

# RECLAIMING CONTROL A GAMBLING RECOVERY TOOLKIT

*‘The secret to getting ahead is getting started’*

Mark Twain



# INTRODUCTION



Gambling addiction is a silent, pervasive force that can dismantle lives, families, and communities. Its impact, often underestimated and misunderstood, can lead to financial ruin, emotional distress, and a profound sense of hopelessness. In the face of such challenges, the need for effective recovery strategies and support systems becomes paramount. This book, 'Reclaiming Control: A Gambling Recovery Toolkit', aims to provide a comprehensive, empathetic, and practical guide for individuals grappling with gambling addiction, as well as their loved one. The journey to recovery from harmful gambling is not linear. It is fraught with obstacles, relapses, and moments of despair. However, it is also a journey of self-discovery, resilience, and hope. This book is designed to be a steadfast companion on this path, offering practical tools, exercises, and insights to navigate the complexities of your recovery. Each section is meticulously structured to address different facets of the recovery process, from understanding the roots of addiction to rebuilding and maintaining long-term recovery.

One of the core principles of this toolkit is the recognition that gambling addiction is not a sign of weakness or moral failing. It is a multifaceted disorder influenced by a combination of genetic, psychological, and environmental factors. By shifting the narrative from blame to understanding, this toolkit encourages readers to approach their recovery journey with the same self-compassion and patience. This paradigm shift is crucial in breaking the cycle of shame and guilt that often accompanies addiction.

# ABOUT

## Extern Problem Gambling

Extern Problem Gambling aim is to provide some independent supports and resources to anyone whose life has been impacted by harmful gambling.

We provide a range of supports, resources and referral pathways for problem gamblers and their families. We also advocate on behalf of those suffering the consequences of problem gambling and highlight gambling related issues in the media.



## EmpowerHER Recovery Network

The EmpowerHER Recovery Network is a free female-focused service for women on the island of Ireland who experience harm from their own gambling. We operate fully online at present, and provide a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental space for women to access support including one-to-one recovery coaching, recovery network meetings, and a peer support community.



# MEET THE TEAM

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## **BARRY GRANT**

**Project Manager**  
**Extern Problem Gambling**

Barry is an addiction counsellor who has spent many years working in the gambling harm space. Barry works tirelessly to advocate for the implementation of fit-for-purpose gambling legislation to be enacted in Ireland.



## **CLAIRE DONEGAN**

**Project Lead**  
**EmpowerHER Recovery Network**

Claire is a Cognitive Behavioural Hypnotherapist and a Practitioner of Coaching with Neuroscience who has spent the past few years working in the gambling harm prevention, research, and support space, both nationally and internationally. Claire has been in recovery from gambling addiction since July 2020.



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# SECTION 1:

## PROBLEM GAMBLING EXPLAINED

# HOW CAN GAMBLING BE ADDICTIVE?



One of the biggest issues with problem gambling (Gambling Disorder/Compulsive Gambling/Pathological Gambling/Gambling Addiction) - apart from the fact that it clearly has way too many names - is the lack of understanding that exists about how a person can become addicted to a behaviour in the first place. Because there is no addictive substance, like alcohol or nicotine, involved - most people believe that stopping gambling should be as easy as steering clear of the Betting Shop or deleting a gambling app from your phone. The reality is that it's far more challenging and complicated than that.

## Gambling Changes Your Brain Chemistry

Just like many stimulant drugs, gambling causes the release of the hormone and neurotransmitter, Dopamine, in the brain. This occurs in the Reward Pathway of the brain - an area which serves the purpose of rewarding us when we eat certain foods or have sex (activities that are strongly linked to the survival of the individual and the species). Gambling, just like many drugs, can 'hijack' the Reward Pathway - so that we 'feel' like we need to gamble (or smoke cigarettes; drink alcohol; use cocaine) in order to survive. Just like with alcohol and other drugs, we develop a 'tolerance' to gambling, over time, and experience 'withdrawal' symptoms, when abstaining. Tolerance and Withdrawal are the key elements of any addiction. The good news is that the brain's chemistry will return to normal levels of Dopamine production, after a period of abstaining from gambling and persevering through withdrawal symptoms. These often include: low mood, restlessness, irritability, difficulty sleeping, anxiety.

## Gambling Taps Into 'Behavioural Conditioning'

Just as we can be conditioned into checking our smartphones for social media updates, text messages and emails - we can be conditioned into developing an unhealthy relationship with gambling. There are two main types of behavioural conditioning: Classical and Operant. Classical Conditioning is sometimes referred to as a 'Pavlovian Response' - referring to the famous 'Pavlov's Dog' behavioural experiment. Basically, this experiment showed that an unconscious response can be 'paired' with a stimulus (trigger), over time, when the trigger is repeated. A person who has developed a gambling problem will usually start out watching sports without gambling on the outcomes, but, over time, will come to associate watching sport with gambling. The two separate behaviours have been 'paired' together, so that the person feels uneasy when not gambling during a sporting event (withdrawal symptoms). The good news is, that, just like Pavlov's Dog, the conditioning can be broken (extinguished) over time and most people can return to watching sport without having strong urges to gamble or intense withdrawal symptoms. Operant Conditioning works on reinforcing behaviours through rewards - or 'punishing' other types of behaviours - usually through the absence of a reward ("carrot and stick"). 'Star Charts', such as those used in early education, are a form of Operant Conditioning. The teacher rewards behaviours that they want to encourage and see repeated. The Behavioural Psychologist, B. F. Skinner, developed the theory of Operant Conditioning, based on behavioural experiments with animals (the 'Skinner Box'). When he was trying to describe his theories to the public, he compared the Skinner Box to slot machines - because they operate on the same principles. Skinner observed that the most addictive 'Reward Schedule' was a 'Variable-Ratio Schedule'. This means that we all become more compulsive in seeking a reward, when it is unpredictable - rather than when it is predictable. For most people with gambling problems, it is the anticipation of a reward, which provides the excitement, stimulation and Dopamine - not the reward, itself. If you are reading this, as a loved one of a person with a gambling problem, you might not be able to relate to this. However, you may be exposed to exactly the same types of processes in Social Media. You can't predict when you're going to see a post that you find interesting or entertaining - so you keep scrolling. You can't predict how many people are going to like, comment or share your posts - so you keep checking and get a little hit of Dopamine when your notifications go off. Most people who have developed gambling problems are trying to deal with rewiring their behaviours away from both Classical and Operant Conditioning, which, in many cases, has been going on for years - developing deeply engrained, subconscious habits.



