FREEDOM
from Problem Gambling

Self-help Workbook

UCLA
Gambling Studies Program

Office of Problem Gambling
California Department of Alcohol & Drug Programs

Freedom From Problem Gambling

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Introduction

This self-help workbook is designed to help you understand: (1) your gambling behavior; (2) why you gamble; and (3) how gambling may have become a problem in your life. The information will provide you with ways to help stop or reduce your gambling.

The workbook is divided into five chapters, each of which focuses on a different aspect of your gambling. The chapters are further divided into sections or topics that contain several paper exercises. The purpose of these exercises is to help you think in detail about the relevance of each topic to your situation.

To get the most out of using this workbook, go through the material at your own pace. You may read through the workbook by yourself or with the guidance of a counselor.

This workbook is not a replacement for professional help or for Gamblers Anonymous. If, after completing the workbook, you feel you would like more help, we have provided a list of treatment resources in the Appendix.

This workbook is currently being evaluated for effectiveness, and the results will soon be available on the Office of Problem Gambling website. Please feel free to contact us by phone at 310.825.4845 or by e-mail at uclagamblingprogram@ucla.edu with any comments or questions about the workbook.

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Overview

What is gambling?

Gambling involves risking something of value (usually money) on an activity or event in which the outcome is uncertain. The risk is undertaken in hopes of an immediate reward. Skill may be involved, which may reduce, but does not eliminate, the uncertainty.

Popular forms of gambling today include casino games, slot and video poker machines, Internet gambling, the lottery, horse racing, and betting on team sports such as football or baseball. Other types of gambling include betting on individual skills, real estate speculation and stock market trading.

Who is a problem gambler?

A problem gambler is a person who spends time and money gambling in such a way that it is harmful to him or her. A severe problem gambler is known as a compulsive or pathological gambler.

The main symptom of problem gambling is a loss of control over gambling. Loss of control can be described in the following ways:

1. Gambling will escalate, as the person needs to take greater risks to maintain a certain level of excitement or to try to win back his or her money.

2. Some people cannot stop gambling when they are ahead. If they win money, they feel they can win more by betting again. But, eventually, luck runs out, and problem gamblers will continue gambling until all their money is gone.

3. There are those people who say they will not gamble again and find themselves gambling again, no matter how hard they try not to gamble.

A person may be a problem or pathological gambler, but have problems with only one form of gambling. For example, some problem gamblers may buy a lottery ticket each week and never have problems with that form of gambling, but they have substantial problems with sports betting.

There are also "binge gamblers" who do not have urges or think about gambling between episodes. They may only bet one sport and show no interest in gambling the rest of the year. Or they may go to Las Vegas several times a year and have no urges or desires at other times. These gamblers can still cause problems in their lives because of large betting losses created by just a few days of gambling.

What are some of the signs of problem gambling?

Common signs of problem gambling include:

- Gambling longer than you intended
- Betting "over your head" and then "chasing" after losses
- Lying to family or others about how much you are gambling
- Missing work or family commitments because of gambling
- Being distracted from these other aspects of your life by the time spent thinking about gambling

As gambling problems grow, feelings of shame, guilt and depression can increase.

What is the difference between a problem gambler, a social gambler or a professional gambler?

Social gamblers gamble for entertainment and typically do so with friends. They do not risk more than they can afford to lose. They accept losing as "part of the game" and do not "chase" their losses. Their gambling does not interfere with their work or family life.

Professional gamblers bet to make money, not for the excitement or to avoid or escape problems. They show tremendous discipline and do not take unnecessary risks. They usually stop when they are ahead. Many problem gamblers claim to be professional gamblers, but the reality is that professional gamblers do not have problems caused by gambling. At the end of the month or the year, they are always ahead, whereas people with gambling problems are almost always behind. However, many "professional gamblers" become problem gamblers over time.

How many people in America are problem gamblers?

Research shows that 4 percent to 5 percent of Americans are problem gamblers, and about 1 percent of Americans are severe problem gamblers (pathological gamblers). Among those who gamble regularly, the percentages are higher.

A 2005 survey showed that close to 4 percent of people who live in California could be classified as problem or pathological gamblers. This means that approximately one million Californians will have a gambling problem in their lives.

CHAPTER I

DO YOU HAVE A GAMBLING PROBLEM?

