

How to recognise gambling harm in the people you care about



It is often more difficult to recognise the signs of gambling harm compared to harm from substance abuse.

This is because the signs of gambling harm could be due to a number of causes, some of them legitimate. These signs are listed below as financial, time-related and mood-related signs.

Financial signs

- Money disappears from wallets, purses, accounts or other investments that don't belong to the person but which they have access to
- Valuable items go missing from the homes of friends and relatives
- Despite being employed, the person is suddenly always short of money when they weren't before
- They are constantly borrowing money from others, never seem to be able to pay them back, and have a variety of excuses as to why they can't do so
- They take out numerous loans simultaneously
- They hide financial information, records or pay slips
- They are often unable to pay bills and receive disconnection warnings or service disruptions for failure to pay
- They have limited food in the house, and the items are not ingredients for meals but more snack-like, requiring little to no preparation

Mood and behaviour signs

- The person withdraws from friends and family
- Their work or school performance is poor
- They become nervous, agitated, irritable or frustrated for no obvious reason

- They mention feelings of hopelessness, helplessness over their own lives, depression, or suicidal thoughts but don't relate them to anything specific (e.g. gambling problems)
- Their personality changes
- They sleep less and lose their appetite
- Their sexual desire or performance changes
- They use controlling, manipulative, or threatening behaviour to obtain money from others
- They use lies or charm to influence other people to give them money or get them out of trouble

Time-related signs

- The person spends increasing amounts of time gambling either at a physical casino or online
- They hide reasons for unexplained absences
- They are late for even important commitments
- They frequently call in sick or take unplanned days off
- They take an inexplicable amount of time on simple errands (e.g. buying milk from a nearby store takes 3 hours)
- They set aside unreasonable amounts of time for simple tasks and may return having not completed the task

If you think that someone you know and love may be experiencing gambling harm, the first step you can take is to learn as much about gambling harm as you can.

Try to find a way to understand your loved one's perspective. Approach the problem from where they are, regardless of your own personal beliefs about their gambling issues.

If gambling has become a problem, you are not alone. You can call the **Gambling Helpline** on **1800 858 858** to speak with a counsellor, or find some more resources on this website.