



Gambling should remain a Game

Self-Help Manual

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For the purposes of brevity, the masculine gender is used to designate both men and women.



Introduction

Introduction

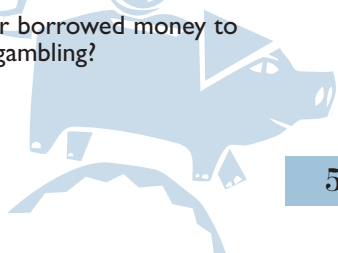
There is a Chinese proverb that says:

“A LITTLE GAMBLING IS
SOOTHING AND RELAXING,
BUT HEAVY GAMBLING CAN
AFFECT YOUR MENTAL
HEALTH.”

Indeed, if gambling does not create any negative consequences in a person's life, it is purely recreational. When a person cannot control his gambling behaviour, however, his health, family, interpersonal relationships, career and financial stability are threatened. The primary purpose of this Self-Help Manual is to assist the problem gambler in regaining control of his life.

Take a few moments to answer the following 20 questions in order to assess your gambling behaviour.

- _____ 1. Did you ever lose time from work due to gambling?
- _____ 2. Has gambling ever made your personal life unhappy?
- _____ 3. Has gambling affected your reputation?
- _____ 4. Have you ever felt regrets after gambling?
- _____ 5. Have you ever gambled in order to pay off debts or solve other financial difficulties?
- _____ 6. Has gambling diminished your ambition or efficiency?
- _____ 7. After losing, have you ever felt you must play again as soon as possible to win back your losses?
- _____ 8. After winning, have you ever had a strong urge to play again and win some more?
- _____ 9. Have you ever gambled right down to your last dollar?
- _____ 10. Have you ever borrowed money to finance your gambling?



- _____ 11. Have you ever sold any personal belongings to finance gambling?
- _____ 12. Do you expect to use the money intended to cover day-to-day expenses to gamble instead?
- _____ 13. Has gambling made you inconsiderate about your welfare and that of your family?
- _____ 14. Have you ever gambled longer than you had planned to?
- _____ 15. Have you ever gambled to escape your worries or problems?
- _____ 16. Have you ever committed or considered committing an illegal act to finance your gambling?
- _____ 17. Have you ever had difficulty sleeping because of gambling?
- _____ 18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations prompt you to gamble?
- _____ 19. Have you ever had an urge to celebrate good fortune by gambling?
- _____ 20. Have you ever considered hurting yourself as a result of gambling?

If you answered “Yes” to seven or more questions, you are considered to be a problem gambler. We encourage you to seek professional help in order to develop ways to change your gambling behaviour. Professional counsellors are individuals with specific expertise in guidance and psychology. They can help you understand yourself and identify your problems, as well as to solve them with you. This guide is designed to assist you as you work with a professional counsellor and/or other individual such as your spouse or a non-gambler friend in order to regain control of your life. It will help you explore your gambling behaviour, evaluate the impact it is having on you, and develop ways to change your habits.



Since problem gambling affects not only one's individual life, but also one's entire family, this guide includes a section dedicated to family members (or friends) who are suffering from the effects of excessive gambling. Indeed, working with a professional counsellor and family members/friends is the key to success in changing your problem gambling behaviour.

**Let's Look at Your Gambling
Behaviour**



Let's Look at Your Gambling Behaviour

First, let's explore your gambling behaviour. Understanding why people gamble will help us know how to put a stop to excessive gambling.

A. Why Do People Gamble?

Here are some reasons why most people gamble. Check off those that apply to you.

- To win money
- For excitement
- For entertainment
- As a social activity
- To boost self-esteem
- For the challenge
- To escape loneliness or boredom
- To escape problems such as family troubles, financial worries, etc.
- Other: _____

B. What is Excessive Gambling?

We can develop a dependence to games of money and chance just as we can become addicted to drugs or alcohol. For an excessive gambler, gaming becomes an addiction driven by an uncontrollable urge to play. Gambling assumes such an important place in his life that it dominates him completely. Consequently, the excessive gambler is confronted with major social, family, professional or scholastic (in the case of young people) problems.

Excessive gambling is a progressive process that evolves in three distinct phases.

1 WINNING PHASE

- We get a lot of pleasure.
- We are excited.
- We place large bets.
- We feel lucky.