1. What kinds of gambling do you do?

List your top three, preferred forms of gambling:
(Rank them in order of preference)

Most preferred: _____

Second: _____

Third: _____

What do you like about these types of gambling?

2. Do you have a gambling problem?

This questionnaire, adapted from the South Oaks Foundation Gambling Screen, has been used to evaluate individuals for problem gambling. You can use it to help decide if you have gambling problem. Other sections of this workbook will help you identify what specific concerns you have.

Please answer "Yes" or "No" to the questions below:

	YES / NO
When you participate in gambling activities, do you go back another day to win back money you lost?	☐ ☐
Have you ever claimed to be winning money from your gambling activities when in fact you lost?	☐ ☐
Do you ever spend more time or money gambling than you intended?	☐ ☐
Have people ever criticized your gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you ever felt guilty about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble?	☐ ☐

	YES / NO
Have you ever felt that you would like to stop gambling but didn't think that you could?	☐ ☐
Have you ever hidden betting slips, lottery tickets gambling money, or other signs of gambling from your spouse or partner, children, or other important people in your life?	☐ ☐
Have you ever argued with people you live with over how you handle money? If "yes," have these arguments ever centered on your gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you ever missed time from work or school due to gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you ever borrowed from someone and not paid them back as a result of your gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you ever borrowed from household money to finance gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you ever borrowed money from your spouse or partner to finance gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you ever borrowed from other relatives or in-laws to finance gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you received loans from banks, loan companies or credit unions for gambling or to pay gambling debts?	☐ ☐
Have you ever made cash withdrawals on creditcards such as Visa or MasterCard to get money to gamble with or to pay gambling debts? (Not including ATM cards.)	☐ ☐
Have you ever received loans from loan sharks to gamble or to pay gambling debts?	☐ ☐
Have you ever cashed in stocks, bonds, or other Securities to finance gambling?	☐ ☐
Have you sold personal or family property to gamble or pay gambling debts?	☐ ☐
Have you ever borrowed money from your checking account by writing checks that bounced to get money for gambling or to pay gambling debts?	☐ ☐
Do you feel that you have ever had a problem betting money or gambling?	☐ ☐

To calculate your score: count one point for each "yes" response.
0 = no problem 1 – 4= mild to moderate problem 5 – 20 = significant problem

My score is: 0

Adapted from South Oaks Gambling Screen, 1992, South Oaks foundation, Henry Lesieur and Sheila Blume.

3. Consequences of gambling

To understand how gambling is affecting your life, take a minute to think about how your gambling behavior impacts you in both positive and negative ways. Consider the consequences of gambling and describe how gambling has impacted you by filling in the blanks under each heading.

Gambling has affected my life in the following ways:

Physical Health

Positive	Negative
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Emotional Health

Positive	Negative
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Work

Positive	Negative
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Financial

Positive	Negative
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Social

Positive	Negative
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Legal

Positive

_____

_____

_____

Negative

_____

_____

_____

Family Life

Positive

_____

_____

_____

Negative

_____

_____

_____

4. What's happening to me when I gamble?

People who gamble regularly may be detached from their feelings or themselves. They may react impulsively or out of habit and not pay attention to circumstances that precede or influence their gambling.

Think back to the last three times you gambled and complete the chart below. An example is provided to get you started.

Where/Situation	**Feelings before**	**Thoughts before and during**	**Amount of $**
Stopped at a casino while looking for a job downtown.	Frustrated, discouraged, feeling broke.	If I made a big win then I wouldn't need a job. This would solve my problems.	$60 [lost].
1.			
2.			

3.			
4.			

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Make blank copies of this chart and use it to monitor your gambling.

Review it each week, paying special attention to the thoughts and feeling that precede impulses to gamble, whether you win or lose, and how you feel afterwards. Blank copies of this chart are available in the Appendix section.

5. Identifying your reasons for gambling

Check the box that most applies to you for each reason for gambling.

Reason for Gambling	**Always**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
To provide excitement			
To make money quickly			
To feel like a big shot			
To be more social because I felt shy			
To not think about problems			
To feel more powerful			
To numb my feelings			
To avoid people			
To not feel bored			
To get rid of my feelings of depression or loneliness			
To feel pleasure or to be entertained			
Out of habit			

After completing the checklist, go back to the beginning of the chapter where you listed your favorite forms of gambling and described what you liked about them. Would you change or add anything to your original answer?

