

The background features a pattern of thin, white, concentric circles on a blue field. The circles are centered in the upper right and lower left areas. The bottom portion of the image is a solid, darker blue.

Concerned about
your gambling?

Why should I read this workbook?

Are you worried about your gambling?
Wondering if you should do something about it?

Is this you?

Do you have debts? Have you lost property?
Are you facing legal charges?

Gambling is causing money or legal troubles.

Do you feel powerless? Guilty? Ashamed? Out of control?

Gambling is affecting how you feel.

Do you feel alone? Do you lie to others?
Is your family stressed or broken up because of gambling?
Have people you care about changed the way they treat you?

Gambling is affecting your relationships.

Do you have stomach pains? Headaches? Depression? Anxiety?

Gambling is affecting your health.

If you see yourself here, you are not alone.

Everywhere you turn, there's a way to gamble—scratch tickets, VLTs, weekly lottery, casinos. Gambling is advertised on TV, in newspapers, in corner stores. It can seem like gambling is a normal, fun, everyday activity. But many people struggle with gambling. For them, it may start out being fun, but soon it just takes over. And you can be more likely to have problems with gambling when you're lonely, anxious, bored, or stressed—for example if you've lost your job.

Many people feel worse about having a gambling problem than they do about other kinds of addictions. Don't let feelings of guilt or shame stop you from getting help. You're not stupid. You're not weak. And you're not alone. You're worth it. You deserve help and support.

Something to think about...

Gambling is an addiction like any other.

People with gambling problems often report strong feelings of “needing to gamble.”

This is because their brain starts to produce “feel good” chemicals while they're gambling. This gives a feeling of happiness, or a high.

Your brain does the same thing with an addiction to drugs or alcohol.

Worried about someone else's gambling?

Call the
Gambling Support Network
1-888-347-8888
for information and support.

In this workbook you'll find:

- Help to decide what you want to do about your gambling
- Ideas for cutting down or stopping
- Where to find support

You'll find support and information at the **Gambling Support Network (1-888-347-8888)**. You'll find more information about the Gambling Support Network in the last section of this booklet.

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What do I want to do about my gambling?

Reasons to change

Emotional or personal reasons

"I feel bad hiding my gambling or dealing with hassles over bills. I hate myself for what I'm doing."

Financial reasons

"I had to hide the bank statements. I was scared that one of the creditors would ring while I wasn't home."

Effects on relationships and family

"I'm tired of lying to my family and friends about where I am and what I'm doing. I lose track of the lies I've told."

Health reasons

"The stress was taking a toll on my health. I was getting headaches and stomach aches. I was so busy worrying about money and planning to gamble that I didn't look after myself."

Effects on work or study

"After spending most of the night gambling I'd arrive at work really tired. Sometimes I'd take a long lunch to go out and gamble."

Effects on social life

"I thought it was good to be around other people while I was gambling, but I was just pretending that I was being social. The truth is that I neglected the people that mattered the most to me when I was gambling."

Legal issues

"I never stole until my gambling got out of control. I felt desperate and started stealing from work."

Does this sound familiar?

Think about how gambling is affecting your life. Think about why you might want to change.

Cut down, stop or do nothing?

It's normal to have mixed feelings when facing any kind of change. You can think of reasons to change and reasons to leave things the way they are.

Many people find that it helps to list all the pros and cons of each course of action. On the next page is a Cut Down, Stop or Do Nothing list. Use it to list all the benefits and costs to cutting down or stopping gambling as well as the benefits and costs of continuing to gamble.

When you're ready, you can talk about these pros and cons with professionals at the Gambling Support Network or the Addictions Services office in your community.

When you're done, look at your list of pros and cons. Weigh the costs and benefits of each choice. Use this information to help you decide if you want to make a change in your gambling.

Cut down, stop or do nothing?

Should I do nothing and continue gambling?

PROS

Check the pros that apply to you

- Helps me relax
- Feels good
- Stops me thinking and worrying about problems
- Might have a big win
- Can continue to hang out with my friends who gamble

Add your own pros

CONS

Check the cons that apply to you

- Family, friends or co-workers don't approve
- Family problems
- Could lose my job
- Break-up of relationship
- Money problems
- Might have to do something against the law to pay the bills

Add your own cons

Should I stop or cut back?

PROS

Check the pros that apply to you

- More control over my life
- Support from family and friends
- Less job problems
- Less money problems
- Better health
- More control over my behaviour

Add your own pros

CONS

Check the cons that apply to you

- Won't have a way to relax
- Will be bored
- Lose pleasure I get from gambling
- Will have to admit I have a problem

Add your own cons

Should I cut down or stop completely?

Once you've decided to do something about your gambling, you need to think about whether you want to cut back or stop completely. This is always up to you.