2

LOSING PHASE



- We borrow money.
- We sell personal objects.
- We miss work or school without a valid reason.
- We play more often.
- We constantly rationalize our behaviour.
- We play to win back money we lost.

3

DESPERATE PHASE



- We are obsessed with gambling.
- We lie.
- We cheat.
- We steal.
- We feel depressed and hopeless.
- We can have suicidal thoughts.

The experience of Mr. Smith serves as a good illustration of this process.

Aged 38, Mr. Smith has been married for eight years and has a five-year-old son. He had always enjoyed playing cards, but he never had any problems as a result.

About a year ago, however, Mr. Smith was laid off from work. Unable to find another job, he became very troubled.

One day, a friend invited him to go to the casino. Out of curiosity, Mr. Smith went along for a relaxing afternoon and some entertainment. At first, he won a small amount of money and was very happy. As he was unemployed, he thought that he would come back to the gaming house on a regular basis to try to make some more.

Mr. Smith did indeed begin to visit the casino more often, and he started spending more and more money in an attempt to win back what he lost. Eventually, though, he fell so deeply into debts that he was forced to sell his house to pay off what he owed.

In the process, Mr. Smith's relationship with his wife deteriorated, and gambling became a way to escape his ever-growing problems. He gambled more and more heavily and, as a result, incurred an enormous debt. His wife was obliged to borrow money from her relatives to repay what he owed. Although her husband kept promising not to gamble any more, he continued to play, having lost all self-control. Finally, his wife reached the point of threatening him with divorce.

What about **YOU**? Have you been in, or are you currently grappling with this kind of situation? Take a moment to jot down some of your own experiences with respect to the three phases of gambling.

1. Winning phase:

2. Losing phase:

3. Desperate phase:

(We encourage you to discuss and share your thoughts with your counsellor.)

C. What Aspects of Life Are Affected?

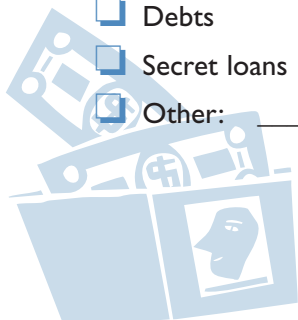
After exploring the reasons why you gamble and the phases you may have gone through in the process, we should examine how different aspects of your life (and that of others) may have been affected. Hopefully, these insights will prompt you to take concrete and immediate action to modify your problem behaviour.

Excessive gambling, like other kinds of addictive behaviour, affects all aspects of life — financial, legal, physical and emotional health, employment, education, social and family.

What effects has gambling had on **YOUR** life? Check off those below that apply to your situation.

1 FINANCIAL ASPECTS:

- Budget problems
- Debts
- Secret loans
- Other: _____



2

LEGAL ASPECTS:

- Illegal behaviour
- legal problems
- Connection with loan sharks
- Other: _____

3

PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

- Weight loss/gain
- Digestive problems
- Difficulty sleeping
- Alcohol and/or drug use
- Other: _____

4

EMOTIONAL ASPECTS:

- Frustration
- Anxiety (i.e. panic attacks)
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Suicide attempts
- Other: _____

5

EMPLOYMENT:

- Late for work
- Unjustified absences
- Reduced productivity
- Layoff
- Other: _____

6

EDUCATION:

- Lack of motivation
- Skipping class to gamble
- Thinking of gambling while studying
- Quitting school
- Other: _____

7

SOCIAL LIFE:

- Avoiding friends
- Conflicts with friends
- Loss of friends
- Other: _____



FAMILY:

- Conflicts with spouse over gambling
- Detachment from spouse, children and/or parents
- Intimacy problems with spouse
- Other: _____

This exercise provides you with a general evaluation of the impact that excessive gambling has on your life. It shows you to what extent gambling has already affected you. If there are a total of five check marks or two areas of life that have been affected, you are losing control of your gambling behaviour. Are you satisfied with your current situations? Do you want to do something to improve the situation?

Note: This test is a basic evaluation and is not intended to provide a comprehensive diagnosis concerning dependency on gambling.



It's Time to Act!



It's Time to Act!

Now that you have evaluated your gambling behaviour, perhaps you have discovered that it is having a negative impact on you and your family. If you really want to change your behaviour, you can!

