

Guide for **family members,**  
and **friends of individuals**  
experiencing  
**problems**  
**related**  
**to gambling**

## **Message to family members of an individual experiencing problems related to gambling**

Living with an individual who is experiencing problems related to gambling is a very stressful experience. You love this person and do not want to see him suffer. You want to help, but, at the same time, you are feeling helpless and frustrated. That is because you too are suffering from all the negative effects of harmful gambling, such as family turmoil, physical and emotional stress, and more.

You need an attentive ear and emotional support. If you are feeling overwhelmed, we strongly recommend sharing your burden with someone who is trustworthy and supportive. That could be another family member, a close friend, a counselor, a clergy member, your family physician, or someone else you are particularly comfortable with. You don't have to feel ashamed, because what's happening is not your fault.

The following tips will help you deal with the situation more effectively.

## **Dos and don'ts for families and friends**

### **Do**

- Be patient.
- Give encouragement.
- Communicate openly and talk about your own feelings and concerns.
- Be understanding but firm in setting limits on the individual experiencing problems related to gambling's behavior.
- Take care of yourself by enlarging your social circle and participating in social activities.
- Be sure to protect your financial resources from being appropriated by the individual experiencing problems related to gambling.
- Share your burden with people who are supportive.
- Clearly express your expectations and fears.
- Set your sights on a healthy approach – rather than depending on the individual experiencing problems related to gambling, try to live independently.
- Enrich your life experience by volunteering, taking some courses, going back to school, looking for a job, etc.
- Establish some new goals for yourself and work towards realizing them.

## Don't

- Try to control the individual experiencing problems related to gambling.
- Do all the work for them.
- Defend them.
- Try to save them.
- Yell at them.
- Threaten them.
- Punish them.
- Blame them.
- Sacrifice yourself for them.

## How to help the individual experiencing problems related to gambling

You could feel overwhelmed when you want to help a person who is dependant on games of chance. It is not an easy task and there is no magic formula, but we would like to offer you some suggestions:

- Raise the issue when you have time to listen and choose a place where you will not be disturbed.
- Tell the person clearly that you are not judging him/her, but that you are raising the issue because he/she is important to you and vice-versa. Let them know that you are concerned about them and about your own future. Be sure to avoid moralizing.
- Clearly express your expectations and fears.

For example:

“I would like you to seek some help.”

*\*Source : Acti-Menu et coll. Do you know how to gamble... without losing your head? Montréal, Acti-Menu, p.10, 1998*

## How to approach an individual experiencing problems related to gambling

Tell the person that you care for them and are very concerned about their gambling behavior.

For example:

“I am concerned about your gambling behavior. It makes me sad to see you hurting yourself.”

“Your behavior is hurting me / the family very much.”

Tell the person exactly what they have done that concerns you.

For example:

“After our argument last night, you went out and lost \$500 on gambling.”

After you tell the person that you are concerned about them, and what you’ve seen, it is important to be willing to listen to what they have to say.

For example:

“I know that this is a difficult situation for you, but I am willing to share it with you.” “Can you tell me what is happening and what are you thinking and feeling?”

The person may say nothing or may become angry. They may tell you that it is none of your business. Or they may thank you and promise to make changes. Whatever the case may be, it is crucial to listen to what they have to say.

Offer some suggestions and propose alternative solutions.

For example:

“Gambling may help you to vent your frustrations and reduce your stress in the short run, but it is definitely not a solution to your unemployment. We would be far better off to find another way to solve the problem.” “Do you think talking to a counselor might help you control your gambling behaviour? Won’t you give it a try?” Tell the person you are willing and able to help them.

## **Warning signs that gambling is becoming a problem:**

- Spending more time and money than intended.
- Arguing about gambling with friends and loved ones.
- After losing, having the urge to return as soon as possible to win back losses.
- Feeling guilt or remorse about gambling.
- Considering illegal means of obtaining money to gamble.
- Missing work to gamble.
- Hiding the extent of gambling activity.

Gambling affects more than the person who is gambling. If you are affected by someone's gambling, or you would like to gain more information about gambling, help is available. You can call your local Addiction Services to get in touch with someone who will work with you during these difficult times. Your local Addiction Services are also available to provide you with more tools and information pertaining to gambling.



## Support resources

If gambling becomes a problem for you or someone you know, there are many resources available across the province:

### Addiction Services

Bathurst	506 547-2086
Campbellton	506 789-7055
Edmundston	506 735-2092
Fredericton	506 453-2132
Miramichi	506 778-6111
Moncton	506 856-2333
Saint John	506 674-4300
Tracadie-Sheila	506 394-3615

## Websites:

### Gambling Information

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/health/Gambling/gambling.html>

### Gamblers Anonymous

<http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/>

Is a group of men and women who share their experiences so that they may help each other solve their gambling problem.

### Gam-Anon

<https://www.gam-anon.org/>

Is a free 12-step self-help organization for those affected by the gambling problem of a loved one.

### Responsible Gambling Council

<https://www.responsiblegambling.org/home>

The Responsible Gambling Council works with individuals and communities to address gambling in a healthy and responsible way. The council research and public awareness programs designed to prevent gambling-related problems.

Call 811 or, 1 800 461-1234 for free, confidential information. Be informed.