY)

Intends to take action within the next month; usually has already taken some significant action in the past year, and has a plan of action for moving forward.

ACTION

Has made specific changes within the past six months, and is continuing to make more changes to behavior.

MAINTENANCE

Has made specific changes to behavior, and is working to prevent relapse; however, does not apply change processes as frequently as do people in the Action stage.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GAMBLING ADDICTION?

The best way to tell if you are suffering from a gambling addiction is to consider your own thoughts and actions. Some possible indicators include, but are not limited to:

- *You want to gamble less/quit gambling, but you cannot, or you suffer symptoms of withdrawal.*
- *You try to recover your losses by gambling more, and/or making bigger bets (“chasing”).*
- *You lie about your gambling wins/losses, or about the time you spend gambling.*
- *You spend money on gambling which should have been used for bills, food, savings, etc.*
- *You gamble for reasons other than entertainment (to “escape”, for “the rush,” etc.).*
- *The amount of time and money spent on gambling, and your average bets, are increasing over time.*
- *Your gambling is affecting relationships with your family, friends, employer, etc.*
- *Gambling leads to bad feelings, such as frustration, irritation, depression, remorse, guilt or shame.*
- *You find yourself constantly thinking about gambling, and/or neglecting other hobbies to gamble.*

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

Gambling addiction is a disease, which can affect anyone regardless of who they are. However, it is a treatable disease!

People who suffer from gambling addiction often find themselves spending money and time that they cannot afford on their gambling, with the amounts of money and time spent increasing over time - and the harms caused by gambling addiction can extend beyond financial. Problem gamblers often see important relationships (family, friends, work, etc.) get harmed, and may also experience physical and mental health problems.

WHY IS IT CALLED THE “HIDDEN DISEASE”?

Unlike many other addictions, it can be difficult to recognize when someone you know suffers from a gambling problem. For example, recognizable signs of an alcoholic include the smell of liquor, bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, a stumbling walk, etc. The same holds true for most drugs (Marijuana, Cocaine, etc.).

On the other hand, gambling addicts display very few physical signs, and those that they do are usually not unique to gambling – i.e. they could indicate an entirely different problem as well. Complicating matters further, our bodies will usually stop us, or at least warn us, when we’re at risk of going too far with most substances (such as passing out or feeling sick after too many drinks), but a gambling addict is limited only by the money they have access to on any given night.

WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF PROBLEM GAMBLING?

WINNING

During this phase, you may gamble more frequently than before, although there may still be long periods between the days on which you gamble. You are likely to view gambling positively, as just a fun activity; however, it will become progressively more important to you, and you may begin to rationalize your sessions (i.e. “It helps me relax” or “I deserve it.”).

You may not be harming yourself financially (you may even be winning), but you will steadily begin to adopt an identity as a “gambler,” and could begin to believe that you are especially talented at gambling; that you can “beat the casino.” Your friends or family will not be worried, and may even encourage you to gamble during this time.

For some, this phase can last for many years, while for others (especially slot players) it may last only a brief time, or not happen at all.

LOSING

During this phase, you will not only gamble more often, but the pace at which your gambling increases will accelerate. Gambling could become a regular activity, or even habitual. You could find yourself beginning to place larger bets, and chase your losses. Gambling will become a priority, taking over your time and replacing other hobbies. The time you spend gambling could begin to affect your relationships with friends and family, and even your job.

You will experience higher than usual levels of anxiety and depression, and may look to borrow money to relieve the financial pressures that have begun to build as the gambling losses mount. You may begin lying about your gambling, and trying to hide it, while at the same time trying to minimize or justify it.

Efforts to quit or cut down on gambling may happen (often failing) during this time, especially after big losses – but at the same time, you may not recognize the overall impact that gambling is having on your life.

DESPERATION

Depression, shame and guilt will increase during this phase, as your options for obtaining cash begin to run out. Some people may begin to sell their possessions, float checks, or even engage in illegal activities to gain access to money.

