

## STRENGTHENING YOUR COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

## PROGRESS SINCE THE PREVIOUS TOPIC

**Ask yourself the following questions as you get ready to go through Treatment Topic Two:**

1. Are you meeting your gambling goal?

Yes     Mostly     No

2. If you are not meeting your goal, briefly describe what you think is getting in the way of achieving your goal:

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3. Have you made any changes to your goal since the previous Topic?

Yes     No

If your answer is Yes, describe how your goal has changed:

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## STRENGTHENING YOUR COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

### BECOMING AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF GAMBLING

The main purpose of this session is to strengthen your commitment to changing your gambling habit. Even though you have taken the important step of beginning this Program and even if you think you are 100% committed to the goal that you defined in Treatment Topic One, it is still helpful for you to read this material and complete the exercises. We want to make sure that your desire to stop or reduce your gambling is as strong as possible and based on a firm understanding of the effect of gambling on your life. We want to make sure that your desire to stop or reduce your gambling now is stronger than your desire to gamble has been in the past.

We know from the way that people change other habits like dieting, exercise, and smoking, for example, that motivation can be very high when the decision to do something about it is made. Sometimes decisions to change a habit are made when we are fed up with a part of ourselves. We get really motivated to do something about it. But once you begin to make the actual effort needed to change the habit (e.g., like changing eating habits, going to the gym, not buying cigarettes, etc.), then it is not always easy to remain highly motivated. It is easier to FEEL motivated but hard to stay motivated. Of course, you have to stay motivated in order to do all of the little things that need to get done to achieve the goal. The result is that motivation to change a habit can go up and down, and with it, the actual effort to change. When this happens, one may find that you stop going to the gym,

you sleep in rather than jogging, you smoke more cigarettes than you intended, and so on.

The situation described above is even more likely when the motivation to change a habit is made suddenly, based on a recent bad event or situation. It is in this kind of situation that we find that motivation to change a habit does not last very long. Good motivation seems to result when (1) we have thought through all of the consequences of the behaviour we want to change, (2) tied it to important values that may be threatened if that behaviour is not changed, and (3) when we set reasonable and achievable goals for ourselves.

It seems that the more people are aware of the reasons why they want to change a behaviour or habit, the more they can see the benefits of changing that behaviour or habit. This in turn helps you stay on course and actually change the behaviour. We believe this to be the case with a habit such as gambling as well.

Having a firm motivation will also be very helpful if and when there will be some bumps along your recovery such as if you find yourself gambling when you do not want to, or gambling more money than you want to, or when the urges or temptations to gamble become very strong. During these challenges, which are completely normal and are not unexpected during the course of habit change, it may be helpful to strengthen your motivation by reviewing the information in this Treatment Topic.

### STRENGTHENING MOTIVATION BY EXAMINING WHERE YOU ARE NOW

Keeping your motivation at its peak acts like armor, protecting you against situations, thoughts and influences that could lead you to return to unhealthy gambling.

Keep your motivation high by examining how gambling has affected all aspects of your life including finances, emotions, physical health, relationships, self-concept, values and lifestyle. The following exercise will help you conduct this motivational analysis. To enhance the effectiveness of this exercise, make use of the powers of your imagination to become aware of the impact of gambling on your life. We expect that the following exercise may be somewhat disturbing as you will become in touch with many feelings, thoughts, and images of the way gambling has harmed you and others. This emotional effect can be very positive if it is experienced in a positive way by strengthening your desire to change your gambling. The best way to do that is to use whatever emotions are generated by this examination as further reason to do whatever it takes to achieve your gambling goal!!!

Starting on the next page you will be asked to think about how gambling has affected your life. Take the time to answer all the questions. Try to imagine clearly these effects. Writing it seems to help people remember better, so we encourage you to complete all of the motivational exercises.

1. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR FINANCES?

a. How much money has gambling cost you over the past 12 months?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. How much money has gambling cost you over your lifetime?

\_\_\_\_\_

c. What kinds of financial sacrifices have you had to make as a result of gambling?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

d. What has been the impact on your lifestyle as a result of these financial losses?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

e. How has the financial losses due to gambling affected the people who are most important to you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., bankrupt, ruined, huge debt):**

\_\_\_\_\_

2. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

a. How has your gambling affected your emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, stress, panic)?