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**‘Hopium’** Nobody ever believes that they can drink their way out of an alcohol problem - but everyone believes that they can gamble their way out of a gambling problem. The vast majority of people who have gone through our counselling service, or call our helpline, have had some 'big win' (or several big wins). This presents the person with 'evidence' that they can 'dig their way out of the hole' that they have dug themselves into (using the same shovel). Unfortunately, for a person with a gambling problem, this hope is pure 'Hopium' - an irrational belief; a delusion.

A person with a gambling problem will just keep gambling - even after a big win - because they are not addicted to winning money. They are addicted to the process of gambling and money just allows you to keep gambling (stay 'in action') for longer. Many people, who are desperate to pay off gambling-related debts, believe that gambling is the only option available to them. Of course, this isn't true - as so many people who have learned the hard way, can attest to.

# DISTORTED THINKING

**Chasing** Chasing involves the abandonment of your gambling strategy, and/ or the increase in size of your bets, in an effort to win back what you have lost. It is a common tactic used by gamblers who want to recoup their losses. This is an irrational behaviour, though it is likely one that you will have found a way to justify to yourself during your time gambling as there are three common explanations given for chasing:

1. Some gamblers are extremely competitive. They take losing personally and find it intolerable, even inconceivable. The casino or gambling operator has 'their' money and they must get it back.
2. Some gamblers are desperate to replace the money they lost before they are found out. They fully expect their loved ones will abandon them once their 'shameful' secret is discovered.
3. Some gamblers chase out of guilt, believing that if they can win back what they have lost then they can clear their debts and get back to even.

Do any of these three explanations for chasing apply to you?

**Money is the Problem, and the Solution** Gamblers often have fixed ideas around money. The first is that money is the solution to all of their problems. The second is that gambling is the way to get money. This leads to distorted thinking around money, where gamblers often believe that the only way to stop gambling, is to continue to gamble until they have won enough to solve all their problems (problems caused by gambling in the first place).



### Self-deception and Superstition

Our brains are conditioned to look for patterns and to make predictions based on what has happened. This does not work for gambling, yet it is influential in how we gamble. It is often difficult for gamblers not to believe that a machine is 'due' to pay out, even though each play is an individual event. Slot machines, cards, and dice, do not have a memory.

If heads came up eight times in a row on a coin flip, the ninth flip would not favour tails, and yet gamblers would find it difficult to accept the 50-50 odds of that ninth flip.

All online roulette games show the outcomes of the most recent spins - as if this information could, in some way help the player predict the outcome of the next spin. Many people seeing that the last 5 spins were all 'red' might think that they can use that information to accurately predict the outcome of the next spin. This is simply not the case. Every spin is independent from all previous spins. There cannot be 'patterns' in roulette or any other fixed odds gambling product. Ask yourself: why do the gambling industry provide you with this information . . . ?

The amount of skill involved in gambling is often overestimated by the gambler, who believes luck is something that can be influenced or changed.

Superstition is a common trait amongst gamblers. Examples of this include favouring red over black on a roulette table, not placing a bet on a horse because a certain jockey is riding it, wearing a certain hat because they won big money when they last wore it etc.

# SECTION 2: RECOVERY APPROACHES

Recovery from any addiction takes time, patience, and determination. There is no one size fits all approach. The content in this toolkit has been carefully selected to provide you with some of the most common practice approaches to recovery, while also acknowledging that everyone's recovery is unique.

Traditionally, the most common approaches to recovery have included the following:

- Visiting a local GP
- Seeking help from a psychologist
- Attending a residential treatment program
- Working with a counsellor/ cognitive behavioural therapist
- Attending a fellowship/ group program
- Hypnotherapy

**While using this toolkit, it may be helpful to get a blank A4 booklet/ notepad to use as a recovery journal that you can tailor to your own recovery.**

# THE 12 STEP APPROACH



## **Gamblers Anonymous**

Gamblers Anonymous is a unique spiritual movement, having no central government and little formal organisation. It is composed of people from many religious faiths, along with agnostics and atheists. Since membership in GA requires no particular religious beliefs as a condition of membership, it cannot be described as a religious society.

The GA Recovery Programme is based on acceptance of certain spiritual values, but the individual member is free to interpret these principles as s/he chooses. As used in GA, the word 'spiritual' can be said to describe that characteristic of the human mind which is marked by the highest and finest qualities, such as generosity, honesty, tolerance and humility. Inasmuch as the GA fellowship advocates acceptance of these principles as a way of life, it can thus be said that GA is a spiritual fellowship.

## **Membership**

The only requirement for membership of GA is a desire to stop gambling; there are no other rules or regulations. Equally, there are no assessments in connection with GA membership. The newcomer signs nothing and pledges nothing.

## **Anonymity**

Anonymity has a great practical value in maintaining unity within the fellowship. Anonymity also has great value in attracting new members who might feel there is a stigma attached to the problem. Therefore, GA guarantee the newcomer as much anonymity as s/he chooses.



## **Gamblers Anonymous 12 Step Program**

1. We admitted we were powerless over gambling - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this Power of our own understanding.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.
7. Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God (as we understand him) praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.



## **The Serenity Prayer**

***God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.***



# SMART RECOVERY



SMART Recovery is unique recovery approach supporting individuals who have chosen to abstain, or are considering abstinence from any type of addictive behaviours (substances or activities). This approach aims to teach individuals how to change self-defeating thinking, emotions, and actions; and to work towards long-term satisfactions and quality of life.

## 4 Point Program

The SMART Recovery 4 Point Program offers tools and techniques for each program point:

1. Building and Maintaining Motivation
2. Coping with Urges
3. Managing Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours
4. Living a Balanced Life

## Approach

- Teaches self-empowerment and self-reliance
- Provides meetings that are educational, supportive, and include open discussions
- Encourages individuals to recover from addiction and live satisfying lives
- Teaches techniques for self-directed change
- Supports the scientifically informed use of treatment and legally prescribed psychiatric and addiction medication
- Evolves as scientific knowledge in addiction evolves
- Differs from the 12 Step Program

SECTION 3:  
SELF  
ASSESSMENT

# SOUTH OAKS GAMBLING SCREEN

Please use this questionnaire with absolute honesty to give yourself the best possible assessment of your relationship with gambling.

