

Problem Gambling: Risk Factors, Signs & Symptoms

Risk factors for a young person include:

- History of gambling in the family
- An early big win
- Low self-esteem, boredom or depression
- Peer pressure

Many people use gambling as a coping mechanism or an escape from reality, to avoid dealing with personal feelings or problems.

They will likely report that winning money is the vehicle, not the reason, for gambling. The element of competition or risk may also be relevant.



As there are many ways to gamble independently, many problem gamblers gamble without others knowing about it.

Signs of a developing problem might include:

- Preoccupation with gambling - being secretive, chasing losses, missing classes, lying, restless/irritable, school work not being completed, grades dropping
- Changes in behaviour - interest in extracurricular activities lessens, increased interest in money/possessions, unusually competitive in winning or 'being right', increase in cash, decrease/missing cash, increased interest in gambling

Impacts can include dropping out of school, isolation, depression, suicidal thoughts, legal and money problems, dissociative 'escape' behaviours, withdrawal, behavioural issues.

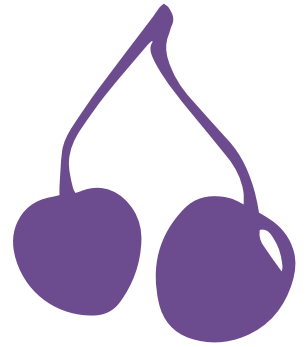
How can it be prevented?

Education and awareness of risks and legality, support as needed, setting realistic boundaries and expectations, building self esteem, constructive use of time and good problem solving skills.



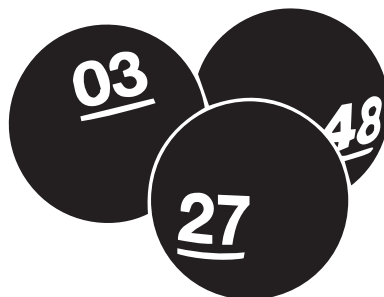
Self-evaluation questions

- Do you often find yourself thinking about gambling activities and/or planning the next time you will play?
- Do you need to spend more and more money on gambling activities to get the same level of excitement?
- Do you become restless, tense, fed up, or bad tempered when trying to cut down or stop gambling?
- Do you ever gamble to escape or forget problems?
- After losing money on gambling activities, do you ever return another day to try and win your money back?
- Have you lied to your family and friends about your gambling?
- Have you spent your lunch or transport money on gambling activities?
- Have you taken money from someone you live with, without their knowledge, in order to gamble?
- Have you stolen money from outside the family or shoplifted in order to gamble?
- Have you experienced problems with members of your family or close friends because of your gambling?
- Have you missed school or work in order to participate in gambling activities?
- Have you ever had to ask for help because of your gambling?



Where to find support

- www.BigDeal.org.uk
- GamCare counselling - more information at www.gamcare.org.uk



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