When you decide to change your gambling, thinking things through and planning ahead can help you avoid setbacks and returns to gambling.

Remembering WHY you want to change is also important. Use the space below to list the reasons you want and need to change. Keep your list where you can see it and look back at it often. Add new items that come up as you move ahead.

You may have tried to stop or cut down on your gambling in the past and found that it has not worked. Maybe last time you were not quite ready. Maybe this time you are.

I want to make a change because...

HOW can I stop or cut down my gambling?

Set goals

Deciding to take control of your gambling is a big step. Most people find that it helps to take things one step at a time.

Setting goals works best when your goals are small, clear, and realistic. For example, *"I'll never gamble again"* is a big goal. *"Just for today, I won't gamble"* is more realistic.

"I'm going to pay back the money I owe" is a big goal. On the other hand, *"I'm going to set up an automatic payment plan. I'll pay \$20 each week until my debt is repaid"* is a clear and realistic goal.

When you set smaller goals, you'll know when you have reached each goal and you can give yourself the credit you deserve.

It's also helpful to think about the things that could get in the way of reaching your goal. If you know what to expect, you can plan a way around it.

On the next page, you'll find a list to help you think about things that could get in the way of reaching your goal and how you can handle them. Check the things that apply to you. There's space to add your own, too. Next to each one, write something you could do or someone you could talk with to stop the urge to gamble.

My goal: Just for today I will not gamble

What could get in my way

- Going to a bar that has VLTs
- Going past the casino
- Feeling bored
- Thinking about painful memories or feelings
- Listening to sports on the radio
Watching sports on TV or the Internet

What I can do about it

- Find a pub with no VLT
- Go home from work the long way
so I don't go past the casino
- Plan an activity with a friend
- Spend the evening catching up with friends
and family by phone
- Take an iPod/mp3 player to listen to in the car
so I don't listen to sports on the radio
Watch TV or DVDs with family or friends

Add your own issues and ideas for dealing with them

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Plan your days

When you are trying to stop or reduce your gambling you may find yourself with more time on your hands than usual. It's important to have places to go and things to do instead of gambling.

You could:

- Plan things to do with someone else—go for coffee, take a walk
- Plan small treats for yourself—have a favourite meal, see a movie
- Volunteer to work with a local group
- Start an exercise routine—have a regular jog or walk in the morning or evening, go swimming or skating alone or with a friend

Make your own list of things to do instead of gambling. Think about all the ways you'd enjoy using the extra time in your day. Try to think of something you could do each day of the week.

Things to do

Sunday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Monday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____	_____	_____

Be prepared to handle the urge to gamble

Something to think about...

Gambling alone, gambling to win, or gambling to escape life's problems may put you at risk for gambling problems.

What causes the urge to gamble?

Places you go and things you do or feel can give you the urge to gamble. To cut back or stop gambling, you need to know what makes you want to gamble.

Here are some things to watch out for.

THINGS YOU DO

can make you want to gamble

- Going to places where you used to gamble—like pubs, clubs, or casinos
- Surfing Pro-line or Playsphere
- Watching sports
- Watching casino ads on TV
- Playing sports
- Playing cards
- Talking or reading about gambling
- Reading the sports pages in the newspaper
- Reading sports or racing magazines
- Receiving bills in the mail
- Breaks at work, working at home
- Having cash on hand
- Cutting yourself off from other people

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

can make you want to gamble

- Being under stress at home
- Fights with family or friends
- Having a hard time talking openly with family and friends
- Friends asking you to gamble with them

THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

can make you want to gamble

- Feeling anxious, tired, angry, depressed, lonely, bored, stressed, or even over-confident, lucky or happy
- Thinking about painful memories, feelings, or emotions
- Worrying about money problems
- Feeling under pressure at work or school

THINGS YOU TELL YOURSELF

can make you want to gamble

- Finding reasons to keep gambling
- Telling yourself that the problem wasn't really that bad
- Saying things to yourself like, *"Now that I've started again, I've blown it anyway so I may as well keep going"*

Keeping a record of what you do and feel when you gamble will help you see the things that make you want to gamble.

Here are a few things to think about as you fill in the box on the next page.

- Where and when do you usually gamble?
- Who else is likely to be around when you gamble?
How do they act?
- How do you feel **before** and **after** gambling?
- What are you thinking about **right before** gambling?
- What are the things you tell yourself about gambling?
(For example, *"I'll only spend \$50,"* or *"I'll stop when I double it."*)
- What do you get by gambling?
What purpose does it serve for you?

When I felt the urge to gamble...

What time of
day was it?

Where was I?

Who was I with?

How did I feel?