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b. How have these emotional effects affected your lifestyle?

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c. How have these emotional effects on you affected those you love?

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d. How has your gambling affected the emotions of those closest to you?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., guilty, ashamed, suicidal):**

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3. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH?

a. How has your gambling affected your physical health (e.g., sleep, diet, stress)?

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b. How have these health effects affected your lifestyle?

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c. How have the health effects on you affected those you love?

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d. How has your gambling affected the physical health of those closest to you?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., insomnia, headaches):**

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**4. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER (if applicable)?**

a. How has gambling affected your spouse/partner?

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b. How has gambling affected your relationship with your spouse/partner?

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c. How has the effect of gambling on your spouse/partner affected you?

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d. What sacrifices has your spouse/partner had to make as a result of your gambling?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., anger, separation, arguments):**

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5. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILDREN (if applicable)?

a. How has gambling affected your children?

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b. How has gambling affected your relationship with your children?

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c. How has the effect of gambling on your children affected you?

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d. What sacrifices has your children had to make as a result of your gambling?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., anger, separation, arguments):**

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6. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FRIENDS/FAMILY (if applicable)?

a. How has gambling affected your friends/family?

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b. How has gambling affected your relationship with your friends/family?

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c. How has the effect of gambling on your friends/family affected you?

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d. What sacrifices has your friends/family had to make as a result of your gambling?

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Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., anger, separation, arguments):

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7. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF?

a. What has been the impact of gambling on your self-esteem?

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b. What has been the impact of gambling on your self-confidence?

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c. How has gambling affected your character or personality?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., feel low, not as nice a person as I thought ):**

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8. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR FUNCTIONING AT WORK/SCHOOL (if applicable)?

a. How has gambling affected how well you work (or study)?

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b. How has gambling affected your ability to keep your job (stay in school)?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., poor work, late, lost job):**

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9. HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOUR LEISURE AND SOCIAL LIFESTYLE?

a. How has gambling affected your social life?

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b. What lifestyle sacrifices have you made as a result of gambling?

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c. What activities, hobbies, and recreation have been affected by gambling?

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**Summarize what you have just written into one or two key words (e.g., no vacations, fewer outings):**

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## HOW HAS GAMBLING AFFECTED YOU?

Take the key words for each of the previous sections and repeat them in the space below:

## KEY WORDS FOR:

1. Finances: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Emotional Health: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Physical Health: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Relationship with spouse/partner: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Relationship with children: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Relationship with friends/family: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Self-view: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Work/School: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Leisure/Social: \_\_\_\_\_

Now use these words to form a POWERFUL IMPACT SENTENCE. This sentence is a summary of the impact of gambling on your life. It shows what gambling has done to your life. Repeat this sentence often.

It helps if you repeat this sentence with vivid, emotionally powerful imagery. Think about the consequences you listed EVERYDAY.

## IMPACT SENTENCE:

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This sentence is an expression of the effect that gambling has had on your life and can help you maintain a firm and focused motivation.

**STRENGTHENING MOTIVATION:  
IMAGINING YOUR FUTURE**

You have just completed an exercise in which we asked you to outline what the effects of past gambling have been on you and your personal world. You can view all of these effects and consequences as the *reasons* that are pushing you to do something about your gambling. This is actually very healthy since it means that you are listening to the messages that your body, emotions, your social relationships, your life are giving you about the dangers of gambling and are prepared to do something about it.

The next exercise is aimed at getting you to consider what kind of effects continued problem gambling might have on you and your family in the future. Often, many of our decisions to change habits are guided not just by what has happened to us, but also by what we fear or expect to happen if we do not change this habit. For example, many people will stop smoking, drinking, or overeating to avoid having future health problems. In the following exercise, we will ask you to imagine and then describe what you expect would be the consequences if you just kept on gambling the way you always have. This analysis will extend the previous exercise, which looked at the PAST, by now looking to the FUTURE. As you go through this exercise, it will not be hard to imagine what could happen if you kept on losing and losing. The effect this has on motivation is one of avoidance or fear. While this is, of course, a powerful motivation to change (e.g., who wants to end up bankrupt?), it is also helpful to include an analysis of what will happen if in fact the future does not include gambling.

