



How To Stop Gambling: 6 Helpful Tips From Experts

By [Lizzie Duszynski-Goodman](#)

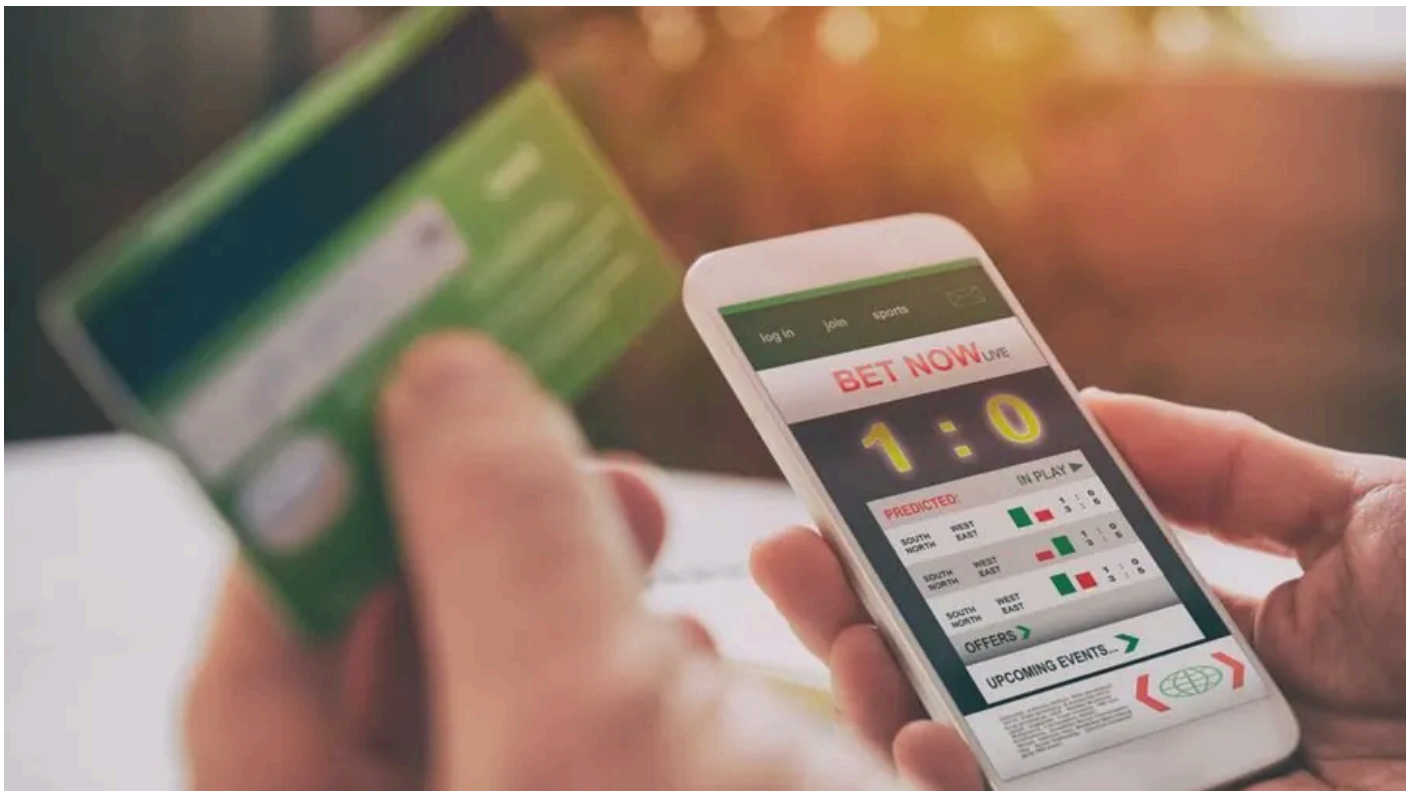
 Medically Reviewed [Jeff Temple, Ph.D.](#)

Published: Mar 21, 2023, 5:30pm

Have a question we may not have answered?

 [Ask our editors here](#)

Commissions we earn from partner links on this page do not affect our opinions or evaluations. Our editorial content is based on thorough research and guidance from the [Forbes Health Advisory Board](#).



Getty Creative

Table of Contents



Many people consider gambling to be a harmless form of entertainment, but for individuals with a gambling addiction, the consequences of gambling may be severe and can negatively impact their personal and professional life, finances and relationships. While gambling addiction is a real and potentially serious mental health condition, there are many ways to find help.