6. Wins and losses

Problem gamblers typically remember their wins, which feel good. However, they also forget, minimize or make excuses for their losses.

Have you kept accurate records of your wins and losses? Some gamblers do in the beginning, but stop when their losses start to accumulate.

Using the form on the next page, reconstruct a calendar for the past month, with the frequency of your gambling episodes, the outcome for each episode, and a total for how much money you won or lost.

Try to remember how much cash you had at the beginning of the month and any attempts you made to borrow or otherwise get additional funds.

Think about these questions:

1. ***Was this last month typical? How would it have compared with the same month from a year ago? Or from a typical month earlier in your gambling career?***
2. ***Over the length of your gambling career, how much money would you say you have won or lost?***
3. ***In figuring what gambling has cost financially, have most of your losses come about more recently? How accurate is your estimate of the monies you have lost?***

LAST MONTH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

7. Indebtedness

Most problem and pathological gamblers have gambling-related debts and are behind in meeting their financial obligations.

Make a list of all your debts, including credit card balances, money borrowed from family and friends, overdue payments, checks written for which funds were not available, and money owed to casinos.

List all of your creditors and the amounts that you owe them

CREDITOR	AMOUNT THAT YOU OWE

CHAPTER II

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

1. Costs and Benefits

Before making changes in your behavior, it is important to think about the positive and negative consequences of your decision. Gambling has caused problems, but it also has its benefits. Here is an opportunity to directly compare the two sides.

Write down the benefits and costs of your gambling. Then write down the benefits and costs of not gambling. Some examples are provided to help get you started. (Note: Looking back at what you wrote in Chapter 1 may be helpful.)

Benefits of Gambling	**Benefits of NOT Gambling**
(examples) • I love the feeling of excitement after a big win. • I can have money fast. • I have fun when I gamble. • Gambling helps me escape from other problems or forget my troubles.	(examples) • I will save money. • I will have more time to do other things. • I will be less stressed.
Add your own reasons. . .	**Add your own reasons. . .**

Costs of Gambling	**Costs of NOT Gambling**
(examples) • I am in a lot of debt. • I can't control my gambling. • I am depressed and anxious.	(examples) • I will be bored. • I might miss a big win. • I will have to face reality.
Add your own reasons. . .	**Add your own reasons. . .**

After you finish this assignment, number your reasons in terms of importance.

How do the cost and benefits compare? Does continuing to gamble make more or less sense at this point?

2. Setting your gambling goal

Before you start to change your gambling, it is important for you to decide on your goal.

• Do you want to stop gambling altogether?

• Or do you just want to reduce the amount of time or money you spend gambling?

Once you have made the decision to make a change, there are three options to choose from:

I. Abstinence (no gambling, at all)

Many people find that not engaging in any form of gambling is the safest option of all for them.

II. Quitting a specific type (or types) of gambling

Some people quit the types of gambling that have caused them difficulty, but continue to play other types. For example, they quit playing slot machines, but continue to play the lottery.

This choice requires continuous work. You must always watch to see if a problem is developing with another type of gambling. This may be a tougher choice than quitting entirely, because problems often develop slowly before we actually recognize them as problems.

If this is your choice, then decide what types of gambling you are eliminating and what types you can continue.

III. Cutting back on gambling

Many people attempt to reduce, but not stop, their gambling. This is usually the toughest choice for these individuals because they have had problems controlling their gambling in their past. Also, this approach may not be supported by friends or family.

We strongly recommend that you attempt to quit gambling completely for three or four weeks before making your final decision.

During this period of not gambling, you will discover how you cope on your own with urges or temptations to gamble.

If you decide to cut back on your gambling, it is important to consider the following guidelines:

- Set a budget for how much you will spend in one session and in one week.

- Develop ways to avoid "chasing your losses" (that is, trying to win back what you have lost).
- Limit the time you will spend gambling.
- Keep a daily diary to record your gambling (use a notebook to record the amount of time gambling, number of occasions, wins and losses, etc.).
- If you are exceeding your gambling limits, in either frequency or amounts, and are still experiencing problems, you should stop gambling altogether.

3. Commit to your goal

Choose **ONE** of the following options as your goal, circle it and sign your name.

This will act as a personal contract to yourself that will help you remain committed to your goal.