We also know that healthy motivation is not based on just avoiding unpleasant future consequences. What kind of life could you

expect if you successfully achieve your gambling goal? How would your life be different if all the bad effects were gone? In general, we would expect that your life would be much happier and satisfying. So in the following exercise, we will ask you to imagine both outcomes: if you continued to problem gamble, and if you did not have a gambling problem in the future.

By remaining very aware of past and potential consequences of continued problem gambling, as well as the potential and anticipated benefits of not continuing to gamble in a problematic way, your motivation to work on this habit will remain firm. This is important since without a strong motivation on which to rely, it may be difficult to devote the necessary effort needed to change this habit. If your motivation is fragile, you may be tempted to drop out of treatment, experience relapses or be seduced by irrational thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

So, just as you did in the previous exercise, please take the time to answer the questions on the next few pages as honestly as you can.

YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH IN THE FUTURE

1a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your finances? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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1b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your financial situation would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH IN THE FUTURE

2a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your emotions? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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2b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your emotional health would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH IN THE FUTURE

3a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your physical health? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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3b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your physical health would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER IN THE FUTURE

4a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your relationship with your spouse/partner? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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4b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your relationship with your spouse/partner would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE

5a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your relationship with your children? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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5b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your relationship with your children would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FRIENDS/FAMILY IN THE FUTURE

6a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your relationship with your friends/family? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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6b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your relationship with your friends/family would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF IN THE FUTURE

7a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your view of yourself? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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7b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your view of yourself would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR WORK LIFE IN THE FUTURE

8a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your work? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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8b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your work life would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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YOUR LEISURE/SOCIAL LIFESTYLE IN THE FUTURE

9a. If you keep on gambling without any change over the next one, two or three years, imagine what would be the effect on your leisure and social lifestyle? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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9b. If you stop or control your gambling, imagine what your leisure and social lifestyle would be like over the next one, two or three years? What would your life be like?

Try to form a clear image of this effect. What do you see?

Circle the KEYWORD in your response:

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## HOW WILL GAMBLING AFFECT YOUR LIFE IF YOU DON'T CHANGE?

Take the key words you circled from the "a" questions for each of the previous sections and repeat them in the space below:

## KEY WORDS FOR:

1. Finances: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Emotional Health: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Physical Health: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Relationship with spouse/partner: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Relationship with children: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Relationship with friends/family: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Self-view: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Work/School: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Leisure/Social: \_\_\_\_\_

Now use these words to form a POWERFUL IMPACT SENTENCE of what would happen if you continued to gamble without changing. This sentence is a summary of the future impact of gambling on your life. It shows what gambling will do to your life if you don't change your gambling habit. Repeat this sentence often.

It helps if you repeat this sentence with vivid, emotionally powerful imagery. Think about the consequences you listed EVERYDAY.

## IMPACT SENTENCE:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This sentence is an expression of the effect that gambling will have on your life if you don't change and can help you maintain a firm and focused motivation.

## HOW WILL STOPPING OR RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING IMPROVE YOUR LIFE?

Take the key words you circled from the “b” questions for each of the previous sections and repeat them in the space below:

## KEY WORDS FOR:

1. Finances: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Emotional Health: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Physical Health: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Relationship with spouse/partner: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Relationship with children: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Relationship with friends/family: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Self-view: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Work/School: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Leisure/Social: \_\_\_\_\_

Now use these words to form a POWERFUL IMPACT SENTENCE of what would happen if you stopped or controlled your gambling. This sentence is a summary of the future impact of stopping/controlling gambling on your life. It shows the benefits of changing your gambling habit. Repeat this sentence often.

It helps if you repeat this sentence with vivid, emotionally powerful imagery. Think about the consequences you listed EVERYDAY.

## IMPACT SENTENCE:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This sentence is an expression of the effect that changing your gambling habit will have on your life and can help you maintain a firm and focused motivation.

You have just completed a large amount of work all aimed at strengthening your motivation to change. The exercises asked you to consider the ways in which gambling has affected your life in the past, how continued gambling might affect your life in the future and the role gambling has had in your life. You also examined what you might expect to experience when you are gambling less or not at all. Review this session often but particularly when you feel that your motivation is weakening, when you are thinking about gambling more than you have, or when you think you might want to change your goal.