

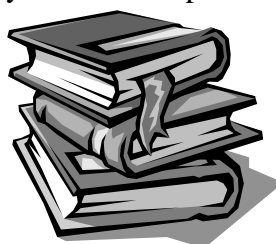


HELP SHEET

SELF- HELP SKILLS

When problem gambling starts affecting your life it can often feel as if there is nothing you can do. For people who gamble, the urge to gamble can seem so strong that they feel out of control. Whilst those affected by another's gambling behaviour, often also feel quite powerless. For both parties it is important to realise that there are in fact many aspects of change that you can initiate your self and learn new skills. This help note provides an overview of some of them.

Learn about Problem gambling – as in any other area of life, you need to know what you are dealing with before you can attempt to change it. Obtaining



information about gambling problems is often the first step. If you have any concerns at all,

it is helpful to get further information. Your local library may have books on problem gambling whilst community health centres and neighbourhood centres are another good source of information. **G-line 1800 633 635** is a 24 hour information, counselling and referral service. The **Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. 02 44215077** provides information via a newsletter, information packs and their website www.gisnsw.org.au

Seek Professional Advice – getting professional advice can often help reduce the impacts of problem gambling and open the door to other forms of help. You may need to consider both personal/relationship

counselling, financial counselling and legal advice as problem gambling can negatively impact many of these areas. Problem gambling often undermines your normal coping mechanisms and you may find your own health starts to suffer, looking after your health and obtaining support are ways in which you can gain control over a problem.

Manage your money – you may need to consider different ways of managing your money. Consider having bills paid by direct debit, reduce access to cash and think about not carrying your ATM/credit cards with you. Only carry as much cash as you will need for the day. Ask someone else to help you manage your money. Consider joint accounts where both parties have to sign. Seeing a financial counsellor can help you get back in control financially, negotiate with creditors and help you work out a budget. There are particular concerns for family members affected by problem gambling (see information on protecting family assets this information kit).

Self-exclusion – both the clubs and hotels have programs to assist patrons exclude themselves from the gambling area of the venue and/or the whole venue. Whilst this can seem like a big step to take it has been found to be successful for many people in helping them combat the urge to gamble, particularly when combined with counselling and other support. The Australian Hotels Association has a “one stop shop” (tel: 1300 137404) whereby they can arrange exclusion at all hotels nominated by yourself,



Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc.



Department for Women

whereas with clubs you will need to visit each club in turn to make arrangements (refer self-exclusion article this information kit).

Cognitive Therapy – is a skills based form of “thinking therapy” which can teach you how to deal with the gambling thoughts and develop alternative ways of thinking. Many people have found this a helpful approach to their gambling problem and with a few sessions have been able to overcome some of the impulses which seem to take over their actions. It is taught by professional counsellors and psychologists and can then be used on your own. Some of the ideas have been included in this information kit and there are self-help books available (see reading list) but it is preferable to seek professional advice to gain full benefit.

Alternatives to Gambling – many people spend considerable hours of the day or week gambling so when they decide to reduce or stop gambling they may need to fill this time with other activities. Gambling has also often reduced the time available to build relationships, take up new interests or renew old hobbies. Finding ways of “filling the void” is an important way of reducing the urge to gamble and ultimately can help on the road to recovery. Spending time with family and friends can rebuild relationships which have suffered and finding time for your own interests can help rebuild self-esteem.

Self-Care – because gambling can take up so much time, energy and thought, often self-care has been neglected. Looking after yourself is an important step in changing behaviour and moving forward, away from the negative impacts of problem gambling. This is

equally important for both people who gamble and their families. Learning new ways to relax, enjoy life and take time for yourself are all ways of nurturing your self and caring for your body. All aspects of a healthy lifestyle including eating well, getting enough exercise and relaxation are means to combat the negative influences of problem gambling and increase feelings of self worth. Some of the suggestions in this information kit are there to help you consider options and rebuild your life.