When you participate in gambling activities, do you go back another day to win back money you lost?	Yes/ No
Have you ever claimed to be winning money from your gambling activities when in fact you lost?	Yes/ No
Do you ever spend more time or money gambling than you intended to?	Yes/ No
Have people ever criticized you gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever felt guilty about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble?	Yes/ No
Have you ever hidden betting slips, lottery tickets, gambling money or any other signs of gambling from your loved ones?	Yes/ No
Have you ever argued with people you live with over how you handle money?	Yes/ No
If yes to the above question, have these arguments ever centered on your gambling?	Yes/ No

Have you ever missed time from work or school due to gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever borrowed from someone and not paid them back as a result of your gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever borrowed from household money to finance gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever borrowed money from your spouse or partner to finance gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever borrowed from other relatives or in-laws to finance gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever received loans from banks, loan companies, or credit unions to finance gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever used credit cards to get money to gamble with or to pay gambling debts?	Yes/ No
Have you ever cashed in stocks or bonds, or other securities to finance gambling?	Yes/ No
Have you ever received loans from loan sharks to gamble or pay gambling debts?	Yes/ No
Have you sold personal or family property to gamble or pay gambling debts?	Yes/ No
Have you ever written bad cheques or promised money you didn't have to get money to gamble or pay gambling debts?	Yes/ No
Do you feel that you have ever had a problem betting or gambling?	Yes/ No

# Scoring

To calculate your score, count one point for each 'yes' answer on the South Oaks Gambling Screen.

**0:** No Problem

**1-4:** Mild to Moderate Problem

**5 - 19:** Significant Problem

# PROBLEM GAMBLING SEVERITY INDEX

The Problem Gambling Severity Index is a scoring system used to measure at-risk behaviour in people experiencing problems with gambling. Please answer each question in relation to the past 12 months.

Each item is assessed on a four-point scale ranging from: never, sometimes, most of the time, almost always. Responses to each item are given the following scores:

- never = 0
- sometimes = 1
- most of the time = 2
- almost always = 3

1. Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?
2. Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement?
3. When you gambled, did you go back another day to try to win back the money you lost?
4. Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?
5. Have you felt you might have a problem with gambling?
6. Has gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?
7. Have people criticized your betting or told you that you had a gambling problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true?
8. Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?
9. Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?

When scores to each item are summed, a total score ranging from 0 to 27 is possible. Scores are grouped into the following categories:

**PGSI score 0**

Representing a person who gambles (including heavily) but does not report experiencing any of the 9 symptoms or adverse consequences asked about.

**PGSI score 1 to 2** Representing low risk gambling by which a person is unlikely to have experienced any adverse consequences from gambling but may be at risk if they are heavily involved in gambling.

**PGSI score 3 to 7**

Representing moderate risk gambling by which a person may or may not have experienced any adverse consequences from gambling but may be at risk if they are heavily involved in gambling.

**PGSI score 8 or more**

Representing problem gambling by which a person will have experienced adverse consequences from gambling and may have lost control of their behaviour. Involvement in gambling can be at any level, but it is likely to be heavy.

# COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Using the following Cost-Benefit Analysis, you can assess what you want your life to look like going forward by figuring out the pros and cons of your current situation.

## Continuing to Gamble

Benefits (Rewards and Advantages)	Costs (Risks and Disadvantages)

## No Longer Gambling

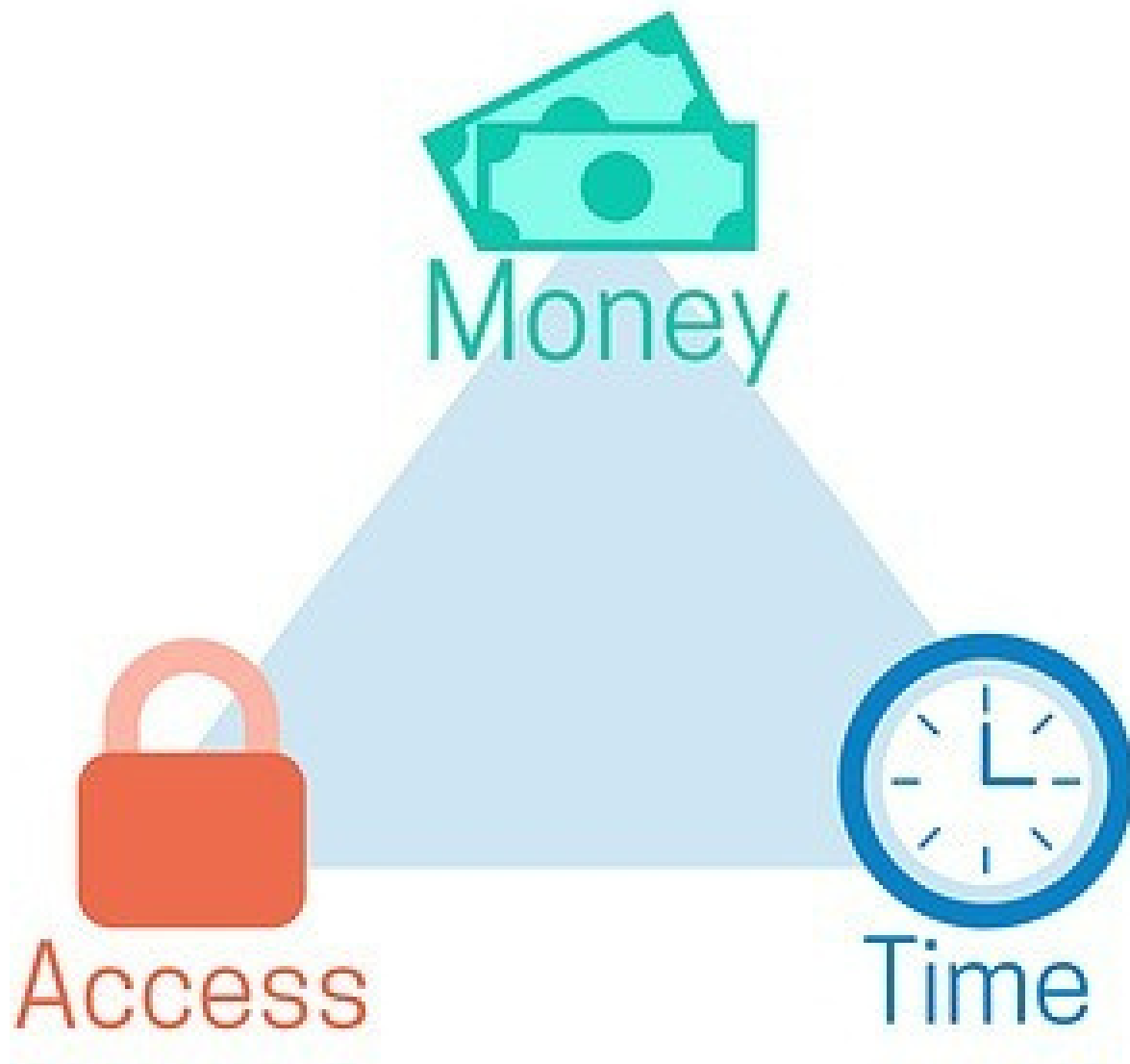
Benefits (Rewards and Advantages)	Costs (Risks and Disadvantages)



