



## **When Gambling Stops Being Fun – How to Help**

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The topic of gambling often comes up in discussions about what people are doing in their free time. We hear about going to the casino after work or to meet friends for a show and playing the slot machines. Others get together for poker games, play on-line or place bets on a sports event.

What do you do when you have concerns about someone's gambling? How do you know if it is a problem and what do you say? These can be tricky and confusing issues to navigate.

Most people keep to their limits when gambling and view it as entertainment. For others, it becomes a problem and they need help. Someone in this position may find themselves gradually putting more time and money into gambling until they begin to neglect themselves and other parts of their lives. They may also try to hide it or deny there is a problem, often because they feel embarrassed. Some other indicators that gambling has become a problem are:

- Gambling less for entertainment and more to win (or recover losses) or to escape from problems and stress
- Thinking more and more about gambling and finding it hard to stop once play starts

As people lose control of gambling their life can feel increasingly out of balance and new problems and stresses emerge as a result of money lost, lies, and failing to look after other parts of their lives. The good news is that problem gamblers can sort through these issues, get life back to normal and regain control of gambling. And, there is help to do this. The challenge is that the gambler must want to change.

It can be tricky talking to people about gambling concerns. Some suggestions for approaching this are:

- Choose a good time to talk to the gambler - when you are able to stay calm and the gambler is willing to listen
- Focus on their behaviour, how it affects you and your concerns if it continues
- Avoid making excuses for their behaviour or denying it - leave the gambler to take responsibility for the problem and feel the consequences
- Set boundaries to take care of yourself emotionally and financially and stick to them

Remember that changing behavior can be a slow process and the first steps involve acknowledging there is a problem and deciding to change. Setbacks can happen and recovery requires patience and support. Free support groups and counselling services are available in the Tri-Cities. All services are funded by the Province of B.C.

**For more information contact:**

SHARE Family & Community Services: (604) 936-3900

The B.C. Problem Gambling Help Line: 1-888-795-6111 (24hrs)