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

It can also help to think about times when you don't feel the urge to gamble.
For example, when you're with your children or partner or out with friends.

When I DIDN'T feel the urge to gamble...

What time of
day was it?

Where was I?

Who was I with?

How did I feel?

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

What can I do?

Here are few ideas for things to do when the urge to gamble hits. And don't forget the lists you made earlier in this workbook.

- Take deep, slow breaths to help reduce stress
- Remember your reasons for cutting back or stopping
- Think about the good things that have happened since you stopped or cut back
- Remind yourself that cutting back or stopping isn't easy. Give yourself credit for how far you've come.
- Leave the place or person that's making you want to gamble
- Call or talk to a friend
- Call the Gambling Support Network • 1-888-347-8888
- Go to a movie
- Go out to dinner
- Go for a walk
- Practice relaxation exercises
- Think about things in your life that make you happy

To help AVOID the urge to gamble:

- Do what it takes for you to feel relaxed and calm.
- Know and accept the real odds of winning and losing.
- Avoid places where you've gambled in the past.
- Limit the amount of cash or credit you can get.

Check the things that make you want to gamble in the box below. There's space to add your own, too. Next to each one, write something you could do or someone you could talk with to stop the urge to gamble.

The urge to gamble

What makes me want to gamble

What I can do

Watching poker games or sports

Cancel or block sports channels
Block myself from online gambling

Driving past the pub or casino on the way home from work

Take a different route home

Fighting with my partner

Go for a run or walk to cool off
Listen to music
Call the Gambling Support Network

Betting Apps for my smart phone

Remove apps from phone
Turn off phone when I don't need it

Feeling depressed or anxious over not gambling

Take a deep breath. Slowly count to ten.
Talk to a loved one
Talk with my family doctor
Call the Gambling Support Network

Daydreaming about gambling

Distract myself – go for a walk or run, watch a movie

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Understand and deal with setbacks

As you cut back or stop gambling, you'll have good days and bad days. You may gamble once or twice after deciding to stop. This is just a bump on the road. It is not a reason to give up and go back to harmful gambling.

You may also relapse and go back to your old gambling levels. If this happens, try not to feel that you have failed. Stopping gambling may take several tries. Each time you try, it's practice for the next time. Like other things that are hard, stopping or cutting back your gambling gets easier with practice.

Reducing or stopping your gambling can't be done all at once. Take it one day at a time and learn from your mistakes. Do not blame or punish yourself.

You can make setbacks less likely by having a good plan and lots of support from friends and family. In other parts of this booklet, you've listed situations that make you want to gamble and planned ways to deal with them. Go back and look at these often. Change them or make new plans as you need to.

Something to think about...

Take care of yourself

When you're dealing with a big problem like gambling, it's easy to forget to take care of yourself.

Have a look at these warning signs about general wellbeing and check the ones that apply to you.

Are you:

- Stressed? Tense? Worried?
- Tearful?
- Feeling like you don't want to do anything?
- More tired than usual?
- Drinking more alcohol or smoking more?
- Having sleep problems?
- Having stomach upsets?
- Getting headaches?
- Using drugs?
- Eating unhealthy foods?
- Finding it hard to concentrate?
- Cutting yourself off from family or friends?

The more of these warning signs that you check, the more important it is for you speak to someone. You might need to talk to your doctor or a counsellor.

**As a first step,
you can contact**

Gambling Support Network

Phone: 1-888-347-8888

Website:

gamblingsupportnetwork.ca

Where can I get support?

Looking for help and support

You'll find information about several sources of help in this section.

- The Gambling Support Network
- Family and friends
- Counselling
- Help for gambling debts

There may also be a **Gamblers Anonymous** group in your area. The Gambling Support Network can tell you where they meet and who to contact.

Other organisations that might be able to offer support include church groups, school counsellors, and local community groups. Your local telephone directory will have a list of agencies in your area.

The Gambling Support Network

The Gambling Support Network is a province-wide, free, counselling service. It offers both long-term support and short term or crisis counselling.

You can phone anytime. The Gambling Support Network is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you can't get through, please leave a message. A counsellor will call you back.

When you call the Gambling Support Network, you talk with a counsellor who offers the same services as a counsellor that you would meet face-to-face. The only difference is that you talk to the counsellor on the phone. You'll find more information about what to expect from counselling further on in this booklet.

When you call the Gambling Support Network, everything you tell them is confidential. The only exceptions to this are if you talked about wanting to commit suicide, or if child abuse is suspected.

The Gambling Support Network also offers general information for people wanting to know more about issues related to gambling.

Gambling Support Network

Phone: 1-888-347-8888

Website: gamblingsupportnetwork.ca

Family and friends

Family members and friends you can talk to and spend time with can make things a lot easier.