# SECTION 4:

## DAMAGE CONTROL

There are three main steps that should be taken at the beginning of your recovery journey. This is known as the ATM Model which stands for Access, Time, and Money.



# ACCESS

Limiting access to gambling is an essential step in your recovery journey. Self-exclusion is the best way to achieve this. This may involve physically going into a land-based gambling establishment you would have visited frequently in the past and requesting that they deny you access to the premises. Certain gambling operators such as Paddy Power will apply the self-exclusion to a number of their offices or within a regional area.

For online gambling, the most effective approach is to install a blocking software on all your devices which will then deny you access to gambling sites. Check out the below links to apply one of these software:

[Gamban](#)

[BetBlocker](#)

[Net Nanny](#)

Most major banks in Northern Ireland now offer the ability to block gambling transactions from your account.

Currently, in the Republic of Ireland, both Revolut and AIB offer card blocks for gambling transactions. Further information is available on both by clicking the links below.



People in Northern Ireland can also use Gamstop, a free tool that allows people to self-exclude from all GB-licensed gambling websites. Please click on the link below to find out more.



# TIME

It is likely you will have spent much of your time gambling and may feel anxious now about how to fill that time.

Scheduling activities and tasks for yourself can help to tackle this.

Consider taking up a new hobby, or re-engaging with old passions that were lost while you were gambling.

Another helpful use of time is to continue to reassess your current situation on a deeper level, identifying key areas that you wish to improve upon and finding ways to enact the necessary changes in order to achieve this.

Throughout this toolkit you will find a range of tools and information that you can use to help create a deeper awareness of how you want to spend your time, and which activities you feel deserve your attention and evoke meaning for you.



# MONEY



## Financial Well-Being

### Look at the Big Picture:

Yes, you may be in a financial bind right now, BUT, look at where you want to be in 1/ 3/ 5 years time.

Recognize that it may take several years for you to recoup your financial strength and pay off any debts you may have. The best thing to do is be aware of this while looking towards positive financial strength.

What are your goals for financial health?

Make a list of them. This is important because it gives you something concrete to strive for, not just the feeling that you are chipping away at your debt.

In your financial goal listing, separate the relatively short-term goals from those that are longer term.

### **Assess the Damage Done:**

In order to move forward, you need to know where you stand financially right now. Create a budget/ spending plan going forward.

### **Seek Financial Counselling:**

There are several financial advice clinics, websites, and organisations that you can contact to help you get back on track with your finances.

See the next section for further details.

### **Hand Over Control:**

Having a trusted friend or loved one manage your money for you can help to lighten the load of financial responsibility. This is a good option if you are still unsure of your ability to control your spending at this time.

### **Cut Up Credit Cards:**

This one speaks for itself. The last thing you want to do at the start of your recovery journey is to have credit available to you.

### **Consider Your Banking Options:**

Contact your bank to find out if they offer gambling transaction blocks. If they do not, consider switching your banking provider to one that does.

## **Debt Management**

Many people who have gambled problematically will have accumulated some level of gambling related debt by the time they decide to stop gambling. It's certainly not unusual. If you feel that the debt is unmanageable, it is essential to talk someone who can help.

MABS (Money Advice & Budgeting Service) can negotiate repayment plans with lenders and credit card companies. They will put together a realistic plan which will leave you with enough to live on, and to pay your essential bills.

Feeling overwhelmed by debt can be a very common trigger to relapse. It is, therefore, essential to get a realistic repayment plan put in place and let the direct debits do the work.

MABS have helped many people experiencing gambling harm over the years. They do not judge. They are there to help you.



They also have a number of self-help tools available on the website to help you assess and manage your own finances:

[My Financial Healthcheck](#)

[My Budget](#)

[My Full Financial Picture](#)



StepChange help thousands of people become debt free every year. Their team of experts offer free, flexible debt advice to anyone who needs it.

This includes:

- Helping people take control of their finances
- Giving practical help
- Supporting clients for as long as they need



# Spending Plan

Creating a spending plan is a good step forward in assessing your financial well-being. Try using the following steps to get started:

**1.** List monthly sources of income. List only items that can be counted on each month such as:

- wages
- maintenance
- social welfare payments

Income that varies should be averaged out monthly, including:

- commissions
- tips
- freelance work

**2.** Extra sources of income such as a work bonus or income tax refund for example, should be put towards savings or to pay for one-off expenses such as purchasing a new car or paying for a holiday.

**3.** List basic monthly household expenses such as rent/ mortgage, groceries, utilities, childcare, and loan repayments.