Debt-related anxiety will often increase further, and physical health and sleep patterns may deteriorate, as an isolation from friends and family increases.

HOPELESSNESS

In this phase, a person essentially “gives up,” although they may still seek to get into or return to treatment. A majority of gambling addicts who reach this phase will commit crimes because of their gambling, and 20% will commit suicide, while almost all others consider it.

MAINTAINING RECOVERY

It is important to understand that recovering from a gambling addiction is both a process and a lifetime commitment. As with most addictions, the greatest challenge of quitting gambling is not the “stopping” – it is the “staying stopped.”

The keys to a successful recovery include: surrounding yourself with people who will provide support, yet hold you accountable; finding healthy alternative activities to gambling; and avoiding tempting environments (i.e. Do not go to the casino “just for dinner.”).

CRAVINGS

It is normal to get urges – often strong urges – to gamble when you are in recovery. The urges can be difficult to resist, but it gets easier as you learn to make healthier choices and build your support network.

When you feel an urge to gamble:

- **Seek Support** - Call your sponsor, attend a GA meeting or talk to someone you trust
- **Do Something Else** - Do something you enjoy, or complete a necessary chore
- **Take Things a Little at a Time**
- **Think About the Consequences** - Remember all the bad experiences you've had, and the effects those experiences have had on you or someone you care about.

TRIGGERS

Doing things that remind you of gambling, or of the rituals or activities you associate with gambling, can “trigger” a strong desire within you to gamble. Unpleasant feelings such as stress, depression, loneliness, fear, or anxiety can also act as “triggers.”

An important element of recovery is to learn to deal with triggers without giving in to the urge to gamble. Try to avoid putting yourself in situations where you may be triggered, and plan ahead for stressful situations, “bad days” and the other unpleasant things that happen to all of us from time to time - and come up with a strategy for how you will deal with these situations when they do happen.

Remember: recovering from a gambling addiction is not easy, and you may slip from time to time; the important thing is to learn from your mistakes and continue working towards recovery!

SUBSTITUTE BEHAVIORS

Finding healthy activities to replace the time you spent gambling is a large part of maintaining your recovery. Everyone gambles for different reasons, so understanding why **you** gamble, and what other activities may give you similar fulfillment, is essential. Some examples are below. If you gamble for:

- *The “rush” – do something adventurous like rock climbing or riding a roller coaster*
- *To escape from problems/feelings – try meditation, or discuss with your therapist/counselor*
- *The social interactions – take some interactive/community classes*
- *Out of boredom/loneliness – Seek out others with similar interests as you (art/books/etc.)*
- *To relax – try exercise, deep breathing, or massage*
- *To solve money problems – remember that gambling will only make these worse!*

LIMITING YOUR ABILITY TO GAMBLE

No matter how strong the urge is to gamble, you cannot do it without four things: time, money, access and a decision (detailed below). Because the most severe forms of gambling addiction can result in an *uncontrollable* desire to gamble, part of the recovery process is to limit your ability to gamble.

1. ITEMS OF VALUE (INCLUDING MONEY):

You cannot gamble unless you have something to wager. This usually means money of course, *but it can be anything of value*. Restrict your access to things that you could wager as much as possible. Examples of how to do this include: limiting how much cash you carry, paying your bills as soon as you get paid (or with automatic payments), and canceling or suspending credit/debit cards.

2. TIME

Gambling takes time – sometimes a lot of it! Keep yourself busy as possible with things you enjoy that are not related to gambling.

3. ACCESS

Restrict your access to gambling as much as you can by self-excluding, blocking online gambling on your computer, avoiding places where gambling is available, and choosing not to make “friendly bets” with people you know.

4. THE DECISION

Before you gamble, you must first make the decision to gamble. Gambling begins with the first bet – which is usually the easiest one **not** to make because your mind is clearest before you begin to gamble. Whenever you feel an urge to gamble:

- Think about the consequences of your actions;
- Find a healthy activity to engage in;
- Tell yourself to stop thinking about gambling; and
- Call someone whom you trust (or call 1-800-GAMBLER) and talk things out!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: IS PROBLEM GAMBLING REALLY A BIG “PROBLEM”?