The following example can serve as a model to guide you.



Let's return to the case of Mr. Smith.

With his wife threatening to divorce him, Mr. Smith was ready to seek out help. He didn't know if it would work, but he recognized that he had little choice. As such, he finally contacted a counsellor.

During the consultation process, Mr. Smith realized that his gambling habit was caused by STRESS in his life. He was using gambling as a way to cope with the stress of being unemployed, the conflicts with his wife, etc. Every time he was feeling anxious, he turned to gambling.

After several sessions with the counsellor, Mr. Smith learned the appropriate skills to cope with his feelings of stress, and he joined a self-help group. He also began to take some refresher courses and started actively searching for a job. Whenever he encountered any problems and felt the urge to gamble coming on, he phoned a member of the self-help group for some support.

Gradually, Mr. Smith regained command of his behaviour. In addition, he earned back his wife's trust and finally found a job. Although it was not an easy process, he successfully took control of his gambling habit and got back to feeling relaxed and at peace with himself.

A. Setting Goals

Now that you are committed to changing your gambling behaviour, let's proceed step by step. What are the goals you want to achieve? There are short-term goals (immediate actions to take) and long-term goals (goals that take two or three years to attain). For example, reducing your debt is a short-term goal, while eliminating your debt completely is an objective for the long-term.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

First of all, let's start with the short-term goals that you want to achieve immediately. These could relate to different aspects of your life such as finances, work, family or your emotional and physical health. Write down at least one goal for each of these aspects of your life.

Example:

Short-Term Goal	Action	Support
Decrease your debt	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Stop borrowing from others2. Actively look for work	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Spouse and family members2. Employment counsellor

When you are ready to change your gambling behaviour, the assistance of a professional counsellor, another person close to you, or a loved one is indispensable. They can help you in identifying problems, setting goals and establishing your strategies. In addition, they can encourage you throughout the entire process. Remember, you don't need to deal with this alone. Let others help you help yourself!

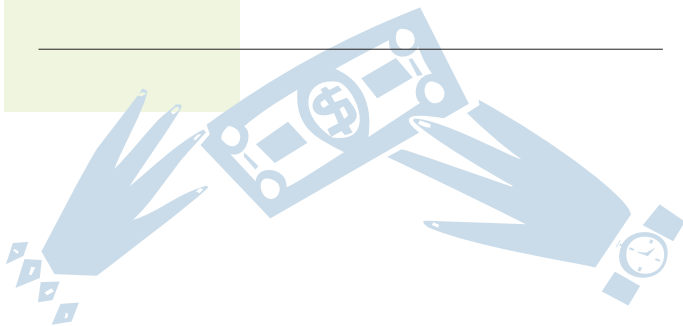
Short-Term Goal	Action	Support
Improve financial stability	1. _____ 2. _____	_____ _____
Improve physical and emotional health	1. _____ 2. _____	_____ _____
Improve family relationships	1. _____ 2. _____	_____ _____
Improve employment / education	1. _____ 2. _____	_____ _____
Reduce gambling behavior	1. _____ 2. _____	_____ _____

HOW ARE YOU DOING?

Once you have begun to work on attaining your short-term goals, it is helpful to check your progress regularly (suggestion: every two weeks). For each action you decide to take, record your progress to date and the name of the person who has helped you along the way.

Short-Term Goal: Improve financial stability

Actions	Progress	Helpers
1.		
2.		



Short-Term Goal:

Improve physical and emotional health

Actions	Progress	Helpers
1.		
2.		

Short-Term Goal:

Improve family relationships

Actions	Progress	Helpers
1.		
2.		

Short-Term Goal:

Improve employment / education

Actions	Progress	Helpers
1.		
2.		



Short-Term Goal:

Reduce gambling behavior

Actions	Progress	Helpers
1.		
2.		

Write down what else you must do to improve your progress with respect to each of the short-term goals listed in the left-hand column below.

Short-Term Goal	Remaining actions to take	Helpers
1. Financial		
2. Physical and emotional health		
3. Family		
4. Employment / education		
5. Reduction of gambling behavior		

Once you see signs of significant and consistent progress in achieving your **SHORT-TERM** goals, you should carefully plan your **LONG-TERM** goals.

