

# How to talk to someone about their gambling

## 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 gambling harm and encouraging the person to seek help.

### Talk to the person about their 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 whānau members and friends to watch a 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 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 gambler if you gather as much information as possible about the problems being caused by his/her gambling.

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



### Encourage the person to seek help

Someone who is struggling with their gambling often needs 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

Whānau and friends of gamblers or people with gambling problems 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 gambling problems 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 gambling on yourself and your whānau:

- protecting your finances,
- maintaining physical and emotional well-being
- taking time for yourself
- finding a person you can trust to talk to.

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## Protect your finances

- Visit your financial advisors (banks, Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), 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
- Make a budget with the person who is gambling so they understand how much money you have coming in, going out and how much is being spent on gambling
- Consider the option of the gambler handing over control of their finances to you temporarily. This can be a positive step for the person who is gambling but it needs to be the right step for both people and be right for you
- Consider taking steps to cancel or remove the gambler's access to joint accounts to prevent their access to substantial amounts of money required for necessities. Setting up separate accounts for both parties to have some spending money can help restrict access but also allow for some freedom to pay for incidentals without asking the other person's permission
- Don't assume the gambler's debt
- Talk to financial experts to find out what your rights are regarding another person's debt and if you have any responsibility to pay it back
- 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 whānau 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.

## Finding a person you can trust

Friends and whānau often feel isolated and are afraid of being judged by the gambler's behaviour or blame themselves for not doing something to stop the gambling earlier. You are not personally responsible for 'fixing' the person's gambling problems, nor did you cause them. Getting help and support for yourself is important; talking with a friend, someone in your whānau or a counsellor can bring a different perspective and help you problem solve. Counsellors are knowledgeable about the nature of the gambling problems and are bound by rules around confidentiality. All our counselling is free for whānau or friends affected by gambling harm.

If you are not sure, you can read more about the signs of gambling harm on our website.

Our trained counsellors are available 8.30-5pm Monday-Friday on **0800 664 262**. They can answer any questions you may have and give advice for your particular circumstances. If you wish to register for counselling, please complete the registration form on our website, then a counsellor will be in contact with you within one working day.

Reference: [https://mhfa.com.au/sites/default/files/MHFA\\_Gambling.pdf](https://mhfa.com.au/sites/default/files/MHFA_Gambling.pdf)

***Kia kaha, Kia māia, Kia manawanui – Be strong, be brave, be steadfast.***

PGF Group provides free and confidential counselling and support services to anyone affected by gambling harm