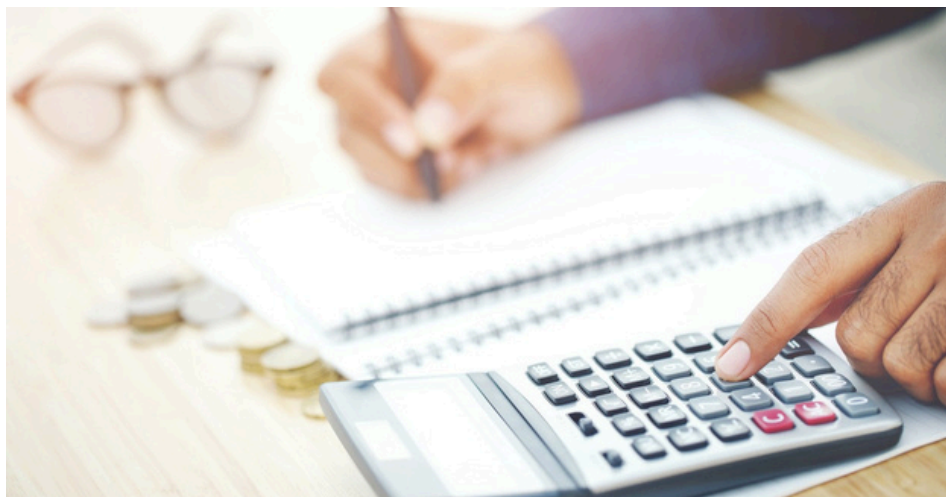
**4.** Savings should always be treated as a priority, even if debts are high. Treat savings as a basic expense.

**5.** The spending plan should be calculated first, without including any debts.

Once basic living expenses are covered, any remaining funds can go towards debt repayments.

If there is not enough income to cover expenses, you may need to consider ways to earn additional income either through a second job or seeking out a better paying job.

You should also look for ways to reduce expenses.





# TRIGGERS

## External Triggers

Walking past a gambling establishment  
Overhearing people around you talking about gambling  
Watching sport on tv  
Receiving marketing communications from gambling operators  
Bombardment of gambling advertising  
Receiving an unexpected bill or notice of arrears

## Internal Triggers

Self-pity  
Unrealistic expectations  
Feelings of depression, anxiety, boredom, loneliness, etc  
Attempting to rationalise thoughts of gambling  
Defeatism

## Interpersonal Triggers

Feelings of stress at home or in work  
Invitations to attend gambling events/ establishments  
Relationship difficulties

When faced with any of the above triggers, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- ***What will I gain from gambling?***
- ***What will I lose if I gamble?***
- ***What do I want my life to look like this time next year?***
- ***Would gambling now help or hinder this from happening?#***
- ***What will my relationships with my loved ones be like if I give into gambling now?***
- ***What can I do right now to ensure my commitment to my recovery?***

# URGE SURFING

It is normal for people in recovery to experience urges from time to time. An urge may be triggered by a person, place, feeling, thought, or something else. They may become more intense and you may feel like it will never pass, but it will.

It is important that you can recognise urges as temporary. Instead of giving into it, you can learn to ride it out just like a surfer rides a wave.



## DO

Acknowledge and accept that you are having an urge

Become aware of your thoughts and feelings without judging or giving in to them

Focus on keeping yourself occupied with something else

Speak with your trusted support person

Use positive self-talk and affirmations to reinforce your commitment to changing your life

## DONT

Give in to temptation

Try to justify gambling to yourself

Overthink it

Allow yourself to be in a position where you have access to gambling

Allow yourself access to money to satisfy your urge

# SUPPORT NETWORK



Recovery is a life-long journey that is not always easy. Although there are many triumphs along the way, there are also many hurdles that may lead to relapse.

One of the easiest ways to stay on the right track is by finding support in recovery. Building a support network helps to build connections and may add an element of accountability to your journey.

It is also important to remember that who you spend your time with can impact your recovery for better or worse, so you need to think carefully about who you let into your life at this time.

# Building A Support Network

In order to thrive in recovery it may be necessary to consider the following steps:

## Saying goodbye to some people

Unfortunately, not all of your old friends should be welcomed back into your life during your recovery. Being around the people you used to gamble with regularly could trigger a relapse. Their lifestyles may not be conducive with your new one, and you need people who are going to support your new life, not interfere with it.

## Mend relationships

Chances are that when you were actively gambling you may have behaved in ways that pushed some of your family and friends away. If those people are important to you and could be a good part of your recovery, now is the time to start rebuilding these relationships, one step at a time.

## Ask for help

If you are ready to welcome support into your recovery, you need to learn how to ask for help. Be specific about what you need in order to see the best results.

## Join a group

Joining a class, group, or team, can help you create new bonds with people who have similar interests to you.

## Be patient

Trust and friendships do not happen overnight and building a support network in recovery takes time. Be patient with yourself as well as your loved ones as you all try to navigate uncharted territory together.

## Healing Relationships

Once you have considered the steps on the previous page, start thinking about how best to work towards healing your relationships with the people who are important to you.

Identify who those people are, assess your current relationship with them, and make a plan to work towards healing those relationships where needed.

Name	Current relationship challenges	What can I do to improve this relationship?

## Trusted Support Person

An important step for making changes in your life is telling someone you know that you really want to do this, and you would be grateful if they could support you through your journey.

Think about what you may need from your support person.  
What would they do for you?

You may need them to:

- Talk to you about personal goals in changing your gambling behaviour
- Listen to and talk to you about your ideas on how to make changes in your life
- Give you emotional support when you really need it
- Help you take care of your money
- Share some of the new activities in your life that you might want to do instead of gambling

<b>What problems do I have?</b>
<b>Who may be able to help me?</b>
<b>When and how can they help?</b>

# SECTION 5:

## LIFE INVENTORY & GOAL SETTING

# WHEEL OF LIFE



## Assessing the Here and Now

Sometimes the easiest way to assess your life is to simply put it on paper and give yourself a snapshot of where you are in your life right at this moment.

The following page contains an Enabling Wheel which you can use you can use to look at the most important areas of your life and assess which areas you feel require the most attention.

You may choose to focus in on one or all of these areas one by one, depending on where you feel you want to begin.

### Instructions:

Using a blank sheet of paper, draw the wheel.

