

## HEALING RELATIONSHIPS

### PROGRESS SINCE THE PREVIOUS TOPIC

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

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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## HEALING RELATIONSHIPS

It is well known that habits such as gambling do not just harm the gambler but those people closest to them as well. Since the crisis that many people affected by problem gambling face is often financial (but not just financial), others may also be affected. As a result, the gambler and family members may need to make major financial and lifestyle sacrifices through the redirection of money toward gambling that would have otherwise been used to pay for food, bills, needed items, vacations, investments, and so on. While many gamblers may begin by using money that they already have such as investments, liquid cash and savings, in many cases this eventually will be depleted and lead to the accumulation of debt, whether it is to banks or credit cards, or through borrowing from friends or family or shady loan companies. In some cases, gamblers will turn to illegal activities to obtain money. As a result, the consequences of being in financial trouble will almost always have an impact on people the gambler cares for most.

Depending on the severity of the financial problems, these may take years to completely undo. Along with the financial stresses, the gambler may find that their relationships with loved ones are strained in many other ways such as:

- conflicts between the gambler and others and may take the form of arguments and distrust, and may lead to emotional, verbal and/or physical abuse;
- unpleasant and unhealthy emotional states such as anger, depression, anxiety about the future, chronic tension, and intense stress;
- lack of trust as a result of hidden gambling, lies, and deceptions;
- poor communication which may include repeated broken promises, misunderstandings, accusations, lying about gambling behaviour and the extent of financial losses; and
- decreased quality of life, which can take the form of sacrificed leisure and recreational activities, and diminished pleasure in family and social relationships.

Over the past several weeks you have been working on your recovery from gambling by reducing your involvement in this habit (as you defined in your goal statement), and you have put in a lot of effort at rearranging your environment and lifestyle so that you can eliminate this bad habit from your life. While your recovery is progressing, it is also important to repair damaged relationships as much as it is possible at this point in your recovery, and as soon as possible. This is critical for your long-term recovery because healthy relationships with those closest to you will:

- be a source of support and assistance during your recovery in the short-term and especially in the long-term;
- be important in developing alternative ways to spend leisure time and money that does not include gambling;
- be important in developing and possibly participating in any financial re-payment plans that you may require;
- improve the emotional health of those you care for, and as a result, yours as well; and
- alleviate feelings of anger, regret, guilt, and depression that can linger long after you have stopped or cut back your gambling.

## TREATMENT TOPIC FIVE: *Healing Relationships*

In many cases, you may find just working seriously on your gambling problem solves most of the strains in your relationships. You can view your continued progress as possibly the best way to make sure that the relationships with those you love continues to be healthy and supportive.

In other cases, you may need to focus specifically on improving your relationships in addition to working on the gambling problem. If the health of your social relationships is avoided, then you may find that even though you are not gambling in a harmful way, that things are just not right. Your loved ones may be:

- very anxious about the future, wondering whether you will be able to recover successfully; or
- they may feel angry at you for the state of your relationships; or
- they may be depressed about the losses and how they will be addressed; or
- trust may be reduced and negative emotions may easily be triggered.

If this is the situation you are facing, then it may help if you to take specific steps towards improving your social relationships and not wait for it to happen on its own. Of course, not all of your loved ones will be ready to work on their relationship with you just yet. That's okay. At this point, we are trying to identify which relationships you need to think about healing and ways that might be helpful to do this, if and when they are ready.

The exercise on the following pages will help guide you in the process and lead you to make some efforts towards improving any damaged relationships.



TREATMENT TOPIC FIVE: *Healing Relationships*

Next, write down the names of the people from your list on the previous page who you feel you need to improve your relationship with. List what you believe is the main obstacle to improving this relationship.

NAME	CHALLENGES TO IMPROVING RELATIONSHIP
Pat	rebuild trust, help overcome anger

TREATMENT TOPIC FIVE: *Healing Relationships*

Based on your relationship with each of the individuals you have listed, and based on how the two of you have worked out problems before, write what you believe you need to say and do that will have a positive effect on your relationship with this person. If possible, you can begin to act on these plans right away if it would not be harmful to the individual and if you are yourself prepared to do so. If it is appropriate, for each of the individuals you have named, make the necessary time to share with them what you describe below. Of course, the timing of this communication is important so choose a time where it will be received well by this person and where you can communicate your intention in a genuine way. Even if you don't do anything with this information now, it might be useful later.

NAME	
WHAT I CAN SAY TO HELP THIS RELATIONSHIP	
WHAT I CAN DO TO HELP THIS RELATIONSHIP	

NAME	
WHAT I CAN SAY TO HELP THIS RELATIONSHIP	
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In combination with your continued efforts at maintaining your success over your gambling habit, the steps you take to improve the relationships with the people closest to you will certainly contribute to your longer-term success, help the emotional health of these individuals, and create a healthier interpersonal environment for you as well.