

Relapse Prevention

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- When you have gambling harm and are trying to prevent relapse, it is helpful to make relapse prevention plan early in recovery
- Part of this will be identifying for yourself, things that might make you more likely to gamble or make you feel vulnerable and at risk of gambling
- The best way to do this is to reflect on past gambling situations and identify what thoughts and decisions led you to want to gamble/what happened after
- How you will deal with these thoughts and decisions is the basis of your relapse prevention plan
- It is helpful to have a counsellor or support person who knows you well, to give you feedback to help you think things through and make it effective

Cues and Triggers

- Triggers are things that might make you want to gamble
- A trigger can be either another activity associated with your gambling or a thought that reminds you of gambling. Cues are controlling stimuli.

Some examples:

- Being in a pub and hearing gambling machines – music/coins dropping
- Seeing a friend you normally go gambling with
- When you're bored or worried, thinking about being in front of a pokie machine and forgetting your troubles
- Having money and realising you could use some to play pokies
- Someone telling you they have won some money
- Seeing the lotto draw on TV and imagining winning

Early Warning Signs

- When trying to stay safe from gambling, it is helpful to recognise the thoughts and feelings that may occur when at risk of getting into a gambling situation
- Some examples are: feeling bored and wanting 'excitement' and having money; 'Halt' (feeling hungry, angry lonely and tired); worrying about money lost or debts and wanting quick solutions; feeling stressed and restless; feeling anxious
- 'Seemingly unrelated decisions' - examples: going shopping and ending up next door to your local venue; 'checking out' TAB or lotto results (when you don't have a ticket); agreeing to go to your old venue for a drink/meal with gambling friends
- Don't wait until you are likely to gamble – at the first sign, thought or action on your 'early warning sign' list, remove yourself from what you're doing/thinking

High Risk Situations: Examples

- Having access to money, bank cards or loaned money when you're feeling vulnerable
- Going to a casino or pub/club with people you gambled with who don't know you want to stop, or who intend to gamble, even if you don't want to
- Having 'time on your hands' or unexpected extra money available
- Using alcohol or other drugs when you are vulnerable or in a gambling venue
- Thinking you are 'cured', being overconfident, and putting yourself in a potentially dangerous situation or 'testing' yourself
- 'Setting yourself up' by creating excuses, time, or lying about where you are/what you're doing even when you aren't actively thinking of gambling

Setting Personal Goals

- Take stock of your situation: marital and social status, family and friends, work and obligations, debts and expenses, hobbies and interests etc.
- What are the things in my lifestyle you want/need to change?
- What are the risks and situations you need to avoid?
- How do you want to fill your leisure time?
- What are your values/most important things in your life?
- What are the things that are going well that you want to continue?
- How would you like your life to be in one year; five years?
- Knowing these can help you plan what you need to start doing/changing.