Yes. According to a 2006 study, more than one million adults in California will experience a gambling problem at some point in their lifetime, with 1.5% of the adults in the state experiencing a gambling addiction (clinically known as a “disorder”).

Q: GAMBLING ADDICTION IS A FINANCIAL PROBLEM, RIGHT?

No! Gambling disorders are a mental health problem caused by an “uncontrollable urge to gamble,” and can cause harm to all aspects of the gambler’s life: finances, relationships, and physical and mental health.

Q: ARE PROBLEM GAMBLERS IRRESPONSIBLE OR WEAK-WILLED PEOPLE?

No! Many people who develop problems are viewed as responsible and strong by those who care about them. Like other diseases, gambling addiction is an illness that some people develop over time. There are many reasons why you develop this illness – but, like any other disease, it must be treated once you’ve developed it or it will get worse.

Q: HOW CAN A PERSON BE ADDICTED TO SOMETHING THAT IS NOT A SUBSTANCE?

Gamblers get the same effects from gambling as others may get from using drugs or drinking alcohol. Gambling can alter the gambler’s mood, leading them to repeat the action in an effort to duplicate the effect. In addition, just as tolerance develops to drugs or alcohol, the gambler finds that it takes more and more of the gambling experience to achieve the same emotional effect as before. This creates an increased craving for the activity, and the gambler finds they have less and less ability to resist as the craving grows in intensity and frequency.

Q: ARE PROBLEM GAMBLERS USUALLY ADDICTED TO OTHER THINGS TOO?

Problem gamblers are more likely to have or develop problems with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or other addictive substances and processes. However, some problem gamblers never experience any other addiction, sometimes because nothing else gives them the same feelings that gambling does.

Q: CAN CHILDREN OR TEENAGERS DEVELOP GAMBLING PROBLEMS?

Yes. In fact, research shows that a vast majority of kids have gambled before their 18th birthday, and that children may be more likely to develop problems related to gambling than adults!

Q: WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE BECOME PROBLEM GAMBLERS?

Although some people are at higher risk, anyone can develop a gambling problem.

Q: CAN I TELL IF I AM A PROBLEM GAMBLER BASED ON HOW MUCH MONEY OR TIME I SPEND?

There is no specific amount of either money or time that determines if you are a problem gambler – it's more how important that money or time is to you personally, because different people can afford different amounts of money or time. For example, someone who is retired has far more free time than someone working two full time jobs does. In that case, if the retiree gambles twice in a week, that time may be less “valuable” to them than if the person working two jobs had to take a day off work or miss a family event to gamble once.

The bottom line is that if you are spending money or time that you cannot afford, or that is taking away from other parts of your life, you may be developing or may have a gambling problem.

Q: HOW DO SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND GAMBLING ADDICTION COMPARE?

SIMILARITIES

- *Seeking immediate gratification*
- *Preoccupation with thoughts about gambling/using*
- *An inability to stop*
- *The abuser or gambler denies the problem*

DIFFERENCES

- *Gambling is easier to hide*
- *Many people do not understand gambling can be an addiction*
- *There is less help for gambling addiction*

Q: WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF PROBLEM GAMBLING?

There are many types of gamblers, and many reasons why they play. The two most common are:

- **Action Gamblers** seek a “rush” or a “high.” They are often intelligent, ambitious, type-A personalities possessing a strong competitive drive. They want to beat the “house” or other players, and they gamble for the thrill of winning. Action gamblers prefer forms of gambling containing a perceived element of skill such as: poker, blackjack, craps, sports betting, horse or dog race betting, or the stock market. Action gamblers may also gamble to escape problems.
- **Escape Gamblers** seek to escape problems in personal or business life. This type of gambler usually plays against machines and avoids human contact (e.g. slot machines). The gambling tends to have an emotional “numbing” effect on the individual.