LONG-TERM GOALS

Let's now establish your long-term goals. Perhaps the easiest way to identify your long-term goals is to ask yourself where you would like to be two or three years from now. Discuss this with your counsellor / helper, and list your long-term goals in the following chart.



Long-term goal:	Improve financial stability
Helpers:	1. _____ 2. _____
Long-term goal:	Improve physical and emotional health
Helpers:	1. _____ 2. _____
Long-term goal:	Improve family relationships
Helpers:	1. _____ 2. _____
Long-term goal:	Improve employment / education
Helpers:	1. _____ 2. _____
Long-term goal:	Reduce gambling behavior
Helpers::	1. _____ 2. _____
Long-term goal:	Others
Helpers:	1. _____ 2. _____

B. High-Risk Situations

Even if you have set clear goals and planned your actions to stop gambling, you may still feel tempted to play. You will want to know what actually triggers your desire to gamble and how to deal with those triggers. Let's find out now.

At what time of day are you most likely to gamble? The following timetable will help you identify the days and times you are most vulnerable. This, will enable you to make the appropriate changes.

First, note down the days and times that you played last week.

Use the letter “G” to indicate when you gambled.

Use the letter “W” to indicate when you wanted to gamble but did not actually do so.

G = gambled

W = wanted to gamble but did not

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Midnight							
1:00 a.m.							
2:00 a.m.							
3:00 a.m.							
4:00 a.m.							
5:00 a.m.							
6:00 a.m.							
7:00 a.m.							
8:00 a.m.							
9:00 a.m.							
10:00 a.m.							
11:00 a.m.							
Noon							
1:00 p.m.							
2:00 p.m.							
3:00 p.m.							
4:00 p.m.							
5:00 p.m.							
6:00 p.m.							
7:00 p.m.							
8:00 p.m.							
9:00 p.m.							
10:00 p.m.							
11:00 p.m.							

Now, take a look at the number of boxes you have filled in with a “G” or a “W”. This will let you know how much time you spent gambling and thinking about gambling over the past week.

Number of “G”s = _____
+Number of “W”s = _____
Total = _____

What tempts you to gamble? The following situations are considered to be high-risk triggers for gambling. Check off those that apply to your particular case.

- I am home alone
- I am depressed
- My wallet is full of money
- I want to reward myself
- I have just argued with my spouse
- I was passing by a gambling facility
- My boss and/or co-worker(s) are going to gamble
- I am feeling bored and restless
- I have some spare time
- I have consumed alcohol/drugs
- I am not getting along well with others
- I want to test my discipline and willpower
- Someone encourages me to gamble
- I am in a social situation and other people are gambling
- I have a feeling that luck is with me
- Other: _____

Now go back over the list and circle the five situations that put you at highest risk of gambling.

DEALING WITH HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS

For each of the high-risk situations you have just identified, list some strategies that would help you to resist gambling. It would also be useful to list the people who can help you in these situations (i.e. spouse, friends, etc.).

Example 1

High-Risk Situation:

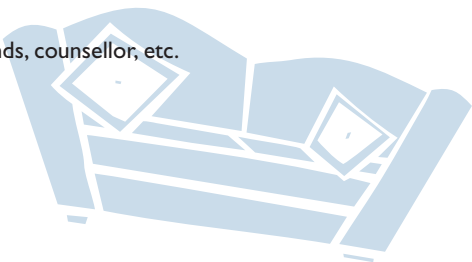
Being home alone

Preventive Actions:

- Avoid being home alone
- Ask a friend to go see a movie with me
- Ask my spouse to stay home with me

Support:

Spouse, friends, counsellor, etc.



Example 2

High-Risk Situation:

Having a wallet full of money

Preventive Actions:

- Only keep the basic amount of money necessary for daily use in my wallet
- Deposit my entire salary in the bank right after payday
- When I have a large sum of money on hand, give it to my spouse

Support:

Spouse, friends, counsellor, etc.

Identify each of your high-risk situations, immediate preventive strategies to take, and people to provide you with support:

High-Risk Situation:

Immediate Preventive Strategies:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Support:

- _____

High-Risk Situation:

Immediate Preventive Strategies:

- ---
- ---
- ---

Support:

- ---

2

High-Risk Situation:

Immediate Preventive Strategies:

- ---
- ---
- ---

Support:

- ---

3

High-Risk Situation:

Immediate Preventive Strategies:

- ---
- ---
- ---

Support:

- ---

4

High-Risk Situation:

Immediate Preventive Strategies:

- ---
- ---
- ---

Support:

- ---

5

ADOPTING LEISURE ACTIVITIES

To deal with high-risk situations, adopting other leisure activities and pastimes to replace gambling is a very effective strategy. What do you like to do in your free time? Shopping? Swimming? Cooking? Watching TV?

