

## Helping the Gambler

While no one can make gamblers stop gambling, you can support them by: talking to them about their gambling, not giving or loaning money, becoming knowledgeable about problem gambling and encouraging the person to seek help.

### Talk to the person about the gambling

Ask the person about his or her gambling. If you think there might be a problem, the direct approach is best.

Consider how you might be willing to support or assist if the person is having a problem. Tell them you care about them.

If you think there is a problem with gambling, tell them what you have observed. Then ask for their feedback on your observations.

Try to avoid arguments, and don't blame the person. These approaches may cause defensive behaviour in the gambler.

Use a positive approach so the person feels your concern and understands that there are some ways that you would consider helping.

### Don't offer to give or loan money

It's tough for family members and friends to watch a problem gambler run into financial problems. But the question is, should money be loaned or given in these circumstances?

The experts say "no." This may sound uncaring, but it's really the only thing you can do so that the gambler will experience the consequences of his or her gambling. If problem gamblers are bailed out, they don't have to face the financial problems and can continue to gamble, adding to future problems.

However, you can still make it clear that you will stand by the gambler and be there to support him or her.

### Become knowledgeable about the problem

You will be better able to help both yourself and the problem gambler if you gather as much information as possible about the problem.

Becoming more knowledgeable will also help you to prepare for future issues, enabling you to minimize the impact that problem gambling may have on you and your family.

### Encourage the person to seek help

Problem gamblers often need encouragement to obtain professional help or support, and they may not be able to control the problem without this help.

You can talk to the person about this, and provide contact information for counselling and support services.



### Helping yourself

Family and friends of problem gamblers often harbour feelings of guilt, shame and helplessness. As well, there may be feelings of frustration and anger caused by the impact of the gambling. People affected by problem gambling may not know where to turn or who to talk to for assistance, so isolation may occur.

There are several things you can do to lessen the impact of the problem gambling on yourself and your family:

- protecting your finances,
- maintaining physical and emotional well-being
- taking time for yourself.

## Protect your finances

- Visit your financial advisors (banks, RRSP accounts, etc.) to make sure you have control over the finances that you are able to control.
- You may choose whether or not to tell your financial advisors about the gambling problem in your family. In some instances, divulging the problem may not be in your best interest.
- Don't let the gambler have unnecessary access to cash and credit that you can control on your own or have the gambler's cooperation to control.
- Put your family on a budget that allows for spending money, but not access to money required for necessities.
- Don't assume the gambler's debt.
- Talk to financial experts to find out what your rights are regarding another person's debt and to get professional advice on your finances.
- Don't sign anything you don't understand without professional advice.

## Maintain physical & emotional well-being

- Physical or emotional abuse is not acceptable at any time or in any situation. Don't let the gambler blame you or harm you.
- Your safety is the top priority, so do whatever is necessary to keep safe. In severe situations, this may mean calling the police or finding an alternate living arrangement.

## Take time for yourself

- You may find yourself so wrapped up in the gambler's problem and its impact on you and your family that you become resentful and angry.
- It's important to put the problem out of your mind at times so you can have some happy, stress-free time to yourself.
- Take time to participate in the activities you enjoy and to spend time with friends. Doing this will give you the break you need to enable you to better deal with the problem.

**Freephone 0800 664 262 • email [help@pgf.nz](mailto:help@pgf.nz)**

For more information and fact sheets visit [www.pgf.nz](http://www.pgf.nz)

