

For family and friends



DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO?

HELP FOR FAMILY
AND FRIENDS
OF GAMBLING ADDICTS



BZgA
Bundeszentrale
für
gesundheitliche
Aufklärung

The background of the entire page is a photograph of three people's shadows cast onto a light-colored, paved ground. The shadows are dark and elongated, suggesting a low sun position. The paving consists of large, light-colored rectangular tiles. A yellow horizontal line is visible on the right side of the image, partially obscured by the text box.

GAMBLING ADDICTION ...

... affects not only gambling addicts themselves, but also their entire circle of family and friends. Everyone suffers when not only money, but also trust is lost. A lot of people want to help, but don't know how.

WHEN DOES THE SITUATION GET SERIOUS?

1

For many people, gambling is a harmless pastime. But it can become a problem and even an addiction.

2

For people addicted to gambling, gambling becomes more important than anything else in life. They lose control. Gamblers think about gambling all the time and can't stop. When they run out of money, they borrow more.

3

People who have a problem with gambling need help. The sooner, the better.

4

Gambling addiction is a recognized disease. The costs of counselling and treatment are paid for by social insurance providers (usually pension or health insurance).

5

In many cases, family members and friends also need support. Counselling services are anonymous and free of charge (see page 12).



HOW A GAMBLING ADDICTION DEVELOPS

In the beginning, gambling is just fun.

Winning makes you feel good. Some people want to repeat this experience again and again. They usually ignore losing; the next big win is much more important.

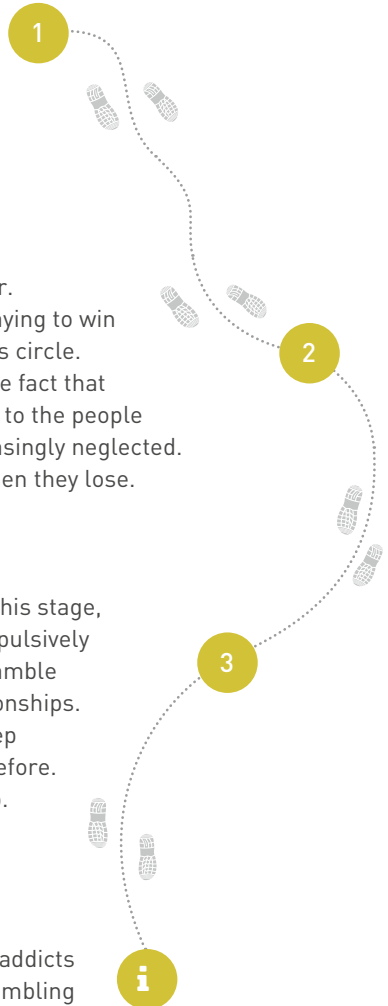
As the bets increase, so does the risk.

They begin gambling more frequently and longer. As a result, their losses increase. Many keep playing to win back the money they've lost. It becomes a vicious circle. Because they are ashamed, people often hide the fact that they are still gambling. Sometimes they even lie to the people they love. Family, friends and hobbies are increasingly neglected. A lot of gamblers become irritable and angry when they lose.

Until finally, gambling is an addiction.

A gambler's entire life centres on gambling. At this stage, gamblers cannot simply stop. They gamble compulsively until they have no more money on them. They gamble away their home, belongings and trusting relationships. Many are afraid and suffer from anxiety and sleep disorders. Some also drink more alcohol than before. At this point and no later, they need outside help.

Information on why gambling addicts cannot simply stop gambling is provided on the next page.



WHY IS IT SO HARD TO STOP?

Why do many gamblers borrow money and never pay it back? Or fathers take money from their children's savings accounts to finance their gambling?

Some answers:

1

Many gambling addicts say, "It was unfortunate that I won in the beginning". What they mean is: The first win gives a person a real thrill. They want to repeat that experience, again and again, so they keep gambling.

2

Gambling changes a player's mind-set. The voice of reason says: "You should stop". But this voice becomes weaker all the time, while the urge to gamble gets stronger.

3

Some set themselves a goal: "Just one more win and then I'll stop". Not many actually do, either because they don't win, or if they do, they keep gambling.

4


The problems caused by gambling can become so great that many would rather keep gambling than confront them.

5

Gambling addicts find that gambling helps them to forget their frustrations, troubles and everyday worries. For these people, gambling becomes a "problem solver".

6

Many are ashamed and therefore hide the fact that they gamble. Family members and friends often don't know about the problem at all and therefore don't do anything to help.