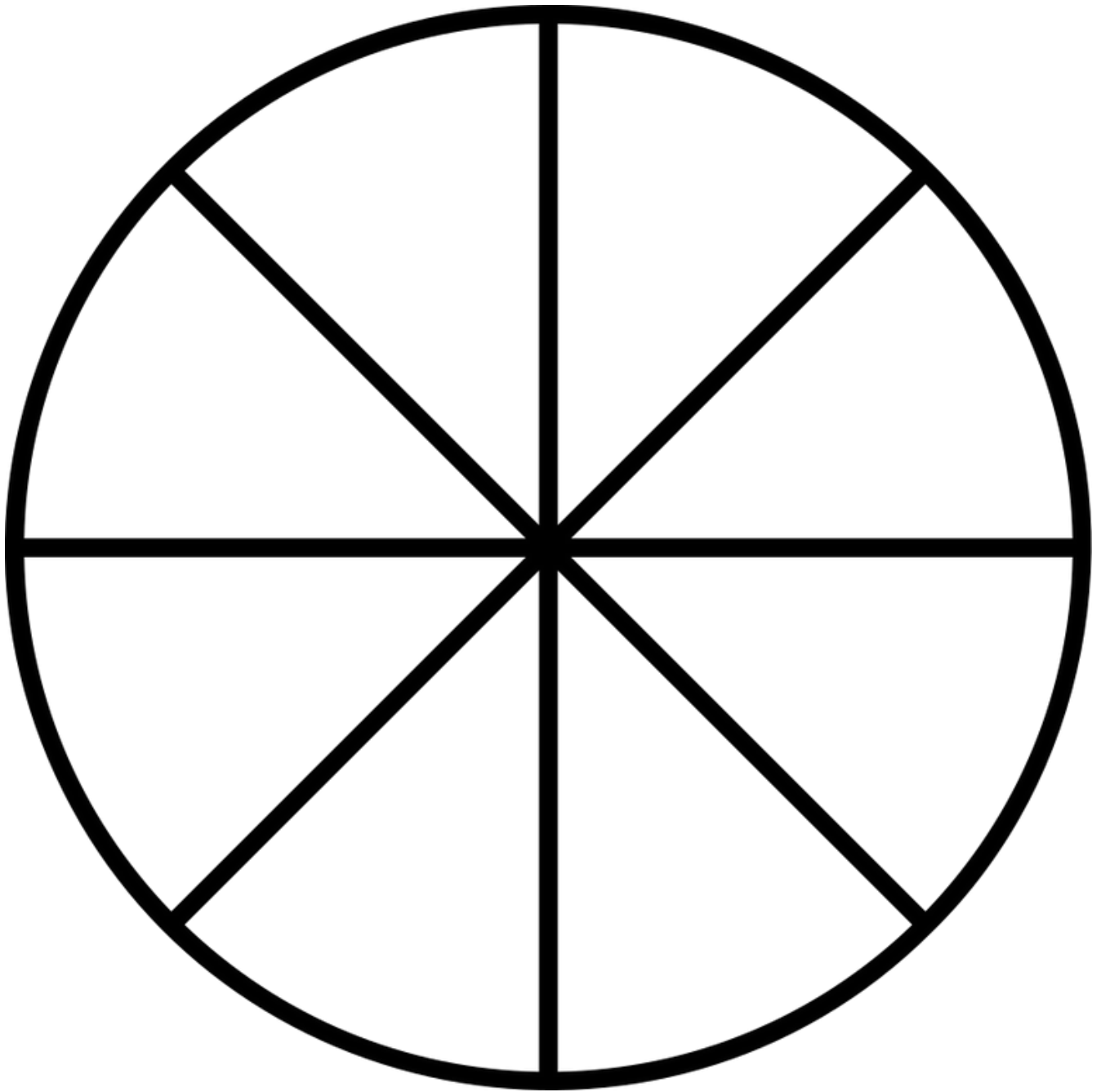
On the outside of each segment, write each of the areas of your life that are most important to you. For example, you may dedicate one segment to Family, another to Work, another to Health, and so on.

Once you have completed the above step, rate each segment from 1 to 10, with 1 representing an area that requires a lot of attention, and 10 representing an area that you feel you are happy with at present. You can put the number inside each of the corresponding segments.

Lastly, using the outline of each segment, draw a ruler representing 1 - 10 along the segment and colour it in to represent the number you have given each segment. This will give you a clear idea of how balanced/ unbalanced your wheel is and which areas you may want to focus your attention on throughout your recovery journey.

To help you visualise what your wheel should look like, please [click here](#) and watch this explanatory video.





# VALUES

Our values are powerful, internal instructions that allow us to live authentic lives. In active addiction, it is common to lose your connection with your values, and while gambling, you may end up acting in conflict with those values.

Taking time to reconnect to your values will help you to make more informed decisions moving forward, and to live in a way that is true to who you are now.

Values are individual and unique to each person.

Take a blank page and design your personal values list.

Try to list as many values as possible and once you have done this, choose between 3 to 5 Core Values (values that are non-negotiable for you).



Evaluate to what degree you are currently honouring or living true to the values you have listed.

How can you improve upon this?

Do you feel more clarity about how you can use these values to inform your life decisions moving forward?

If you find yourself struggling to compose or evaluate your personal values list, try asking yourself the following questions:

***What is important to me?***

***What does (e.g. respect) mean to me?***

***What does it give me?***

***What does this value generate in my life for me/ those around me?***

***What are the consequences of not honouring this value?***

# GOALS

*‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step’*

Lao Tzu

This is a Chinese Proverb which teaches us that even the longest and most difficult journeys have to begin somewhere. You are choosing to take that first step and begin a journey of positive change. With all journeys of course, it is important to understand the motivation behind it.

- Why are you here?
- What are you travelling for?
- What does the destination look like?

## **The Importance of Goal Setting in Recovery**

Recovery can be a fresh start.

The benefits of setting goals in recovery include:

Helping you focus on the present and the future

Not dwelling on the past

Developing patience and a good work ethic

Creating a sense of pride when you reach your goal

Once you begin your recovery journey you may find you have more time, money, and energy to do more things. You may want to start developing new skills, and trying new things as part of your journey.

Recovery goals don't necessarily have to focus solely on abstinence from gambling.

They can also include goals that apply to different areas of your life, such as improving personal relationships, changing career, spirituality lifestyle changes, or improving financial health.

Before deciding on any goals, it may be helpful to do some reflection. Think about the following:

- What do you like about you life currently?
- What would you like to be different?
- What new things would you like to have/ do?
- How do you want to spend your time?

# SMART CAR GOAL SETTING

You may have heard of SMART Goal setting before which is a tool used in SMART Recovery. This is a well established goal setting tool to help people plan their goals effectively.

