

HOW DO I HELP SOMEONE CHANGE THEIR GAMBLING?



Making meaningful and lasting changes to behaviour can be challenging. Changing gambling behaviour is no exception.

It can be helpful to understand the process of behaviour change (known as the Stages of Change) when trying to offer support to someone close to you with problem gambling.

The Stages of Change is a theory that states there are distinct stages or steps involved in the process of changing behaviours.

There are 5 stages in this model:

- 1. Precontemplation:** Your loved one is not yet interested in changing.
- 2. Contemplation:** Your loved one is unsure about changing.
- 3. Preparation:** Your loved one is getting ready to change.
- 4. Action:** Your loved one is taking steps toward change.
- 5. Maintenance:** Your loved one is keeping up with the changes they have made.

A person who has gambling problems may move back and forth between these stages before committing to making changes in their behaviour. You can have an influence on your loved one's decision if you match your support to the stage of change they are in.

Keep in mind that it can be very challenging to support your loved one in making changes to their gambling, especially if you are very close to the person and have been impacted by their gambling. It is important to take care of your own needs, including reaching out for support (for example, accessing counselling for yourself) and protecting your finances, if necessary.

Review the chart on the next page to get a better sense of what your loved one might say at each stage of change and what actions you can take to support them in changing behaviour.

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STAGE OF CHANGE	WHAT YOUR LOVED ONE MIGHT SAY	ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE FOR EACH STAGE
PRECONTEMPLATION	"I don't have a gambling problem."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try not to lecture, interrogate or argue with your loved one about their gambling problem, as it won't help. Talk about the behaviours you have noticed and how those behaviours impact others. Do not try to shame or force your loved one to stop gambling, as this will likely create resistance. Do not help your loved one who is gambling avoid responsibility for their actions. Learn about problem gambling, and share the information with your loved one. Focus on your own self-care, seek support for yourself and (if applicable) protect your assets and income.
CONTEMPLATION	"Things would probably be better if I didn't gamble—but now is not the right time to stop."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer your support. Try not to expect too much too soon—making meaningful change is a process. Be hopeful, and praise any efforts being made toward change. Help your loved one avoid situations that may trigger gambling. Keep focusing on your own needs, including accessing your own supports.
PREPARATION	"I am looking for a program that will help me stop gambling."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help with identifying and problem-solving obstacles to getting help. Praise any initial steps toward change. Discuss with your loved one how they can limit access to cash or credit. Explore other activities to replace gambling. Keep focusing on your own needs, including accessing your own supports.
ACTION	"I started going to see a counsellor about my gambling."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide time for non-gambling-related social activities that are of interest. Praise your loved one's efforts. Offer to attend counselling with your loved one. Keep focusing on your own needs, including accessing your own supports. Understand that a gambling slip may occur.
MAINTENANCE	"I am doing better. I don't want to go back to how things were."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide time for non-gambling-related social activities. Continue to praise efforts made, and recognize skills and strengths. Arrange finances to limit losses in the case of a relapse or a return to gambling behaviours. Help your loved one identify and cope with gambling triggers. Understand that your loved one may have gambling relapses.

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