I. Abstinence from gambling

II. Quitting a specific type (or types) of gambling

Types of gambling allowed

_____

Types of gambling NOT allowed

_____

III. Cutting back from gambling

The number of days a week I can gamble : _____

The maximum amount of time per session: _____

The maximum amount of $ per session : _____

The maximum amount of $ per week : _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

4. Strategies for limiting your gambling

A gambling budget
Research has shown that if an individual spends more than 2 percent of his or her annual income on gambling, this could be a sign of problem gambling.

If you have chosen to cut back on gambling or limit your gambling to a specific type, please complete the following calculations:

A. Your gross annual income (estimated):

_____

B. 2 percent of your annual gross income:
(Multiply your annual gross income by .02. This is your estimated gambling budget per year.)

_____

C. Estimated gambling budget per month
(Divide Total of Line B by 12)

_____

D. Actual amount of money spent on gambling last year:

_____

Limiting access to gambling
These are steps gamblers have taken to help regain control over their gambling. Please check any that you have tried and mark any that you might consider trying now:

_____ Self-exclusion (barring yourself from the casino)

_____ Cut off transportation

_____ Move farther away from the casino

_____ Get rid of Internet access

_____ Remove your name from casino marketing lists

_____ Spend less time with friends or colleagues who gamble

_____ Other strategies not listed:

_____

Limiting access to money

Many people find that if they have cash in their pocket they are more likely to gamble. Those who have successfully stopped gambling say that getting their cash flow under control is critical.

Check the strategies that you might consider doing:

___ Cancel your credit cards or give them to a family member for safekeeping.

___ Cancel your bank card or limit ATM access.

___ Take out only the cash needed for the day's expenses.

___ Make sure checks are automatically deposited in your bank account.

___ Have your wages collected by spouse or partner.

___ Limit the amount of money you can withdraw in a week (by making arrangements with your bank).

___ Tell family and friends NOT to lend you money.

___ Have someone else pay your bills.

___ Keep a record of all money spent and earned (budgeting).

___ Arrange for someone to co-sign all of the checks that you write.

CHAPTER III

CHANGING OLD HABITS

1. Recognizing your triggers

Triggers lead to an urge (or desire) to gamble. There are basically two kinds of triggers:

Internal (thoughts or feelings)
External (situations)

An internal trigger is most likely caused by one of the following:

- Feelings of uncertainty or helplessness
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Strong negative feelings such as depression, anger or anxiety
- Personal demands and expectations of yourself.

Gambling can be a way to avoid or escape such uncomfortable or painful feelings.

Can you think of a recent situation that triggered such feelings for you and led to an urge or desire to gamble?
Please describe that situation in the space below:

External triggers are objects, words or images that remind you of previous gambling experiences. Examples might include a billboard advertising Las Vegas, a televised poker game, or the freeway exit for the racetrack. External triggers can also involve situations that are associated with gambling. For example, a woman might typically gamble when her daughter is at a dance lesson or when her husband is out of town.

Can you think of something you experienced, saw or heard recently that triggered an urge or desire to gamble?

(continue on next page)

Of the two kinds of triggers, which leads you to gamble?
How have you dealt with this?

2. Dealing with cravings

Cravings are extremely common, especially when you are trying to stop gambling. Cravings are the physical reaction or response you have that leads to the urge to gamble.

Each time you are able to resist, you accomplish something. Your cravings will become weaker in both intensity and frequency over time. Just because you have a craving and want to gamble does not mean you have to act on it. Several techniques can help you deal with cravings.

Technique #1 IDENTIFICATION

This technique involves recognizing that you are having a trigger. This is the first step in managing your cravings.

People experience cravings in different ways. A craving may consist of a thought telling you to gamble; a visual image in which you see yourself gambling; or an experience made up of the sounds and smells associated with gambling.

Cravings may also be accompanied by physical symptoms such as rapid heart beat, sweaty palms, or a queasy feeling in the pit of the stomach. You may also experience the rush you get before gambling.

Describe how you experience cravings that urge you to gamble:

(continue on next page)

Technique #2 POSITIVE SUBSTITUTION

This technique involves replacing one mental image with another. For example, instead of visualizing yourself gambling, you see yourself fishing or playing golf. Or, you actually substitute gambling for the healthier activity – instead of going to gamble, you go fishing or you play golf.

What can you substitute for gambling when you experience an urge to gamble?