The following page contains a variation of this tool called SMART CAR.

SMART CAR goal setting is a coaching tool you can use to plan your recovery goals using a reward-based approach.

Please use this tool for each goal you wish to achieve, and think carefully about the timeline you wish to achieve it in.

If your goal will take several stages, you can use this tool for each page.



## Goal:


---

<b>SPECIFIC</b> What is the goal? When do you want it to start? Where does it need to take place?	
<b>MEASURABLE</b> How will you know it has been achieved? How are you going to record progress?	
<b>ACTION-BASED</b> What steps do you need to take? What might distract you?	
<b>REALISTIC</b> Is it possible to implement? Is the time assigned enough?	
<b>TIME_BOUND</b> When do you want to have achieved this goal by?	
<b>COMMITMENT</b> What is your commitment to achieving this goal?	
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b> How are you going to keep yourself accountable?	
<b>REWARD</b> How will you reward yourself when you have achieved this goal?	

SECTION 6:  
SELF-CARE  
&  
LIFESTYLE



# SELF - CARE



Self-care means taking care of yourself so that you can be healthy, you can be well, you can help care for others, and you can do all the things you need to do and accomplish in a day.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines self-care as:

***‘the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness or disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider’***

According to this definition, self-care includes everything related to staying healthy, including hygiene, nutrition, and seeking medical care when needed. It concerns the steps an individual can take to manage stressors in his or her life and take care of his or her own health and well-being.

Research suggests self-care promotes positive health outcomes such as fostering resilience, living longer, and becoming better equipped to manage stress.

Common examples of self-care include:

Maintaining a healthy sleep routine

Healthy eating

Spending time in nature

Finding a hobby you enjoy

Self-care looks different for everyone, but to count as self-care, the behaviour should promote health and happiness for you. To get into a routine of regularly practicing self-care, experts recommend starting small rather than tackling the most challenging element first. Begin by choosing one self-care practice and add in more when you feel ready to do so.

Another important step in self-care is to regularly check-in with yourself and ask yourself how you are doing and what your body is asking you for.

When we are regularly taking care of ourselves, we are better able to react to the things that go on in our lives. It is something we do to maintain positive well-being.



## Types of Self-Care

### Emotional Self-Care

Saying 'no' to things that cause unnecessary stress  
Giving yourself permission to take a pause  
Positive self-talk  
Weekly meet up with friends

### Physical Self-Care

Prioritising sleep  
Adopting a new exercise routine  
Choosing healthy nourishing food over processed food

### Spiritual Self-Care

Attending a religious service  
Spending time in nature  
Keeping a gratitude journal  
Incorporating regular acts of kindness into your day



# BOUNDARIES



Having healthy boundaries is essential to being a healthy person who enjoys healthy relationships. When most people enter recovery, they tend to lack a solid understanding of what boundaries are and why they are valuable.

No matter what your personal situation may be, it is important to understand that identifying, developing, establishing, and protecting your boundaries is vital to your well-being.

Basically, there are two types of boundaries - external and internal.

## **External Boundaries**

External boundaries are what separate you from other people. They are specific constructs you create to determine what is ok in your relationships. External boundaries allow you to recognise where you stop and other people start. You might think of them as guidelines that govern the way you interact with the world around you.

### **Physical Boundaries**

You are entitled to your own personal space, privacy, and safety. You have the right to feel comfortable within the invisible boundary line that surrounds your physical body. Keep in mind that everyone has their own physical boundaries. Be respectful of other people's space just as you want them to be respectful of yours. What may be ok with you may not be ok with someone else.

### **Mental Boundaries**

Your mind is your own. You get to decide what the thoughts to think and what information you allow to come in. You do not have to share your thoughts, opinions, or beliefs if you choose not to. No one should try to pry inside your mind to see what's inside. You also do not have to listen to the thoughts, opinions, or beliefs of others if you choose not to.

### **Emotional Boundaries**

You have permission to experience emotional health and wellness. Emotional boundaries should be firmly rooted in the knowledge that you are responsible for your own feelings and that you are not responsible for the feelings of others. Asserting emotional boundaries means that you should protect yourself from abuse of any kind. This means detaching from toxic relationships that do not support your highest good.

**Spiritual Boundaries** Spiritual boundaries promote your spiritual health. You are entitled to protect your own spiritual boundaries. You may do this quietly and respectfully. There is no need to explain your spirituality to anyone else, nor is it appropriate to push your beliefs on someone who believes differently than you do.







## Internal Boundaries

Internal boundaries are between you and you. They help you to regulate the relationship you have with yourself.

You might think of internal boundaries as self-discipline, which results in effective time management, mental and emotional self-regulation, appropriate behaviour, and impulse control.

Internal boundaries empower you to follow through on commitments you make to yourself.

### Internal Boundaries With Yourself

By the time most people get in to recovery, they have severely damaged the relationship they have with themselves. Rebuilding self-confidence and experiencing self-love is an ongoing process that takes time and dedication.

You can start to rebuild the relationship you have with yourself by making a commitment to tackle your recovery one day at a time. As you live up to this commitment with each passing day, you will feel more comfortable in your own skin.

Doing this will encourage you to set more boundaries. With time, you might set boundaries around what you eat, how you spend your money, how often you exercise, and what time you go to bed and wake up at.

Setting internal boundaries is a sign of self-care and self-love. It is showing respect for others and yourself.

# STRESS

Chronic stress is a prolonged and constant feeling of stress that can negatively affect your health if it goes untreated. It can be caused by everyday pressures of family and work, or by traumatic situations.

Chronic stress occurs when the body experiences stressors with such frequency or intensity that the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) does not have an adequate chance to activate the relaxation response on a regular basis. This means the body remains in a constant state of physiological arousal.

Virtually every system in the body is affected, either directly or indirectly. Humans were built to handle acute stress, which is steady over a long period of time. In order to begin managing chronic stress, it is important to understand what it is, what may be causing it, and how it affects the body.

## Symptoms

Chronic stress affects both the mind and the body. It produces physical and psychological symptoms that can take a toll on a person's ability to function normally in their daily life.

