

Gamble Aware Week

October 19-24

How to #checkin on your mates

It is estimated that under 5% of Australian adults experience moderate to severe problems caused by excessive gambling with a flow on effect impacting their significant others, will ask for help. Studies also show that only a small number of people experiencing gambling harm seek formal help and this is often a last resort after experiencing significant negative consequences.

What should I do? How can I help?

- Anyone in the community can provide referral information about counselling and other assistance offered by **Gambler's Help**. Equip yourself with the knowledge of "what's out there" to assist you to respond.
- Talking about gambling can be very hard for people struggling with this issue. Shame and the stigma of gambling harm mean communication must be done with care and sensitivity.
- Use non-judgmental communication. Listen and help people identify their own solutions and help them to implement them, rather than providing advice.
- People experiencing gambling harm often find a way to stop gambling, or get it under control.
- This change can include the removal or reduction of the stresses that contributed to the gambling in the first place.
- Encouraging support from friends and family, professional services, and sometimes, through being excluded from gambling venues all can assist people who are experiencing gambling harm.

What should I do? How can I help?

Rates of seeking help from gambling support services are low. This can be due to people finding help with family and friends, or with the aid of online information and resources. It can also be because of barriers like the stigma surrounding gambling harm, and feelings of guilt and shame associated with continuing to gamble. People may also be in denial of the harm their gambling is causing.

- People experiencing gambling harm may struggle to control their gambling for years before they are motivated to talk to someone who can help.
- Some people experiencing difficulties with gambling address the issues themselves.
- Providing information about self-help resources can be a good way to help them get started. These resources include guidance around goal setting and finding the circuit breakers to assist in curbing gambling urges.

When having the conversation, do:

- Without blaming, tell people how their gambling might be impacting on others
- Focus on positives and fixes rather than the problems themselves
- Get them to talk about what might be good about gambling less
- Let them know you're asking because you care about them
- Use the words they use
- Ask them, "How bad do things have to get?"
- Be patient. This is a process that can take weeks or months.

When having the conversation, avoid:

- Blaming people for causing problems for others
- Labelling them a problem
- Lecturing, if you keep chipping away at people they won't hear you
- Telling people what you would do, unless you've overcome addiction
- Telling people what to do. Come to a solution together.

Conversation Tips

- Listen to what they have to say
- Encouraging them to act through helping themselves, working on it together, peer support or treatment. Self-help strategies and peer support are more appropriate for people with less severe gambling issues, but they can work
- Ask about potential difficulties with managing money
- Encourage them to take up of alternative activities they enjoy away from gambling
- Assist with peer connection (if appropriate)
- Provide information about support options such as:
 - [Gambling help online forum](#)
 - Live chat
 - Phone support

- 24-hour helplines and professional phone counselling: [1800 858 858](tel:1800858858)
- Face-to-face counselling.

If they don't want to talk:

- You can tell them that gambling help is available and that you are willing to talk when they are ready. If the conversation becomes unproductive or aggressive, you should end the discussion and try again at another time
- Let them know you will be ready to help them when they are ready to change their behaviour
- Interventions should be a last resort. If this is required, do it in a way that helps the person feel supported and cared for rather than punished or shamed.

If gambling has become a problem, you are not alone. You can call the **Gambler's Help** line on [1800 243 232](tel:1800243232) to speak with one of our counsellors.