

**Section for spouse
and family members**



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For purposes of brevity, the masculine gender is used to designate both men and women.

Message to the Spouse and Family Members of an Excessive Gambler

Living with an excessive gambler is a very stressful experience. You love this person and do not want to see him suffer. You want to help, but, at the same time, you are feeling helpless and frustrated. That is because you too are suffering from all the negative effects of problem gambling, such as family and marital discord, financial turmoil, physical and emotional stress, and more.

You need an attentive ear and emotional support. If you are feeling overwhelmed, we strongly recommend sharing your burden with someone who is trustworthy and supportive. That could be another family member, a close friend, a counsellor, a clergyman,

your family physician, or someone else
you are particularly comfortable with.
You don't have to feel ashamed, because
what's happening is not your fault.

The following tips will help you deal
with the situation more effectively.

Do's and don't's for the spouse and family members of a problem gambler

DO

- be patient
- give encouragement
- communicate openly and talk about your own feelings and concerns
- be understanding but firm in setting limits on the gambler's behaviour
- take care of yourself by enlarging your social circle and participating in social activities
- be sure to protect your financial resources from being appropriated by the gambler
- share your burden with people who are supportive
- clearly express your expectations and fears
- set your sights on a healthy approach — rather than depending on the gambler, try to live independently

- enrich your life experience by volunteering, taking some courses, going back to school, looking for a job, etc.
- establish some new life goals for yourself and work towards realizing them

DON'T

- try to control the gambler
- do all the work for him
- defend him
- try to save him
- yell at him
- threaten him
- punish him
- blame him
- sacrifice yourself for him

How to Help the Excessive Gambler*

You could feel overwhelmed when you want to help a person who is dependent on games of chance. It is not an easy task and there is no magic formula, but we would like to offer you some suggestions to establish a good beginning:

* Source: Acti-Menu et al. Do you know how to gamble... without losing your head? Montréal, Acti-Menu, P. 10, 1998

SUGGESTIONS :

- Raise the issue when you have time to listen, and choose a place where you will not be disturbed.
- Tell the person clearly that you are not judging him, but that you are raising the issue because he is important to you and vice versa. Let him know that you are concerned about him and about your own future. Be sure to avoid moralizing.
- Clearly express your expectations and fears.
Example:
“I would like you to seek some help.”

How to Approach the Excessive Gambler

1. Tell the person that you care for him and are very concerned about his gambling behaviour.

Example:

- “I am concerned about your gambling behaviour. It makes me sad to see you hurting yourself.”
- “Your behaviour is hurting me / the family very much.”

2. Tell the person exactly what he has done that concerns you.

Example:

- “After our argument last night, you went out and lost \$500 at gambling.”

3. After you tell the person that you are concerned about him, how you feel, and what you've seen, it is important to be willing to listen to what he has to say.

Example:

- “I know that this is a difficult situation for you, but I am willing to share it with you.”
- “Can you tell me what is happening and what you are thinking and feeling?”

The person may say nothing or may become angry. He may tell you that it is none of your business. Or he may thank you and promise to make changes. Whatever the case may be, it is crucial to listen to what he has to say.

4. Offer some suggestions and propose alternative solutions.

Example:

- “Gambling may help you to vent your frustrations and reduce your stress in the short run, but it is definitely not a solution to your unemployment. We would be far better off to find another way to solve the problem.”
- “Do you think talking to a counsellor might help you control your gambling behaviour? Won’t you give it a try?”

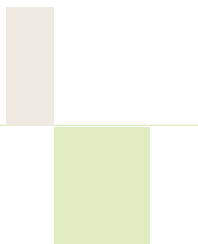
5. Tell the person that you want and are able to help.

Example:

- “I am always here if you need someone to talk to.”

Urge the gambler to get help, and assist him in finding the best support available. This is likely to be the most caring thing you can do for him.

Generally speaking, people like to handle things by themselves! They do not like to seek help from others, particularly not from people outside the immediate family circle. However, when confronting situations that we are unable to handle ourselves, we must ask for help. The following section outlines some of the help and support resources available.



1. Gambling: Help and Referral

This is a free, bilingual, anonymous and strictly confidential telephone help line. Here, problem gamblers can find an attentive ear and obtain information about excessive gambling and appropriate referrals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the Province of Québec.

The line is staffed by qualified professionals ready and able to help people identify and understand gambling behaviour. They can also refer problem gamblers and their families to helping resources such as Gamblers Anonymous, self-help groups, legal aid, financial counselling, therapy centres, etc.

Montréal: (514) 527-0140

Elsewhere in Québec (toll-free): 1 800 461-0140

or: 1 866 SOS-JEUX

1 866 767-5389

2. Self-Exclusion Program at Québec Casinos

As a preventive measure, or because you want to stop going, the Société des casinos du Québec offers the individual the possibility of being voluntarily denied access to its casinos for a specific period of time. Those interested simply need to go to any casino's customer service counter and indicate their desire to become part of the program. This is a bilingual, strictly confidential service offered free of charge.

Problem gamblers can also join the self-exclusion program from the following Québec treatment centres:

Centre CASA,
in Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures : (418) 871-8380

La Maison Jean Lapointe,
in Montréal : (514) 288-2611

Centre de réadaptation Ubald Villeneuve,
in Beauport : (418) 663-5008

Casino de Montréal : (514) 392-2700

Casino du Lac-Leamy : (819) 772-2100

Casino de Charlevoix : (418) 665-5300

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If gaming is no longer a pastime...

1 866 SOS-JEUX
1 866 767-5389 TM

GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL



une initiative de Loto-Québec