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

Talkspace Online Therapy

Talkspace

Get Started

On Talkspace's Website

Thousands of licensed therapists, psychiatrists and nurse practitioners across all 50 states

In network with most major insurers

Live chat, video, and text sessions available

Offer care for individuals, teens and couples, across a wide range of specialties

Therapy help is available to you 24/7

Is Gambling Addiction Real?

Gambling addiction, or gambling disorder (GD), is a behavioral addiction that can lead to significant disruptions to daily life. Sharing similarities—such as signs, symptoms and inheritability—with substance use disorders, GD was recently redefined as a substance-related and addictive disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*. GD is a diagnosable condition that may lead to financial loss, bankruptcy, family conflict and more.

Behavioral addictions like GD are easily disregarded, says Daniel Hochman, M.D., a board-certified psychiatrist in Austin, Texas, and founder of the online addiction recovery program Self Recovery. “Because gambling has been fairly normalized both socially and commercially, it’s hard for people to identify when it has crossed the line of an addiction,” he says. “But gambling addictions can be devastating. The financial ruin and time lost can end marriages, lose trust in relationships and lead to immense shame and self-hatred.”

Recent neuroimaging studies have shed light on important changes in brain activity for people with gambling addictions, says Lin Sternlicht, a licensed mental health counselor and the co-founder of



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

How Do I Know If I Have a Gambling Problem?

For many people, gambling can be a harmless social activity. But for individuals with an addiction, gambling may cause significant harm to their finances, families and relationships.

You may have a problem with gambling if you exhibit four of these signs within a one-year period, according to the American Psychiatric Association:

Thrill-seeking behavior, needing to continually up the stakes while gambling

Irritability when attempting to control gambling

Frequent failed attempts to control gambling

Obsessive thoughts about gambling

Turning to gambling when upset

Lying to cover gambling habits

Choosing gambling over relationships or responsibilities

Making requests to family and friends for financial help

“As with any addiction, someone seriously addicted to gambling will likely continue on a downward spiral until they recognize the problem and seek help,” says Elliott Blitenthal, a licensed clinical social worker in Queens, New York. “Gambling addicts appear to have the same potential as other addicts to lose their wealth, jobs, families and relationships.”

FEATURED SPONSOR OFFER

Professional Therapy, Done Online





Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

Over 4 million people have received support through BetterHelp

Subscription includes a weekly one-on-one session and optional group session, journaling, worksheets, goal setting, and more

Ability to switch therapists or cancel at any time

Expert Tips on How to Stop the Urge to Gamble

A gambling addiction can have devastating consequences if left untreated, says Sternlicht. In addition to incurring financial losses, straining relationships and impacting job or school performance, Sternlicht notes that GD may also cause significant harm to mental and physical health. “This is due to the psychological effects that gambling addiction can cause, such as feelings of deep despair, hopelessness, helplessness and shame,” she says, noting that individuals with gambling addictions have high rates of suicidal ideation. “It is important to address a gambling addiction as soon as possible.”

Here are six expert tips to help you address a gambling addiction.

1. Recognize the Problem

Before you can begin on your path to recovery, you first need to recognize that your gambling habits are the source of your distress. “The first step to addressing a gambling addiction is an awareness of the problem and a desire to change,” explains Sternlicht. Once you’ve acknowledged your gambling addiction, Sternlicht says there are many roads to recovery, such as addiction counseling and 12-step programs.

2. Remove the Stigma

There’s a significant social stigma associated with gambling addiction, says Sternlicht, sharing that individuals with GD are often stereotyped as weak-willed, irresponsible and culpable for their addiction. Internalizing these labels may lead to shame and low self-esteem, which in turn, may hold people back from seeking the treatment they need, Sternlicht adds.

Chipping away at this stigma isn’t easy, says Blitenthal, though he adds sharing what you’re going through helps. “The more gambling addicts share about themselves and their experiences, the more likely they are to influence and broaden others’ understanding,” he notes. “That process



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

loved one if they can assist you in the process,” she says.

Sharing your condition and asking for help accessing the resources you need may assist you in your recovery. “There is tremendous pain in not just having an addiction, but carrying the pain on your own,” adds Blitenthal.

4. Seek Professional Help

If you are having trouble controlling your gambling habits, Sternlicht says it may be time to seek professional help. To find an addiction specialist near you, she recommends searching online, contacting your insurance provider or reaching out to the National Council on Problem Gambling for a local referral.