Technique #3 "PLAYING OUT THE SCRIPT"

If you see yourself sitting at a card table, for example, take yourself through what will happen. In your initial fantasy, you are winning, of course. But what happens in reality? You keep playing until you have lost everything. Then what? You are out in the parking lot feeling disgusted, angry and ashamed.

And then you have to drive home. How do you feel? What happens when you get home and see your spouse's face, and he or she knows you have been gambling?

Please write out what will happen if you gamble:

Technique #4 IMMEDIATE NEGATIVE CONDITIONING

This is a similar technique in which you think of your worst experience related to gambling. The previous example provided several possibilities: the experience in the parking lot, feeling suicidal while driving home, seeing your spouse's face.

Now, connect that memory, that image, with the urge to gamble, so that it becomes linked in your mind – so that every time you think about gambling, it is not how much money you are going to make or how much fun you are going to have, but your worst experience that automatically comes to mind.

What are the "worst experiences" from gambling that you can remember?

(continue on next page)

Now, remember to connect those thoughts and feelings with the bad outcomes you wrote about in Technique #3. Each time you think about gambling, think of those bad outcomes before you make the decision about whether or not to gamble.

Technique #5 POSTPONE GAMBLING

Tell yourself you are not going to do anything about the urge to gamble for the next hour, or 10 minutes, or one minute, and wait it out. Break it into the smallest time increment you need to, and then postpone taking any action.

What are some things that you can do to postpone gambling?

Technique #6 SUPPORT

It also helps to call someone, especially someone who has gone through similar problems. Many recovering gamblers utilize their religious or spiritual beliefs to help them deal with cravings. The important thing is to deal with your urges and cravings in an active manner. Try each of these tools and techniques.

Try talking to a friend or a family member whenever you have the urge to go gambling. Another place to get more support in dealing with cravings is Gambler's Anonymous. Go to a meeting and ask the other members how they deal with cravings.

3. Dealing with Distorted Thoughts about Gambling

In between the triggering event, the craving or urge to gamble, and the act of gambling, gamblers may tell themselves false statements in order to justify their decision to gamble.

Examples of some of these distorted thoughts about gambling are included below. Check all the ones that you have used to justify your gambling.

	I'll just play for a little while.		I deserve to gamble.
	One bet won't harm me.		I might actually win this time. And, how can I win if I don't play?
	Gambling is an easy way to earn money.		My gambling is under control, I've just had a lot of bad luck recently.
	I'm smart, I have a system to beat the odds.		Gambling will be the solution to my problems.
	I will pay it back.		Gambling makes me feel better.
	Someday I'll score a really big win.		I can win it back.
	I can't lose on my birthday.		I am smarter than the other gamblers.
	Other:		Other:

4. "Chasing"

Chasing involves the abandonment of your gambling strategy, and/or the increase in the size of your bets, in an effort to win back what you have lost. Gamblers will go back another day or may keep going back, attempting to recoup their losses.

Although practical reasons (rationalizations) are given, this behavior is usually irrational. Chasing results in greater losses, as the gambler buries himself or herself even deeper.

There are three common patterns or explanations for chasing. See if any of these apply to you.

1) Some gamblers are extremely competitive. They take losing personally and it is intolerable for them. In fact, it is inconceivable. The casino has "their" money, and they must get it back.

2) Some gamblers are desperate to replace the money they lost before they are found out. They fully expect their spouse to leave them and their families shun and abandon them once their shameful secret is discovered.

3) Some gamble more desperately out of a sense of guilt. They believe that, if they can win back what they lost, it not only erases the debt, but it is as if they had never gambled in the first place.

Has chasing been a part of your gambling problem? Do you see it contributing to your loss of control? Would it be accurate to describe yourself as desperate when you are chasing? Do any of the three explanations for chasing apply to you?

5. Money is the problem, money is the solution

Problem gamblers often have fixed ideas about money. The first is that money is the solution to all their problems. The second is that gambling is the way to get money.

Money is the solution to all one's problems.

It certainly may seem that way, particularly if your payments are overdue, your creditors are calling, or you have gambling-related debts.

Gambling is the way to get money.

Haven't you lost more often than you have won? And wasn't it gambling that put you in debt and caused most of your current financial problems? If you could have gambled in a disciplined manner, not taken unnecessary risks, and quit while you were ahead, wouldn't you have been doing that all along?

How will you know when you have enough money?
Please describe below how you view money in your life:

6. Self-deceptions basic to gambling

Our brains are conditioned to look for patterns and to make predictions based on what has happened.