"We often don't understand why Lennard doesn't stop gambling, even though he's already lost so much and we've started suffering from the effects as well."

*– Meike and Paul,
parents of Lennard*

I believe
in you
sort of ...



MONEY IS LOST – AND A LOT A MORE BESIDES

Money is lost

- The money lost is needed to make important purchases for the family.
- Financial problems lead to more quarrels.
- When gambling addicts ask to borrow money, this causes a great amount of stress for their family and friends. They want to help, but they're afraid (often justifiably so) that the money will be gambled away.

Trust is lost

- Family and friends have to stand by and watch as a gambler spends more time at the slot machines or in the casino than with them.
- Because gambling addicts often hide their addiction, they even lie to their loved ones.
- Family and friends realise that promises aren't being kept.

It hurts

- It hurts to see a loved one lose control of his or her life.
- Many family members and friends also get angry and desperate because they don't know who they can talk to about the problem.
- Children suffer extremely when one parent or both are addicted to gambling.

**GOOD TO
KNOW**

Gambling addiction is a disease,
for which there is help.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

1

In the beginning, most family members and friends accept the gambling.

Sabine, 43, says: "My husband was always interested in sports, so I didn't think anything of it when he went to the betting office once in a while".

2

Then they start worrying.

"When he began spending more and more time there, I started to wonder. At home he was lost in thought. He was also more nervous than usual".

3

The first crises occur.

"Then I noticed that my husband had repeatedly withdrawn large sums from our bank account, and naturally I asked him about it. He got furious and asked if I was trying to control him. So I held off for a while".

4

Family and friends want to help and therefore often take responsibility for the gambler.

"When we didn't have enough money to pay the rent, I withdrew some from my savings account. At some point, our best friends took me aside and said my husband had changed. I told them not to worry and that his job was very stressful at the moment".

5

They believe the gambler's promises.

"Every time I asked, he said: 'I have my gambling under control' or 'I can stop any time I want', or 'I only bet small amounts'. I believed him. Today I would say: I wanted to believe him".

Family and friends become increasingly desperate over time – and need help themselves.

GOOD TO KNOW

A lot of people in your situation have found help. By reading through this brochure, you've already taken the first step.

"I then found out that my husband had borrowed money from our friends. I was so ashamed. Who could I talk to? I couldn't think of anyone. It was not until I was able to talk to someone about my husband's gambling addiction that I started feeling better".

- Sabine, 43



WHAT CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS DO?

Take care of yourself

Do things that you enjoy. Don't let your day be governed by the subject of gambling. Meet up with friends and plan two or three nice things to do every day. Make time for yourself.

Don't try to cushion the other person's problems

Family members and friends often invent excuses, for instance when a gambling addict goes to the betting office instead of a family get-together. Or they withdraw money from their bank account to replace money needed for household expenses. Their intentions are good, but they are only helping the addiction, not the addict, who usually continues to gamble.

Take action early on

One common reaction is: Just ignore it for now. This is true for both the gambling addicts and their family and friends. Many hope the problem will resolve itself. But this approach only magnifies the difficulties.

Have confidence in yourself

Your loved one's gambling addiction is not your fault in any respect. It is the gambler himself who makes the decision to continue gambling.

Talk calmly, but firmly

Don't heap accusations on the addict. Talk about your concerns at a moment when you're capable of staying calm.

Help means helping someone to help themselves

It can be good for an addict, for instance, if you support him or her in finding a counselling centre. It is the addict's responsibility to keep appointments or go to debt counselling.

Don't make threats you can't keep

Only confront a gambling addict with steps you really can and want to take.

Don't lend money

Some gambling addicts keep borrowing money "for the last time". Their motive seems understandable at first glance: They want to pay off their debts. But gambling addicts usually are no longer capable of doing so. They end up tossing the money into a slot machine again. Or they take it and go back to the casino. For this reason, do not assume any debts or guarantees. Don't pay any bills and never give a gambling addict your credit card. What's more, he or she should not have power of attorney over any shared bank accounts.

Clarify your own financial situation

Possibly talk with a lawyer. Debt counselling may also be a sensible step in some cases. To find a counselling centre near you, visit:

www.bag-schuldnerberatung.de.

Be aware that gambling addiction is a disease

The sooner a person gets treatment, the better the chances of recovery. Family members and friends can also get counselling. Support programmes for gambling addicts and their family and friends can be found on page 12.

