

## Signs that you may know a problem gambler:

- Uncontrolled spending
- Significant time spent gambling
- Concealing or lying about gambling behaviour
- Gambling impacting on relationships with family and friends
- Withdrawal from family activities
- Spending excessive amounts of time on a computer
- No apparent interests or leisure pursuits
- Absence from school, college, university or work

**Gambling could be getting in the way of the life they want to live.**

GamCare offers advice, information and practical help over the phone and online. Post messages on our Forum, chat online or talk to an adviser who can let you know about local support, including counselling services, and sources of advice about gambling-related issues such as debt.

GamCare also provides counselling to help you explore situations relevant to your gambling in a safe environment over time. GamCare counselling is offered free of charge, although we accept donations.

To find out more, talk to one of GamCare's specially trained advisers. They'll listen, they won't judge you and your conversation is completely confidential.

The National Gambling Helpline, provided by GamCare, is open seven days a week, 8am - midnight.

**Call free: 0808 8020 133**  
[www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk)

### Gamblers Anonymous

A support fellowship for problem gamblers.  
[www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk)

### Gam-Anon

Support for friends and families affected by gambling.  
[www.gamanon.org.uk](http://www.gamanon.org.uk)

### Gordon Moody Association

A residential treatment centre for problem gamblers.  
[www.gordonmoody.org.uk](http://www.gordonmoody.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice

Free, independent and confidential advice and information.  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### National Debtline

Free, independent and confidential advice on money and debt problems.  
0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

### Relate

Relationship counselling and advice to couples and individuals.  
0300 100 1234  
[www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

### Samaritans

Confidential, emotional support for anyone in crisis.  
08457 90 90 90  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### Family Lives

Support and information for parents.  
0808 800 2222  
[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

### Offenders' Families Helpline

Free and confidential information and support for friends and families of prisoners.  
0808 808 2003  
[www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org](http://www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org)

### Youth Access

Information on local counselling services for children and young people.  
[www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)



# Supporting a problem gambler

A guide for family and friends



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# We all want to help people we care about when they are in difficulty

Gambling, and the loss of trust it often brings, can put an enormous strain on a relationship with friends or family. This leaflet is designed to help you manage your feelings and cope with the issues associated with problem gambling.

For free advice and support you can contact the National Gambling Helpline, provided by GamCare, on **0808 8020 133** or log on to our website at [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk) to find out about counselling and support services available in your area.

## What can I say to someone whose gambling is causing a problem?

Problem gambling is not an easy issue to raise. What a problem gambler needs to understand is how their actions are affecting you and perhaps others. However, talking about the issue may also be an opportunity for you to demonstrate the support you are able to offer to help them overcome the problem.

### **Try not to make assumptions about why they gamble, just discuss what you have observed.**

Take time to think about what you want to say. Encourage the person to see the consequences of their behaviours and its effect on you. It might help to write your feelings down.

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## Why do they gamble?

Many people find themselves unable to explain why they continue to gamble despite the problems it causes them and those around them. The most obvious answer is 'for the money', but is this really true?

Some problem gamblers say that the thrill or 'buzz' becomes addictive and they want to experience that feeling again and again.

Money may be the initial attraction, however most problem gamblers are gambling to escape from other problems or pressures in their lives – issues at home or work, boredom, loneliness or anxiety. As the problem increases, the need to experience this sense of escape may also increase.

## What can I do to help?

### Look after yourself

Take the time out to get support. This might be family or friends, a GamCare counsellor or a support group. Someone with a gambling problem may ask you to keep their secret, but this doesn't allow you to get support and it can help someone avoid responsibility for his or her actions. Find support you can trust.

Limit the financial impact that gambling has on you. Keep separate bank accounts and protect your own money.

### Pace yourself

We all want to help the people we care about when they are in difficulty. But remember, the motivation and willingness to change behaviour comes at different times and the person who you are trying to help may not be ready.

Try not to rush them or push them to change. When they are ready, offer to help them choose.

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## Ultimatums

Ultimatums are rarely effective. They can increase the sense of guilt and shame a person feels about their behaviour, which can push them to greater secrecy and rarely prepares someone for change. Instead, encourage them and work with them to establish firm boundaries.

Think carefully before doing anything that enables the gambler to continue to gamble. Lending money or lying for them helps problem gamblers avoid the consequences of their actions.

## Don't do everything

The first steps to seeking help can be daunting and require a steady state of mind, but they are also often the simplest and easiest.

If you take these steps for a gambler, they won't be able to demonstrate their readiness to act in a way that gives them a sense of achievement. Remember, they need to be motivated to change.

## I'm feeling really down about the situation, what should I do?

If you find that you feel overwhelmed or are losing hope, it is important to seek professional help. Share your concerns with your GP, a relationship counsellor or with a GamCare counsellor who can help you through this difficult time.

## I'm worried about them as they seem depressed – what should I do?

Try to talk to them to ask them how they feel, encourage them to call the National Gambling Helpline on **0808 8020 133** or seek help online at [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk). If you believe they may be thinking about harming themselves, they should seek professional help as soon as possible.