If gambling is affecting your wellbeing, it is also affecting the people around you.

- Your partner, husband or wife
- Your children
- Other family members
- Your employer or employees
- Your work mates and colleagues
- Your friends

Your gambling affects these people because they are part of your life and they care about you. These are people who might want to support you as you work to cut back or stop gambling.

The people around you may be worried about you but may not know how to talk to you about your gambling. You might also be finding it difficult to talk about your gambling with them.

If you need help in talking to or asking for support from the people in your life, call the Gambling Support Network to work through ways to do this.

It is common to feel alone and overwhelmed, especially when you keep your gambling problem to yourself. Many people have found that sharing with others helped them to make changes in their gambling and their life.

Who should I ask for help?

First, make a list of people who you would feel comfortable asking for support. Look for people who will be good listeners, won't judge you, and will support you no matter what.

Next, think about how you will approach them. Would you be comfortable phoning them? Should you meet for coffee? What will you say? How will you ask for support?

Then think about what you will ask each person to do. This could be things like:

- Phoning you regularly to ask how things are going
- Offering encouragement and cheering you on
- Asking you to do things with them that don't involve gambling

If you need help with this, call the Gambling Support Network.

Who can I ask for support?

Name	How should I approach them?	What can they do to help?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Do you have a Health Card?

You need a Nova Scotia Health Card to get counselling services. For information on how to get a health card call:
1-800-563-8880

For information about Addiction Services in your community

Please visit:
novascotia.ca/dhw/addictions/addiction-services-offices.asp.

Counselling

Counselling gives you a trained person to talk with about things that concern you.

Getting counselling is not about being told what to do. It helps you find the path that is right for you.

You do not have to stop gambling to receive counselling. You don't even have to be sure that you want to stop. The main focus is on making gambling less harmful to you. This could mean helping you develop a plan to cut back. Or it could mean supporting your decision to stop gambling. It's up to you.

The first time you go or call, the goal is to find the best way for you and the counsellor to work together. The counsellor will ask you to talk about why you're there. They might ask questions to be sure they understand what you're saying. Based on this, you and the counsellor will develop a plan for how best to work together.

You can go to counselling by yourself or you can take a support person with you.

How often you go to counselling and how long it takes is different for everyone.

Where can I go for counselling?

There are free face-to-face counselling services available in your community through Addiction Services. When you first call to meet or speak to a counsellor, an intake worker will help you decide which services may be most helpful to you before setting up a meeting with the counsellor.

All services provided by Addiction Services are confidential. This means that when you speak to a counsellor, what you say will not be shared with others. However, there are a few times when they may not be able to keep information confidential. For example, if you talked about wanting to commit suicide.

Help for gambling debt

Many people have money problems as a result of gambling.

- Overdue bills
- Using your credit cards for gambling
- Unpaid rent/mortgage payments
- Unpaid loans from banks and other creditors
- Eviction or repossession
- Owing money to family and friends
- No money for everyday needs like food

Financial counselling is available free of charge across Nova Scotia through Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

Financial counsellors work with people who are in debt or have concerns about money. They can

- help you work out a short term budget and plan for managing your debt
- suggest safe ways that you can talk with creditors
- give you an idea of what to expect in dealing with debt collectors, banks, or creditors
- talk you through some options
- refer you to face-to-face financial or legal assistance

You can contact a financial counsellor

Monday to Friday
8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

Phone: 1-800-670-4357

Website:

[novascotia.ca/sns/access/
individuals/debtor-assistance.asp](https://novascotia.ca/sns/access/individuals/debtor-assistance.asp)

To sum up

This workbook has offered a lot of information to help you decide what, if anything, you want to do about your gambling. Only you can choose the path that is right for you.

Below is a list that sums up the information and advice in this booklet. If you decide to stop or cut back your gambling, we hope that it will help you keep your eye on the big picture.

Making a change in your life is never easy.
We wish you a safe journey on whatever path
you follow.

Checklist for success

- Take it one day (or hour) at a time.
- Be honest with yourself.
- List things you can do if you get an urge to gamble.
- Plan your day so you have things to fill your time. Think about things to do instead of gambling.
- Think about how you can involve the people you care about in your plans to stop or cut back your gambling.
- Make small goals. Give yourself a pat on the back every time you reach a goal.
- Have a check-up with your doctor. The better you're feeling, the more energy you will have to take control of your life.
- Contact a face-to face counsellor from your local Addiction Services.
- Talk to a financial counsellor in your community:
1-800-670-4357
novascotia.ca/sns/access/individuals/debtor-assistance.asp
- Use the Gambling Support Network as often as you want or need to: 1-888-347-8888

For information and
support call the
Gambling Support Network.

1-888-347-8888

