

Triggers for Gambling

If you believe your gambling has become a problem, one approach is to recognise the triggers you experience that lead to gambling. For most people the following triggers play a role.

Money

Both having money and needing money can act as a trigger for gambling. Most problem gamblers have to control their access to money and change their attitudes to money in order to control their gambling. *See Money Section below*

Time

Time can be a trigger for gambling. Having free or unstructured time, time in which the person is bored can be a strong trigger for gambling. For some people time itself becomes a gambling trigger for example if you are in a habit of gambling on your way home from work, in the lunch time, on Saturday mornings these times will become a gambling trigger.

Access

When you are in a gambling environment e.g. in a hotel, casino or TAB, the urge to gamble may be very strong.

Mood

Both high and low mood can trigger gambling. When feeling extra good people will sometimes feel an exaggerated optimism that can make them vulnerable to gambling.

Low mood, even the low mood caused by gambling and gambling losses can act as a trigger for gambling.

The key to dealing with each of these triggers is to plan ahead. The old saying "failing to plan is planning to fail" is really relevant here.

Money

Most problem gamblers start to control their gambling by controlling their money. This usually entails limiting their access to cash by one or more of the following methods.

- Not carrying cash.
- Not carrying EFTPOS or Credit Cards.
- Having a partner, relative or friend control their finances.

- Setting up automatic payments for all bills including an AP into a savings account, which does not have card access.
- For self employed people, avoiding cash by getting payments by Direct Credit or Cheque and banking all cash immediately.
- Some problem gamblers have used a safety deposit box at a bank to store all their cards, cheque books and financial documents. They then go into the bank monthly, uplift the safety deposit box (for a small fee), write cheques for all their bills including one for groceries and petrol, then re-deposit their safety deposit box. Many banks will make an office available to work in as part of the fee for this service.

Problems

The problem gambler can resent not having any control over their money or having any cash. Partners, family or friends can also resent the responsibility of controlling someone else's money and can fear being pressured by the gambler.

Controlling gambling just by controlling money is often an important step in treatment but is seldom enough on its own. The gambler almost always ends up getting access to cash somehow. For example by borrowing off friends or going directly into the bank or someone repaying a debt to them.

Couples or families using money restrictions to control gambling must be careful not to be too severe on the gamblers. Wanting to punish the gambler only makes them feel worse and may make gambling more likely.

Be Creative

Many people with gambling problems find the amount of money is important. \$10, \$20 or \$30 may not be enough to trigger gambling, where as \$100 may definitely trigger gambling. If this is so, get used to carrying limited cash in order just to feel a bit normal.