Talk to someone you trust

Find someone you can talk to, such as a friend. It will help you get a new perspective on your situation and realise you're not alone. This experience is important, especially in a situation that can lead to repeated disappointment.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can also help an addict by looking after yourself and keeping a clear mind.



HELP

Gambling addiction is a disease. Statutory health insurance funds, pension insurance and social welfare providers pay for the cost of certified treatment programmes. In addition to out-patient and in-patient treatment programmes for addicts, there are also numerous counselling services for family members and friends.

Self-help groups

Self-help groups are made up of people who have to cope with the same or similar problems. They help themselves by sharing their experiences with like-minded people. Talking with others who have suffered from the same problem helps to take a load off your mind. There are self-help groups for gambling addicts as well as for family members and friends. For a list of self-help groups, visit www.check-dein-spiel.de/hilfe/hilfe-vor-ort/.

Special self-help groups for family and friends can be found at: www.gamanon.de.

Services provided by addiction counselling centres

These centres offer out-patient rehabilitation programmes, among others. The costs in most cases are borne by the responsible pension insurance provider. The counselling centre assists clients through the application process.

Some counselling centres offer special programmes, such as special group counselling, or work closely with a debt counselling centre.

To find an addiction counselling centre near you, visit: www.check-dein-spiel.de/hilfe/hilfe-vor-ort/.

or get help from the free BZgA counselling helpline for gambling addiction at: **0800 1 37 27 00**

Helpline in Turkish:
0800 326 47 62

GOOD TO KNOW

In out-patient rehabilitation programmes, addicts attend group and individual counselling sessions over an extended period of time. They live at home and go to work as before. Family and friends can be integrated in the treatment programme.



In-patient treatment programmes

Gambling addicts can join an in-patient rehabilitation programme in a specialized addiction clinic. Depending on the nature of their addiction, they can also be treated in a department for psychosomatic medicine. In-patient treatment takes between eight and twelve weeks. Family and friends can participate in counselling sessions or visit seminars designed for them.



BZgA counselling helpline for gambling addiction (in German)

Telephone: **0800 1 37 27 00** (toll-free service number)

Counselling hours for addicts, family and friends and other interested persons: Monday – Thursday 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.,
Friday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Helpline in Turkish: **0800 326 47 62**

Free and anonymous counselling.

Monday 6 p.m. – 8 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday 8 p.m. – 10 p.m.

You get:

- Information and explanations about gambling addiction
- Information and counselling on local help programmes
- Specific counselling for personal problems and difficult situations caused by gambling addiction or problematic gambling behaviour

GOOD TO KNOW

Addiction counselling centres are not just for addicts. Help is also available for people having initial problems with gambling. Help is particularly effective at this stage for both addicts and their family and friends.



BZgA website

www.check-dein-spiel.de

Search here for support providers near you, such as counselling centres and self-help groups. Gamblers will find a self-test on the site to check their gambling behaviour. Gambling addicts and those at risk of gambling addiction have the option of participating in an on-line rehabilitation programme.



Debt counselling centres

Don't hesitate to go to a debt counselling centre if you experience financial hardship. Talk openly there about how you came to be in debt and the extent of your debt. This will enable the counsellors to give you the right kind of help.

Debt counselling centres offer no-obligation assistance. But they also represent you by contacting creditors and negotiating settlements or payment by instalment on your behalf. To find a debt counselling centre near you, visit: www.forum-schuldnerberatung.de.



Family counselling centres

Gambling addiction often leads to problems in the family, sometimes even to divorce and estrangement. These centres can also help you find programmes for the children of addicts. For a list of family and parenting counselling centres, visit www.bke.de.



General practitioners

Crisis, worry and hardship can make people ill. It's important to take physical complaints seriously.



Crisis helpline: 0800-111 0 111

Round-the-clock counselling to provide support in all areas of life and especially in critical situations.



**Bundeszentrale
für
gesundheitliche
Aufklärung**

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Tell other people affected by addiction about the BZgA's support programmes. If you would like to distribute this brochure, just order a few copies from us.

INFORMATION ON GAMBLING ADDICTION

BZGA HELPLINE: 0800-1 37 27 00 (in German)

Free, personal counselling, on request anonymous.

Information on gambling addiction.

Monday – Thursday 10 a.m. – 10 p.m., Friday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

WWW.CHECK-DEIN-SPIEL.DE

Comprehensive information and help portal on gambling with detailed self-tests, online rehabilitation programme and counselling centre addresses.

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