
GAMBLING

During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Over this past year, we have been relying more on our digital devices to get through the day- But one thing that has been criticised by the government and charities is the increase in online gambling advertisements.

Gambling can affect any one of us. What starts as harmless fun and a much-needed distraction, in this current time, can soon become an unhealthy need, which can lead to serious consequences.

We want to offer you helpful tips and advice surrounding gambling addiction and signpost you to seek help and support during this time.

We understand that most people who have a gambling addiction are using gambling as an opportunity to escape from other problems or pressures in their lives – money worries, stresses at home or at work, boredom or loneliness. Understanding what role gambling is playing in your life can be an important first step in your recovery.

If you are at home and concerned about the impact clicking onto gambling websites and apps is having on your life, you can try the following to overcome the urges to log into your computer or click on an app to gamble-

Take a pause and think

- Take one day at a time. Breathe, take a minute and adjust to each day as it comes.
- Are the times when you are stressed or bored? Trying to understand when and why you get an urge to bet will help with your recovery. Get to know what triggers the urge to bet.

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- If you see a pattern of times during the day when you are more prone to access online or mobile betting, make a plan to preoccupy your mind with alternative activities during these times. Schedule time to talk to a friend, start a hobby or do something new.

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Take control of access to your money

- Speak to someone you trust and ask them to manage your money, making it harder for you to access it quickly or when you feel the urge to bet.

- You can contact your bank and request they block links and apps from accessing your current or credit bank accounts.

Outsmart the ads and apps

- You can actively block specific adverts on social media. If you see a gambling advert on your social media, select the 'Hide Ad' option, which will then remove all ads similar to that you have hidden.

- You can also self-exclude from each separate company you gamble with or from multiple companies at the same time. You can search for 'Responsible Gambling' on the gambling websites as well as visiting [GamStop](#) which now enables you to self-exclude from gambling sites for free over a certain period of time.

Ask for help

- Seek support when you need it, especially when you feel the urge to bet or when you feel like things are out of control talking through your feelings will help you understand your emotions.

Support

- We appreciate that these are unusual times and for some people coping with the stress of these times and self-isolation may increase urges to gamble but there are organisations in Northern Ireland that can help you in taking your first steps to overcome your gambling addictions.

- Dunlewey Addiction Services can provide help and support for anyone affected by gambling addiction- <https://dunlewey.net/helpline-contact-us/> **NI 08000 886 725**

- Minding Your Mind has other regional Gambling Support Services listed on their website - www.mindingyourhead.info/topics/gambling

With many addictions, the recovery journey is different. The goals you set yourself have to be achievable and realistic but remain positive as each target you set yourself is accomplished.

Breaking a dependency is very difficult- if you do relapse, do not be too hard on yourself. Learn from what happened - did anything trigger the urge? Reach out and speak to someone about what happened, it might not be an easy conversation to have, but it might help you to regain control of the situation.

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