

Do You Have a Gambling Problem?

Objective

To identify if you have a gambling problem and determine if you are ready to seek treatment.

What to Know

Gambling disorder, affecting 3-5% of the adult population, is defined by an inability to stop gambling, despite ongoing problems caused by the behavior. In addition to financial problems, your relationships, career, and health are likely to suffer. Check off the following statements that apply to you, then add up your checked responses.

I am currently spending more time gambling and less time with family, friends, or pursuing other interests.

I spend more money on gambling, placing bets, and/or “doubling my bets” more often than in the past.

I borrow money from family or friends to gamble, or to pay bills I am unable to pay because I spend all of my money on gambling.

I am secretive about money and/or my gambling losses.

People have criticized my betting or told me I have a problem with gambling.

I hope for a “big win” because it is the only way to solve my money problems.

I have not been able to quit or cut down on gambling, despite losses, distress, and other problems.

I refuse to discuss gambling with others, and I have even lied about it.

If I lose or I am unable to gamble, I feel irritable, anxious, or depressed.

I feel high when I am winning.

I minimize losses and tend to brag about my winnings.

I have missed or been late to special occasions or important events because of my gambling habit.

I have problems in my marriage/relationship because of my gambling.

I try to plan my holidays and vacations where gambling is available.

Gambling interferes with my job – I have left early, arrived late, received gambling-related phone calls, or had unexplained absences.

I like to gamble with more and more money to feel a sense of excitement.

Gambling has negatively affected my reputation.

___ I constantly think about gambling, including how to get more money.

___ I have experienced withdrawal-like symptoms when I have tried to quit gambling, including irritability, anger, depression, hopelessness, or shame.

___ I have hidden betting slips, lottery tickets, gambling money, IOUs, or other signs of betting or gambling from my spouse, children, or other important people in my life.

___ I have felt regretful or remorseful after gambling.

___ After winning, I have had the strong urge to go back and win more.

___ I often gamble until my last dollar is gone.

___ I have sold things to pay for my gambling.

___ I gamble to escape my worries or problems.

___ I have done, or considered doing, something illegal or unethical to pay for my gambling habit.

___ I have thought about hurting or killing myself because of gambling.

___ I have arguments with my spouse/significant other about how I handle money.

___ I have borrowed money from someone and failed to pay him/her back because I spent it all on gambling.

_____ Total

If you checked off one to four items, you might have a slight gambling problem. You may want to discuss your gambling habit with a trusted loved one or counselor. If you checked off five or more items, you have a severe gambling problem and you might want to seek treatment.

If you have a gambling problem, you are more likely to experience a range of other problems, including:

- Social Problems
- Health Problems
- Criminal activity / incarceration
- Divorce
- Domestic violence
- Financial hardship, bankruptcy
- Job loss
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicide

Gambling problems tend to run in families. If you have a parent with gambling disorder, you are three times more likely to have a gambling problem. If you suspect you have a problem with

gambling, it can be a difficult decision to actually seek treatment. Your thoughts about treatment may be conflicting and influence your choice to seek treatment.

What to Do

First, answer the following questions.

What is the largest amount of money you have ever gambled with on any one day? \$ _____

Did any of your family members have a gambling problem? If yes, who? _____

When you gamble, how often do you go back another day to win back the money you lost?

- Never.
- Some of the time, but less than half the time I lost.
- Most of the time I lost.
- Every time I lost.

Have you ever said you were winning money when you were really losing? _____

How do you feel about seeking treatment for your gambling problem? Explain.

Use the table below to create lists of the benefits and drawbacks of seeking treatment.

What are the benefits of starting treatment?	What are the benefits of NOT starting treatment?
What are the drawbacks of starting treatment?	What are the drawbacks of NOT starting treatment?

What stood out for you in terms of benefits and drawbacks to seeking treatment?

Did any of your answers surprise you? Be specific.

Which of the reasons you listed were most convincing for you? Why?

What is your next step in your pursuit of treatment?

If you decide not to seek treatment, how will you know when it is time to start treatment?

Based on your self-assessment of your gambling problem and how it has affected your life, you will:

- cut down on gambling.
- stop gambling completely.

Recovered gamblers will tell you one of the most important things that helped them in their recovery was the support of others. Who can help you? List three people.

Getting treatment to stop gambling means you will face some difficult issues. However, having someone you trust that you can talk to about your recovery can make all the difference.

If you seek treatment, the first step is telling someone. Write down the name of one supportive person you can talk to, and include the date you will talk to them. You might talk to your spouse, a relative, close friend, minister, or someone else.

What can your support person do?

- Talk to you about your personal goals in changing your gambling habit.
- Listen to and talk about your ideas about how to make changes in your life.
- Give you emotional support when you need it.
- Help you manage your money.
- Share some of the new activities in your life you might do instead of gambling.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
