

TREATMENT TOPIC SIX: *Preparing for the Future*

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

PROGRESS SINCE THE PREVIOUS TOPIC

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

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:

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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You have worked very hard on changing your gambling habits, using your own natural problem-solving skills and benefiting when necessary from the material in this Workbook.

Between Treatment Topic 5 and Treatment Topic 6 we have suggested a three-week gap. The reason we do this is to give you a chance to practice all of the strategies you have read about in previous Topics. For many of you, everything that you needed to get a firm handle on your gambling habit you found in the first five topics. In combination with your own efforts, you may feel like you are making good progress in achieving your goals.

This is a good time to give you some space to practice and identify if there are issues or difficulties that are important for you to solve.

Another reason for a three-week period between Treatment Topic 5 and 6 is to see if there is any effect of being out of treatment. It is generally known that most people who are motivated in trying to change a habit, especially addictive ones, may start off with plenty of success when they begin to change this habit but then find that they have more difficulty in keeping up the changes as time passes. They may find that their motivation, drive, or reason to keep changing their habit is decreased. To some degree this is quite normal. That is why we have anticipated this and want to help you cope with any difficulties you may encounter.

It would not be unusual or unexpected for you to have some ups and downs as you progress in your recovery. Over the next little while, we would like you to be aware of any obstacles that come along your way and think about ways to

cope with them. One thing is for sure, if you do not have a coping response ready, you are more likely to make an unwise decision.

- Many gamblers have told us that some of the risky situations that can get in the way of sticking to your goal include a concern about money or continued trouble with money (that's why we strongly advised you to get professional credit counselling).
- In addition to money worries, any upsetting emotion can also steer you away from your gambling goal. These emotions include depression, anxiety, stress and anger, but also feeling very happy, excited, or satisfied. Strong emotions, either good or bad, can sometimes lower our guard and let in old habits. So watch out how your mind thinks about gambling during these ups and downs.
- For some individuals, using too much alcohol can affect their decision to gamble. In general, excessive alcohol use can contribute to bad decisions and it is not unusual for many relapses to begin while someone has been drinking too much. So be aware of the effect other habits like drinking (if you do drink) can affect your commitment to your gambling goal.
- As well, feeling bored is also something to be on guard for. Many relapses seem to begin with a feeling of boredom, of feeling unstimulated. That is why we encouraged you to re-discover leisure activities that made you feel good and return to meaningful activities with people you care about.
- Conflicts with other people can also be a trigger to thoughts or urges about gambling. Again, be aware of how your relationships with others, especially when they are not going very well, can affect your gambling behaviour. That is why we suggested that you begin to at least think about improving your relationships with people that are closest to you.

We will ask you to continue to stick to your goal, as you have been doing from the

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beginning. All that we ask you to do over the next three weeks is to review the material in the previous sessions and to continue to do everything you need to do in order to succeed. This includes all of the strategies and techniques that you have found most useful in helping you gain control of your gambling.

The last exercise on the following pages is intended to help you over the next little while monitor your motivation to change and maintain your commitment to stick to your gambling goal.

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CHECK FOR ANY CHANGES IN MOTIVATION

Watch out for any reductions in your commitment to your gambling goals. Look for any thoughts that tell you it is all right to ignore your goals, to gamble more than you want and with more money than you planned. Are you thinking it might be a good time to see whether you can gamble more safely? Is part of you saying that it's okay to relax your control, that maybe things aren't as bad as they seemed at first?

WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE *YOUR MOTIVATION REMAINS STRONG?*

continued 

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CHECK FOR ANY WORRIES ABOUT MONEY

Your worry about your debt may lead you to believe that gambling may be the only way to get money fast and get out of this situation. Even though you are not gambling or gambling less, you may still be faced with paying quite a bit of money. It is not unusual for some people to consider taking a risk to gamble again hoping to get a big payoff and get rid of accumulated debts.

WHAT STEPS COULD YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE *YOUR WORRY ABOUT MONEY DOES NOT AFFECT YOUR RECOVERY?*

continued 

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CHECK FOR ANY CHANGES IN THINKING

You begin to think that you may be able to win at gambling. You may have come across a way or a system that might succeed at this point, that luck may be on your side, or that you have a strong feeling that you might win. Be on the lookout for thoughts that you might be able to stay in control of your gambling if you played outside of the limits of your goals.

WHAT STEPS COULD YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE *YOUR CHANGES IN THINKING DOES NOT AFFECT YOUR RECOVERY?*

continued 

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CHECK FOR ANY EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS

If you have found that gambling was a way to help you feel better when you were sad, depressed or otherwise upset, then be very careful of how you cope with such emotions. Also, if you feel bored or not stimulated, you may feel attracted to gambling as a way of having fun. For some people, just feeling good can also lead to a desire to celebrate and have fun, and this could include gambling.

WHAT STEPS COULD YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE *EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS DO NOT AFFECT YOUR RECOVERY?*

continued 

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CHECK FOR ANY LIFESTYLE TRIGGERS

You may be simply bored, missing the excitement or challenge of gambling and decide that it is time to get some excitement into your life again. If you have taken gambling out of your life, you may not have replaced it with anything positive or gratifying. If your lifestyle isn't very satisfying currently, and you have lots of available time, you might turn to gambling to fill in the gaps.

WHAT STEPS COULD YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE *LIFESTYLE TRIGGERS DO NOT AFFECT YOUR RECOVERY?*

continued 

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CHECK FOR ANY SOCIAL TRIGGERS

Your friends keep on inviting you to go gambling, or your socializing often takes you into situations where you have gambled in the past. It is not easy to go into these situations and successfully resist gambling on all occasions. As you continue to progress, you may feel it is not a big risk to spend time with people you gambled with before or go to gambling venues you've been to before. This could eventually lead to decisions that get in the way of your gambling goal.

WHAT STEPS COULD YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE *YOUR SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT DOES NOT AFFECT YOUR RECOVERY?*

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This Program has now come to an end. However, your recovery and your progress are just at the beginning. We hope that this Workbook will provide a solid foundation to your recovery. While we understand that it is quite a short program, we believe that it is your own personal strengths and commitment to change that are the key ingredients to your success. We hope we have been able to support your own efforts and maybe even provide you with some additional ideas and techniques.

If you require additional counselling, whether specific to gambling or another issue, please contact The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health at 416.535.8501. In addition, keep this Workbook close by you over the next several months if you need to review or remind yourself of the lessons you have learned. We wish you the best and the greatest success in your recovery.