Jot down some leisure activities you would like to do instead of gambling.

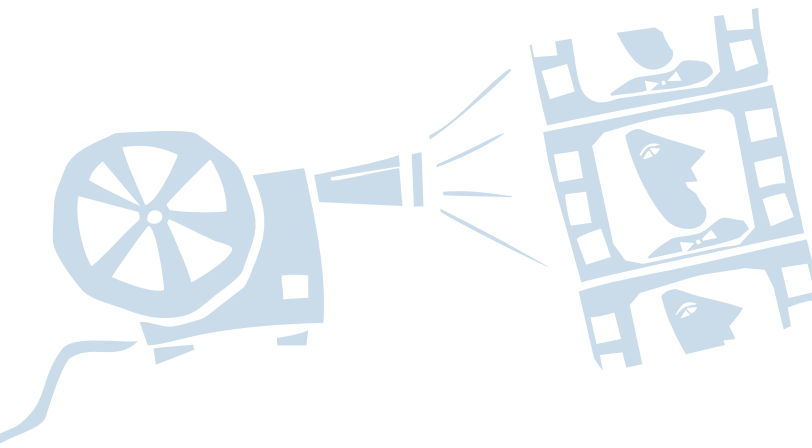
Leisure Activities	Possible Companions
1.	
2.	
3.	

C. Activity Diary

In order to gain better control of your time, it is important to plan your daily activities in advance.

Now, let's set up your own personal activity diary.

First, list what you intend to do in the **PLANNED ACTIVITY** column.



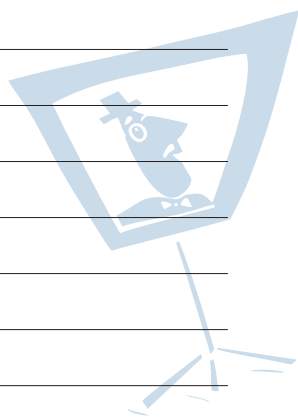
Sunday

Time	Planned Activity	Actual Activity
Midnight		
2:00 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		
Noon		
2:00 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
Midnight		



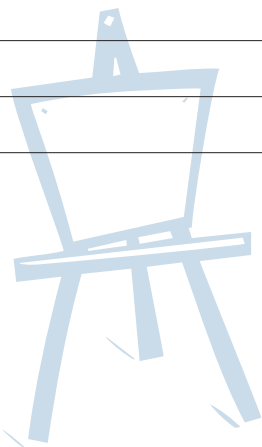
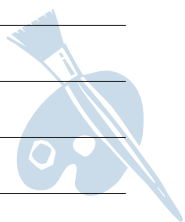
Monday

Time	Planned Activity	Actual Activity
Midnight		
2:00 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		
Noon		
2:00 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
Midnight		



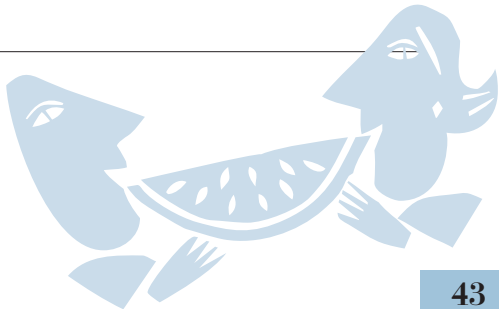
Tuesday

Time	Planned Activity	Actual Activity
Midnight		
2:00 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		
Noon		
2:00 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
Midnight		

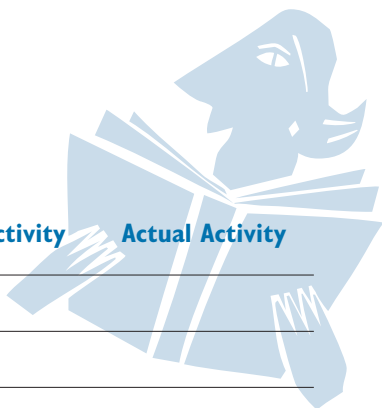


Wednesday

Time	Planned Activity	Actual Activity
Midnight		
2:00 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		
Noon		
2:00 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
Midnight		



Thursday



Time

Planned Activity

Actual Activity

Midnight

2:00 a.m.

