

Supporting those close to you:

How to spot gambling harm

Spotting harmful gambling in those closest to me

There are different levels of gambling harm that can range from mild to severe. Family and friends often report they noticed the following that may indicate a loved one is experiencing gambling harm:

- changes in their behaviour or usual routines that seem out of character.
- lying when they were previously honest with you.
- being more withdrawn.
- being late home regularly.
- arriving home and avoiding telling you or seeming like they are lying about where they have been.
- withdrawing more from usual family, community and social activities.
- becoming defensive or nervous when asked about money or gambling.

It's when you start to notice a combination of signs, one by one they add up.

Harmful gambling is not just about losing money. It happens when the person has difficulty limiting time or money spent on gambling. It can affect a person's whole life, the lives of people close to them, and the community.

"We thought he was working late but he was just spending hours at the pokies. The lies hurt more than the money."

Gambling becomes harmful when it:

- Gets in the way of work, study, responsibilities or other important activities.
- Harms the person's mental or physical health, and/or the health and wellbeing of those close to them.
- Hurts the person financially, and those close to them.
- Damages the person's reputation.
- Causes problems with relationships with others, such as family, friends, work colleagues, teachers, parents.
- Dominates their thinking at the expense of other things, such as relationships or responsibilities and obligations to family or others in the community.
- Leads to or worsens existing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression or stress.



Why do people gamble?

People may choose to gamble for a lot of different reasons, such as:

- Gambling is legal and easily accessible in the community.
- It may start as a social activity but become addictive for a range of reasons.
- They may have experienced grief and loss, are lonely or socially isolated, are struggling to cope with a significant change in their life such as divorce, retirement, loss of significant relationship, or work pressures.
- They may want to escape problems or relieve feelings of worry, helplessness, guilt, anxiety or depression, are trying to get back lost money (chasing losses), or do not want to realise the money is gone.
- They may want to fit in with friends and peers who may gamble, are seeking excitement in their life, or are addicted to the feeling that gambling gives them.

"I noticed she was irritable and withdrawn. She used to be so bubbly. It wasn't until she broke down that I learned she was drowning in gambling debt."

Need more information?

Scan the QR code for more information on how to support your family, friends or anyone close to you who may be affected



Visit the
Gambling Harm
Support SA
website

Need more support?

Phone and online counselling services are also available to anyone. These services can offer support and information to help support you or someone you care about.

Gambling Helpline

 1800 858 858

Gambling Help Online

 gamblinghelponline.org.au