

# Top Tips for Managing Gambling

## Commit to Change

Change is hard so you need to be clear on *why* you want to change before you start to think about how. You might see a number of positives to gambling - it might help you to cope with stress, unwind after a long day, or you might enjoy the rush of adrenaline you get when you place a bet, but it's important to look at the whole picture. What does gambling cost you? How does it affect your work, relationships, family, and finances? How would things improve if you were to stop gambling? Looking at the whole picture will allow you to make an informed decision about whether or not gambling is worth it.

## Identify your Triggers

To manage your gambling you need to understand what triggers it. Keep a gambling diary and record when you gamble, what you were thinking about or doing when the urge to gamble hit you, how much you intended to gamble, how much you actually gambled, and what you won/lost. Knowing triggers and having a better understanding of your gambling will help you when it comes to setting limits.

## Set Specific Goals

One of the first things you'll need to decide is whether you want to stop gambling completely or whether you want to limit your gambling. Some people find it helpful to abstain from gambling for a short-period of time either way, to prove to themselves that they're able to do it. If you decide to limit your gambling it's important to set specific goals. Decide how much time you think is reasonable to spend gambling each week, how much money is an acceptable amount to gamble, and how much is an acceptable amount to lose. When setting goals be aware that if you continue to gamble to recoup lost money you're gambling problem will probably get worse not better.

## Problem Solve an Exit Plan

Even with specific goals, you'll probably find it difficult to walk away once you've reached your time or money limit. Make a list of all the things that could get in the way of you walking away and come up with a plan for how to overcome these barriers. For example, only take a certain amount of cash with you and leave your credit cards at home or tell someone close to you about your gambling goals. Knowing someone knows about your goals can help you stick to them.

## Manage Urges

Urges might *feel* like they're going to hang around for forever, but they won't. If you're having an urge to gamble practice waiting the urge out. See if you can delay acting on your urge for 15-minutes, and then another 15-minutes, and so on. Keep busy until the urge passes.

# think TOP TIPS

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## GAMBLING

**Because it's so socially acceptable, it can be hard to differentiate between social gambling and problem gambling.**

**The key difference between social and problem gambling is that problem gambling continues despite negative consequences, including:**

- Employment problems
- Financial problems
- Strained personal relationships
- A damaged reputation
- Depression and anxiety

**Other common signs and symptoms of problem gambling are:**

- Thinking about gambling a lot
- Wanting to spend more and more money on gambling
- Not being able to cut back or stop
- Feeling irritable and angry when you can't gamble
- Using gambling to cope with stress
- Gambling to "make up" losses
- Feeling the need to lie about or hide your gambling from family or friends
- Neglecting other responsibilities
- Resorting to illegal activities to fund your gambling

**This tips sheet covers basic strategies for managing problem gambling.**

**If your difficulties with gambling are long standing or if you're finding it hard to cut back, speak to your GP about seeing a clinical psychologist.**