This does not work for gambling. It is hard not to believe that a machine is "due," although each play is an independent event. The slot machine, dice and cards do not have a memory. If heads came up eight times in a row on a coin flip, the ninth flip of would not favor tails. However, it is hard to accept that the odds are still only 50-50.

Additionally, the amount of skill involved in gambling is often overestimated, while luck is something people believe they can influence or change. Many gamblers are extremely superstitious. For example, some believe they can control the dice, while some refuse to gamble on the thirteenth day of the month.

What are your superstitions? Please write them below and try to provide evidence that they can influence the outcome:

My Superstitions About Gambling	Evidence

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPING NEW HABITS

1. Avoiding avoidance

Gambling is often used to avoid or escape from especially painful feelings (shame, guilt, helplessness, depression) or from some problem in life that seems unsolvable.

While gambling, did you feel you were escaping the stresses of your life? Did you value the fact that you did not have to think about anything, that nothing else existed?

Gambling, of course, creates other problems (financial, emotional, work, and family), but these serve to distract people even further from their original problems.

What were you avoiding by gambling, and how well did this work for you?

What I was avoiding	Outcome of avoiding

Avoidance, as a way of coping with problems, is habit-forming.

People develop a repertoire of different ways they avoid dealing with uncomfortable or difficult situations.

On the list below, please check all the ones apply to you:

	Drinking Alcohol		Taking street drugs
	Eating a lot		Watching Television
	Surfing on the Internet		Acting out sexually
	Procrastinating		Lying to people
	Playing Video Games		Reading a book, magazine or newspaper
	Talking to someone that I trust		Spending more time at work
	Going to a support group		Exercising
	Going to church		Writing in a journal or diary
	Cleaning my house		Meditating
	Other		Other

2. Developing Ways to Cope

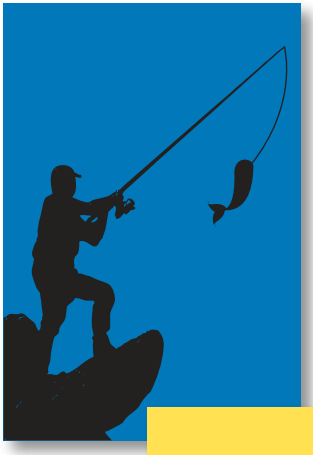
If you have been using your gambling to avoid or escape from some underlying problem, and if you have stopped (or gained control of) your gambling, you now have a choice. You can find other ways to avoid or escape problems, or you can confront them, and find healthy ways to deal with them.

Which of the following strategies might be helpful?
Check how helpful you think each of these would be for you:

	Not Helpful at All	Some-what Helpful	Very Helpful
Talking to a friend, family member or therapist			
Writing, keeping a journal or diary			
Learning to relax, through meditation, yoga, or breathing			
Getting regular exercise			
Attending Gamblers Anonymous meetings			
Planning activities, setting goals			
Learning anger management			
Taking medications			
Getting more time for myself			

Remember, the development of new coping skills is a process that does not have to be done all at once. Nor do most problems have to be solved right away. Early in recovery, many people set unrealistic expectations for themselves.

3. Developing new activities



Many gamblers have a problem with boredom, especially when they have recently stopped or cut down on their gambling.

• Some of these individuals may have used gambling to give meaning to their lives. Once they are less preoccupied with gambling, they find they have much more time on their hands. They may feel understimulated.

• Boredom can also mean that gamblers are uncomfortable being in the presence of their own company (and specifically with their feelings).

For these reasons, it is important to develop new interests and activities, to create meaning and purpose for oneself. This in itself is exciting! But the process may feel strange and uncomfortable.

Make a list of activities or hobbies unrelated to gambling that you enjoy which can fill your time. These can be hobbies that you used to enjoy, but have given up, or new activities that you have always wanted to learn or try.

Old Activities:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

New Activities:

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

If you are taking recovery seriously, you will be relating to people differently, having new experiences, and learning new things every day.

Practice living in the present, as opposed to dwelling in the past or anticipating the future. Gamblers Anonymous recommends living one day at a time. This is not as easy as it sounds. You may want to try a smaller interval of time, like one hour at a time.

