



Betting on Older Adults:

A Problem Gambling Awareness Kit

Making Changes

Understanding Motivation for Change

There is a well-accepted model for understanding the stages of change people go through. People are not either “motivated” or “unmotivated” for change. Instead, they move through a series of stages before coming to a decision to take action about their problem. It is possible to move forward or backward through these stages and sometimes there may be several starts and stops before there is any movement in a forward direction. The gambler needs support through every stage of recovery.

• Precontemplation (Resisting Change)

At this stage, people do not see the gambling as a problem and have no plans to tackle their gambling behaviour right now. If the gambler is strongly refusing to make any changes, then they are likely in this stage. Some people in this stage have given up on themselves and have accepted the situation as their “fate”. Denying, minimizing, or rationalizing the gambling behavior are also common.

i.e.: “I don’t have a gambling problem, I have a financial problem.”

• Contemplation (Change on the Horizon)

People at this stage do begin to recognize that their gambling has become a problem. However, they may spend quite a bit of time thinking about it before deciding to do anything about it. Although many gamblers get stuck in this stage for a long time, they will typically claim that they intend to consider quitting or decreasing their gambling. Gamblers may be more open to discussing the problem with you during this stage and may be more receptive to your help.

i.e.: “I worry that I might be gambling too much.”

• Preparation (Getting Ready)

At this stage, people tend to make small changes in their gambling behavior. For example, they may make an effort to gamble less money or on fewer days. They will likely claim that they intend to make significant decreases in their gambling.

i.e.: “I really need to do something about my gambling, it’s affecting my life.”

• Action (Time to Move)

People in the Action stage have already made a significant reduction in their gambling behavior or have completely quit. They have made a commitment to overcoming the problem and are taking the time, effort and energy to do so.

i.e.: “I’ve started to make changes and I’m feeling good about it.”

• Maintenance (Staying on Track)

People in Maintenance Stage integrate all the changes they have made. The new behaviours are practiced with such consistency that they become a part of their life.

i.e.: “I’m doing very well. I really feel that all I need now is to continue to practice my new behaviours.”

Problem Gambling Counsellors are able to assist clients to make changes in their life. Contact your local problem gambling service provider if you would like more information on problem gambling.

Adapted by Ontario Resource Group on Problem Gambling and Older Adults 55+ Source: Makarchuk, K and Hodgins, D. (*Helping the Problem Gambler - Helping Yourself. A Self-Help Approach for Family Members*) – based on Prochaska & DeClemente (The Transtheoretical Model)