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## Strategies for Success

**Removing the stimuli for gambling is critical in early recovery. The following are some ideas to help create a supportive environment where healthy choices become easier to make.**

- 1. Handle money as little as possible.**
  - a) Dispose of bank teller cards.
  - b) Discontinue credit cards if you are taking cash advances or using them irresponsibly.
  - c) Have your paycheques put directly into your bank account.
  - d) Have someone else who you can trust (e.g. a friend, family member) manage your finances.
  - e) Consider other financial avenues, such as locking your money into long-term savings bonds, etc.
  - f) If you are going near a gambling venue, leave all your money, cheque books, etc. at home.
  
- 2. Keep a diary of your expenditures. If you are gambling, keep track of how much you have spent, and the amount you have won. (If you can't afford to lose anymore, record the losses of a friend or investigate legislation and statistics about the earnings of gambling venues.)**
  
- 3. Try to reduce your financial need.**
  - a) Determine if there is something else contributing to your high level of financial need (e.g. drug or alcohol abuse).
  - b) Is it necessary for you to have lots of money or a high standard of living to be happy?
  
- 4. Problem gamblers often gamble alone, so get involved in activities with other people. Take an evening class, join a club or sports group, volunteer, or participate in activities with family or friends.**
  
- 5. Associate with people who do not gamble. Meet with friends in a place where gambling is not available.**
  
- 6. Build a support network.**
  - a) Seek out self-help groups (e.g. Gamblers Anonymous, GamAnon).
  - b) Seek out addiction services workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, or other health care professionals that can help you.
  - c) Seek out family, friends, or relatives for support.
  
- 7. Seek financial counseling if needed (e.g. for budgeting skills, debt repayment plans, etc.).**

8. **Seek treatment for drug or alcohol abuse and mental illness (e.g. depression, suicide, mania). Seek counseling for marital problems, career and legal issues, or other problematic areas in your life.**
9. **Save your gambling money for something special you enjoy doing (e.g. hobbies, travelling). Reward yourself when you choose not to gamble (e.g. go out for dinner, see a movie).**
10. **Channel excess energy or prevent boredom or loneliness by building other alternatives to gambling. Take up sports, hobbies, exercise, or other enjoyable activities.**
11. **Change habits and behaviors that support your gambling (e.g. don't drive past your gambling venue of choice, avoid reading sports results).**
12. **Plan and schedule your days, replacing the time spent gambling with other activities you enjoy. Stick to your schedule as closely as possible.**
13. **Determine what triggers your gambling (e.g. stress, depression, loneliness, anxiety) and find other ways of dealing with these triggers.**
14. **Learn more about problem gambling. Go to a library or bookstore. Read books, pamphlets, or borrow videos.**
15. **Develop realistic expectations for change.**
  - a) It is unrealistic to expect quick change or improvement. Relapses are likely and they are not signs of failure.
  - b) Understand that winning is due to luck only, not skill.
  - c) Gambling is not the best way, or the only way, of controlling your financial situation.

### **What is gambling?**

Gambling is risking something of value when there are odds of winning or losing.

### **Problem Gambling**

Problem gambling is a pattern of gambling behaviour, which may compromise, disrupt or damage family, personal or vocational pursuits.

### **Problem Gambler**

A problem gambler is a person who is spending time and money in a manner that it is harmful to them. This gambling may also be hurting those around them including their partner, family and/or friends.

### **Why Do People Gamble?**

There are many reasons, some of which are:

- **To win money** - Gambling being the only form of entertainment where one can finish with more money than one started with.
- **Peer Influence** - In certain groups gambling may be seen as desirable behaviour because it means someone is taking a risk and tempting fate.
- **Charitable Donations** - Some people gamble as a way of supporting a worthy cause.
- **Excitement, Fun** - Gambling is a complex mixture of anticipation and reinforcement that can make it enjoyable and fun.
- **Escape** - It can be used as a way to escape from worries or problems, can relieve boredom, loneliness, etc.
- **Fantasy** - They imagine themselves being happier if they won the big jackpot and/or think about what to do with a lot of money.
- **Parental Influence** - Parents are role models for their children, children can receive messages that gambling is acceptable, harmless, get rich quick, etc.

**ADDICTION SERVICES** - For additional information contact **1-800-461-1234**