4. Forgiving yourself

An extremely important part of any gambling problem is the feeling of shame and guilt that can persist long after you stop gambling. Gamblers Anonymous and an individual therapist can be helpful in helping gamblers improve relationships with family members and others who have been hurt by their behavior.

Equally important, but often neglected in the recovery process, is the need to forgive yourself. While this involves a series of steps, the process can start now.

- The first step in forgiving yourself is to put your gambling and other hurtful behaviors in the past and to be able to say, "I used to do such-and-such, but I don't do that any more."

- The second step is to try to make sense of what was irrational, self-destructive and harmful behavior. "It was hurtful, it was stupid, but I'm starting to understand why I thought I needed to do what I did."

Hopefully, by reading this manual, completing the exercises, and thinking about your answers, you are beginning that process of self-forgiveness and acceptance.

CHAPTER V

REVIEWING YOUR PROGRESS

1. Your goal and plans

In Chapter 3, you set a goal for yourself – to either control your gambling by setting limits or by abstaining from certain games, or to stop gambling altogether.

What is your goal now?

Review the previous four chapters. What seems most different to you? How would you summarize what you have learned?

Do you have a plan to change your gambling? What is it?

Generally, most people find it helpful to tell others about their plan.
What kind of help will you need? How will you get it?

In addition to controlling your gambling, what are the other things in your life that you need to work on?

What potential problems do you anticipate? Will you need to make changes in your life style in order to avoid situations that act as triggers?

For example, will your friends be supportive of you not gambling? Or, if you were a sports bettor, will you continue to watch sporting events, read the sports section, or listen to sports talk?

2. Dealing with slips and relapses

You need to expect that problems will come back from time to time. If you do slip and gamble again, remember that you have not failed and remind yourself of your past achievements.

- You can often predict when problem gambling will reappear. You are more likely to lose control when you have bad times in other parts of your life.
- You can learn from your slips and relapses by recognizing your triggers and risky situations.
- Take a look at what happened and see if you can spot ways of stopping the triggers and avoiding risky situations next time.
- Reread this manual and write down your additional ideas.

Learn from your mistakes, see what works, and brainstorm what could work in the future.

Description of relapse to gambling:	How to avoid this from happening again
(examples) Went with co-workers for lunch and drove past the card clubs.	(examples) • Bring enough money for lunch only • Drive with a friend

Remember, change takes time. By completing this manual you have taken an important step toward regaining control of your life!

Be sure to give yourself credit for each of your accomplishments along the way!

Learn from your mistakes.

Feel good about your successes.

The most important day is today.

APPENDIX

RESOURCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I. Blank copies of the gambling diaries

Where/ Situation			
Thoughts and feelings before gambling			
Thoughts and feelings while gambling			
Amount of money won and lost			
Thoughts and feelings after gambling			

Additional Resources

If you feel you need more help or support, or if you have tried the techniques in this booklet and haven't been successful, then other resources are available. Many of these resources will be available in your area.

1. Gambler's Anonymous

- www.gamblersanonymous.org

2. Problem Gambling Assistance

- National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG)
  http://www.ncpgambling.org/
- California Council on Problem Gambling
  http://www.calproblemgambling.org
- Office of Problem Gambling (OPG)
  http://www.problemgambling.ca.gov/
- UCLA Gambling Studies Program
  http://www.uclagamblingprogram.org/
- Union Pan Asian Communities (UPAC)
  http://upacsd.com/

3. Resources: Books & Resources

- Berman, Linda, M.S.W. and Mary-Ellen Siegel, M.S.W. Behind the 8-Ball: A Guide for Families of Gamblers. iUniverse, Inc., San Jose, 1998.
- Estes, Ken and Mike Brubaker. Deadly Odds: Recovery from Compulsive Gambling. A Fireside/Parkside Book. Simon &Schuster, New York, 1994.
- Lee, Bill. Born to Lose: Memoirs of a Compulsive Gambler. Hazelden. Hazelden Foundation, Center City, 2005.
- Petry, Nancy M. Pathological gambling: etiology, comorbidity and treatment. American Psychological Association Press, Washington DC, 2005.

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D. Hodgins and **K. Makarchuk**, Becoming a Winner: Defeating Problem Gambling, A Gambling Self-Help Manual, University of Calgary, June 2003.

The South Oaks Gambling Screen exercise was adapted from:

Henry Lesieur and **Sheila Blume**, South Oaks Gambling Screen, South Oaks Foundation, 1992.

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