“If you’re concerned about being able to afford professional care, know that there are always options available,” says Sternlicht. Many specialists in gambling addiction accept health insurance, she notes, adding that a call to your insurer for a list of in-network resources is a good place to start. “Other gambling specialists who don’t accept insurance may work on a sliding scale and be able to reduce the cost of their services in alignment with what you [can] afford,” she adds.

Therapy For How We Live Today

Talkspace is an online therapy platform that provides users the confidential support of a licensed therapist through an easy-to-use and HIPAA-compliant app.

[Learn More](#)

5. Join Support Groups and 12-Step Programs

Don’t underestimate the power of community support. Finding a support group or attending a 12-step program can be critical to recovery, says Blitenthal. “Connecting with others who struggle with addiction—even if it isn’t gambling addiction—helps us to know that we’re not alone and that



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

treatment approach,” says Dr. Hochman. “For example, I see people start with support groups or addiction-related coaches, but over time recognize they need to address underlying issues.”

No matter where you are in your addiction recovery, know that there is help available. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text ‘988’ for free, confidential and immediate help. You can also call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) to access the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 24/7 helpline.

Sources

References

Learn More About Mental Health

[Best Online Therapy](#)

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

[Best Online Anger Management](#)

[Best Online Marriage Counseling](#)

[How Much Does Therapy Cost?](#)

[What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?](#)

[What Is Gaslighting?](#)

[What Is Anticipatory Grief?](#)

[Telepsychiatry vs. Teletherapy](#)

Online Therapy Reviews



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

MDLive Review

Doctor On Demand Review

Further Reading

What Causes Stress?

What Is Chronic Stress?

What Is Anxiety?

High Functioning Anxiety

What Is A Panic Attack?



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

More from Forbes HEALTH

Support Your Weight
Loss And Ignite Your
Metabolism With GNC

Best Online Couples
Therapy Services Of
2024



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

I Tried Talkiatry Online Psychiatry—Here's M...

By Leigh Weingus

5 Best Online Psychiatry Services Of 2024

By Macy Alcido

Best Online Therapy For Depression: Tried And...

By Racheal Ede

10 Best Online Therapy Platforms For Anxiety Of 2024: Tried And...

By Sarah Davis



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

Information provided on Forbes Health is for educational purposes only. Your health and wellness is unique to you, and the products and services we review may not be right for your circumstances. We do not offer individual medical advice, diagnosis or treatment plans. For personal advice, please consult with a medical professional.

Forbes Health adheres to strict editorial integrity standards. To the best of our knowledge, all content is accurate as of the date posted, though offers contained herein may no longer be available. The opinions expressed are the author's alone and have not been provided, approved or otherwise endorsed by our advertisers.



Lizzie Duszynski-Goodman
Contributor

Lizzie Duszynski-Goodman is a journalist living in the Midwest with her husband and two young children. Her work explores the intersection of mental health, wellness and parenting. She is the former managing editor of Pregnancy Magazine. When not behind her computer, you can find her on a yoga mat or with her nose in a good book.



Jeff Temple, Ph.D.
Mental Health / Adolescent Mental Health / Violence

Dr. Temple is a professor and licensed psychologist and the associate dean of clinical research for the School of Behavioral Health Sciences at UTHHealth, where he also holds the Betty and Rose Pfefferbaum Chair in Child Mass Trauma and Resilience. As the founding director of the Center for Violence Prevention, his research focuses on the prevention of interpersonal, community and structural violence. Dr. Temple has been funded through the National Institute of Justice, National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He has over 250 scholarly publications in a variety of high-impact journals including JAMA, JAMA Pediatrics, The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, Pediatrics and the Journal of Adolescent Health. He recently co-edited a book on adolescent dating violence, is an associate editor for the Journal of Prevention and is on the editorial boards of four other scientific journals. Dr. Temple co-chaired the Texas Task Force on Domestic Violence and served on the Board of



Take Assessment

Sponsored Offer from BetterHelp

Forbes

© 2024 Forbes Media LLC. All Rights Reserved. Our website services, content and products are for informational purposes only. While our team of experienced journalists and medical experts offers timely wellness insights, news and reviews, we do not provide medical advice, diagnoses or treatment.

[AdChoices](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [Terms and Conditions](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Careers](#) [Forbes Press Room](#)

[Forbes Quote of the Day](#)

