

## ? How can I raise the issue?

A gambling problem may feel like a tough subject to talk about with someone your care for. Try not to make assumptions about why they gamble, just discuss what you have observed.

Take time to think about what you want to say. Encourage the other person to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour and how this is affecting you and others. It may help to write your feelings down first.

Ultimatums are rarely effective. They can increase the guilt or shame a person feels about their behaviour and can push them to greater secrecy. Instead, you can encourage them to work with you and to think about their next steps to achieving positive changes.

While you can always offer to support a loved one, it is important for their own self-esteem that they can take steps to help themselves too. Our Advisers can support both you and them to find the right support to move forward.

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**No matter what situation you are in, contact GamCare for help. It's so easy and so very worth it.**

## Getting help and support

The National Gambling HelpLine, provided by GamCare, is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. You can talk to our Advisers on Freephone **0808 8020 133** or live chat via **www.gamcare.org.uk** whenever you need some advice and support, or even just to talk.

The team can talk you through all of the options available for support over the phone, online or in your local area.

You can also connect with others in similar situations through the GamCare online Forum and our daily chatrooms at **www.gamcare.org.uk**.

### Gam-Anon

Support for friends and families affected by gambling.

[gamanon.org.uk](http://gamanon.org.uk)

### Samaritans

Confidential, emotional support for anyone in crisis.

116 123

[samaritans.org.uk](http://samaritans.org.uk)

### Relate

Relationship counselling and advice.

0300 100 1234

[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk)

### Family Lives

Support and information for parents.

0808 800 2222

[familylives.org.uk](http://familylives.org.uk)

**National Gambling HelpLine**

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# Problem Gambling: Support for family and friends

**Practical information, ideas  
and support**



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Call the National Gambling HelpLine on Freephone **0808 8020 133** or live chat with one of our Advisers at **GamCare.org.uk**

You may be in a position where you want to support an individual whose gambling is affecting you and need practical and emotional support to do so. Perhaps they are no longer in your life and you just need support for yourself. It is important to know that there is a plenty of help and support available for you.

Understanding why the person who has affected you acted in the way that they did can help you move forward. Problem gambling is a compulsive-behaviour disorder. That means that the person who is gambling has, in severe cases, lost control of their actions and are acting compulsively. Their actions are not a reflection of their feelings toward you; their actions are separate from you and your relationship.

Understanding this will help you to support that person, if that is what you would like to do, or help you to understand why they acted the way that they did.

Although people often start out gambling because it is fun and there is a chance to win some money, the enjoyment can soon be replaced by other motivations, which are called cognitive distortions. These are thought processes that replace logical and rational thinking which leads to gambling behaviour progressing from a social and entertaining activity to more of a problem.

Gambling is not a way to make money, so losing is inevitable. People begin to chase the money that they have lost, which only worsens the gambling behaviour. Poor mental health, rising debts, and rocky relationships might make gambling feel like the answer to their problems.

## Impacts of problem gambling

People who have a gambling problem often experience negative consequences because of their actions. This can include financial struggles, mental health problems and/or relationship breakdown.

As somebody who has been affected by another person's gambling problem, you might have experienced similar gambling-related harms.

Perhaps it was your money that was used to gamble with, or to pay off debts. This could have been with your permission or not. Maybe you are feeling stressed, anxious, angry or betrayed – or all of the above.

We hear from many people who feel isolated because there is still a lot of stigma surrounding gambling problems. It is important to know that you are not alone in this.

There is a range of support available to you. Whether or not you are in touch with the person whose gambling has affected you, whether or not you want to support them, or even if you are not sure yet, GamCare can help you.

We can help you understand why people gamble despite the negative consequences, as well as helping you work through your thoughts and feelings about your own situation.

Problem gambling is complicated, but getting support doesn't have to be. By making sense of it yourself, you'll be in a better position to move forward.

## You and your resources

Many people who have had a problem with gambling have some debt. When you are impacted by someone else's gambling, debt is likely to have impacted you too. It's important that you tackle your finances, as this will help you regain some control. Facing up to how much you owe is the first step to getting out of debt, so calculate what you owe however overwhelming this may feel.

If you are worried, call the National Gambling HelpLine and our Advisers can give you more information about the specialist organisations that can help you with your debt.

If you are still in contact with the person whose gambling has affected you, it is important to stop lending them money. This might not feel like the right thing to do, but by lending them money you are enabling them to gamble, not helping them.

Encourage them to call the National Gambling HelpLine for support on how they can manage their debts and manage their money going forward.

## You and your relationships

If you want to maintain a relationship with someone struggling with gambling, it will help for you to understand the triggers that led them to act as they have.

Many people can gamble without any problems developing, but for some, it can develop into a compulsion or an addiction. This can happen for several reasons. Circumstances can change, which may lead someone to turn to gambling as an escape from trauma, stress, loneliness or poor mental health. It may even be as simple as someone having more free time, if they've entered retirement or a period of unemployment.

For others, a trigger might be that it is a common activity amongst their friends, so there are increased opportunities to gamble. Some people who have problems with gambling may also have a problem with alcohol or drugs.

**If you want to support someone, you'll need to support yourself first.** GamCare can help you; contact our Advisers today to talk through all of the options available for support.