4:00 a.m.

6:00 a.m.

8:00 a.m.

10:00 a.m.

Noon

2:00 p.m.

4:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m.

8:00 p.m.

10:00 p.m.

Midnight

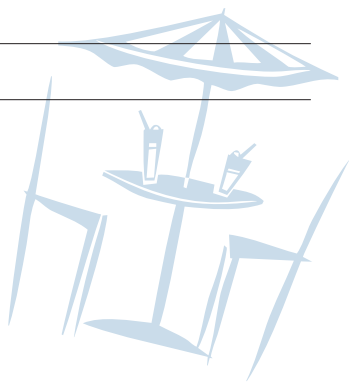
Friday

Time	Planned Activity	Actual Activity
Midnight		
2:00 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		
Noon		
2:00 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
Midnight		



Saturday

Time	Planned Activity	Actual Activity
Midnight		
2:00 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		
Noon		
2:00 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
Midnight		



Now, go back to the list and fill in what actually happened during each time period of the day under the **ACTUAL ACTIVITY** column.

You can continue this exercise over the course of several weeks or more.



YOU NEED DETERMINATION AND DISCIPLINE TO SEE THIS PROCESS THROUGH.

If you do not succeed the first time, you will want to find out why and develop strategies to deal with the reason(s) you returned to gambling.

KEEP ON TRYING!

As long as you try, you will see improvement.

Remember that changing behaviour is a complex and long process that won't happen overnight.

DO NOT LET YOURSELF BE DISCOURAGED. KEEP TRYING!

D. Stress Management

The process of giving up gambling creates a lot of stress. You may encounter difficulties in trying to attain your goals. You may also be disappointed with your behaviour. That's why stress management is very important. In order to maintain control, here are some tips to release tension:

1 LEARN TO RELAX

- Do deep-breathing exercises.
- A few minutes of calm and silence every day can make a big difference.
- Try practicing a relaxation technique such as meditation.
- Take a leisurely stroll in the park.



2

EXERCISE REGULARLY

- Swim, walk or cycle. Any of your favourite sports will help you let off steam and relieve stress.

3

TALK THINGS OUT

- Discuss your problems and frustrations with a good friend or a counsellor.

4

BE REALISTIC

- Continue your efforts and never give up!
- Do not expect a quick fix.



Self-Evaluation

Self-Evaluation

Please complete this questionnaire once every three months as long as you need to.

Progress Evaluation Key

0 = no change

1 = slight change

2 = significant progress

3 = a lot of progress

4 = mission accomplished

Short-Term Goals

Indicate your major short-term goals

Circle your rate of progress

Financial

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Physical and emotional health

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Family

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Employment / education

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Reduction in gambling

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Long-Term Goals

Indicate your major short-term goals

Circle your rate of progress

Financial

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Physical and emotional health

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Family

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Employment / education

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4

Reduction in gambling

1. _____

0 1 2 3 4

2. _____

0 1 2 3 4



**A Word of
Encouragement**

A Word of Encouragement

YOUR “PRESENT” IS THE
RESULT OF YOUR “PAST”.
YOUR “TOMORROW”
DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU
DO “TODAY”.

If you would like a happier future, don't miss any opportunity to change and improve yourself today. It is worthwhile to keep trying to change a habit that impacts negatively on your life. But remember, change is a long process. Along the journey towards change, you will encounter different obstacles and you may stumble. This is normal, so don't get discouraged or give up. Give yourself another chance and you will succeed. In addition, be sure to give yourself credit for each accomplishment you achieve, no matter how small it may seem.

Enjoy your journey towards change, and keep up the good work. But keep your vulnerability to games of chance in mind as well, and consult your Self-Help Manual as often as you need to.

Finally, be sure to keep track of your progress so that you will continue to improve. Remember, this is the most important game you will ever play.



If gaming is no longer a pastime...

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1 866 767-5389

TM

GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL

FONDATION

MISE SUR TOI



une initiative de Loto-Québec