Common symptoms include:

- Aches and pains
- Decreased energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Disorganised thinking
- Fatigue
- Feeling a loss of control
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Nervousness and anxiety
- Trouble concentrating
- Frequent illness and infection

## Impact

Because chronic stress is so prolonged, it can have a detrimental impact on your health and well-being if left untreated. Some potential complications include:

- Acne
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Eczema
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Hypothyroidism
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Low sex drive
- Ulcers
- Weight changes

## Simple Ways to Relieve Stress

- Get more physically active
- Follow a healthy diet
- Minimise phone use and screen time
- Practice self-care
- Reduce caffeine intake
- Spend time with family and friends
- Create boundaries and learn to say 'no'
- Learn to avoid procrastination
- Take a yoga class
- Practice mindfulness
- Have a cuddle or hug with someone you love
- Spend time in nature
- Practice deep breathing techniques





# SLEEP

Lack of sleep directly affects how we think and feel. While short-term impacts are more noticeable, chronic sleep deprivation can heighten the long-term risk of physical and mental health problems. The term ‘sleep deprivation’ is defined based on sleep duration, which is the total amount of time a person spends sleeping.

The primary signs of sleep deprivation include:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Reduced concentration
- Slower thinking
- Mood changes
- Poor and risky decision-making
- Worsened memory
- Reduced attention span
- Lack of energy
- Anxiety and/ or irritability



Sleep plays a fundamental role in the effective functioning of nearly all systems in the body, so a persistent lack of sleep creates significant risk to physical and mental health. This includes the following:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Immunodeficiency
- Hormonal abnormalities
- Pain
- Mental health disorders

## Helpful Actions

Increase bright light exposure throughout the day

Reduce bright light exposure in the evening

Don't consume caffeine late in the day

Reduce irregular or long daytime naps

Try to sleep and wake at consistent times

Avoid alcohol

Avoid eating late at night





# NUTRITION



Nutrition is the essence of how the body uses food. Food has an important role in the body. The nutrients within food fuel the body and provide energy. These nutrients are chemical substances vital to maintain, repair, and build new tissue.

There are six main groups of nutrients.

## Fats

Fats help in processing stored vitamins, but fatty acids are also essential for the building of cell membranes. It is important to note that the body produces its own fat cells, so monitoring fat intake will help maintain a healthy balance.

Dietary fats are found in both plant and animal food consumption and provide an energy source for your body, along with aiding certain vitamins to do their work.

## Minerals

Minerals are essential for growth and are labelled inorganic as they are not living. Minerals are required in very small amounts known as trace elements.

**Carbohydrates** Made up mostly from sugars and starches, carbohydrates form the main source of energy. Sugars are known as simple carbohydrates, and these give quick bursts of energy. Starches must be broken down into sugars and they release energy slowly which is better for the body. Fibre is another type of carbohydrate which helps regulate the body's use of sugars, helping to keep hunger and blood sugar in check.

## Proteins

Proteins are the building blocks of the body. They are complex molecules made up of amino acids and, while the body produces some naturally, most come from eggs, cheese, meat, milk, nuts, beans, and other pulses.

## Vitamins

Vitamins are important as they are essential to normal metabolism. A lack of certain vitamins can cause deficiency diseases.

## Water

While water doesn't improve energy, it is crucial to health. It aids the break-down of food, helping to remove waste, and it acts as a cooling system through sweating. Water can be obtained through vegetables, but several litres of water are required each day for optimal health.



# EXERCISE

Exercise during recovery is essential to reintroduce healthy endorphins into the body.

It is a way of gaining a natural high which will aid the transition from addiction to recovery.

## Benefits of Exercise

**Makes you feel happier** Endorphins are hormones that reduce pain and boost pleasure, creating a general feeling of well-being and positivity. Endorphins also act as natural painkillers and can strengthen muscles, lessening chronic pain and risk to injury.

### **Gives you more energy**

Physical activity increases your heart rate and gets your blood flowing. More oxygen and nutrients to your muscles means higher levels of energy.

### **Promotes quality sleep**

Exercise can reduce stress and anxiety levels, leaving you feeling more relaxed and stabilised, which is a perfect state of sleep.

### **Helps fight depression**

Research shows for mild to moderate cases of depression, exercise can be an effective treatment. Exercise increases your brain's sensitivity to serotonin and norepinephrine, which eases feelings of depression.

### **Helps maintain strong muscles and bones**

As we get older, we lose muscle mass and function. Exercising regularly may reduce muscle loss and help maintain strength. As we exercise, our bodies release hormones that help muscles to absorb amino acids and boost muscle growth.

*'Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual ability'*

John F. Kennedy



## Mindset Strategies to Encourage an Active Lifestyle

- Focus on fun, family, and healthy enjoyment
- Reinforce what bodies can do, not how they look
- Explore feelings of reward and accomplishment
- Keep your mindset around movement positive
- Build body confidence
- Avoid using exercise as punishment



## Clarifying Your Exercise Goals

What is your current fitness level?

What does your current exercise routine look like?

Are there areas you would like to improve upon/ goals you would like to achieve in this area?

What are you willing to commit to in order to make these improvements happen?

What would this give to you?

What is the cost of not committing to/ achieving your goals?



# SECTION 7:

MINDSET  
&

BELIEF  
SYSTEMS

# MINDSET

## Fixed Mindset

A person with a fixed mindset usually avoids challenges in life, gives up easily, and becomes intimidated or threatened by the success of others.

Fixed mindsets can lead to negative thinking. For instance, a person with a fixed mindset might fail at a task and believe it is because they are not smart enough to do it. A person with a growth mindset, however, might fail at the same task and believe it is because they need to spend more time practicing.

Those with a fixed mindset believe individual traits cannot change, no matter how much effort you put in, and as a result are more likely to:

- Believe intelligence and talent are static
- Avoid challenges to avoid failures
- Ignore feedback from others
- Feel threatened by the success of others
- Hide flaws so as not to be judged by others
- Believe putting in effort is worthless
- View feedback as a personal criticism
- Give up easily





## **Growth Mindset**

A growth mindset views intelligence and talent as qualities that can be developed over time, through effort and actions. A growth mindset also recognises that setbacks are a necessary part of the learning process and allows people to 'bounce-back' by increasing motivational effort.

This kind of mindset sees 'failings' as temporary and changeable, and, as such, a growth mindset is crucial for learning, resilience, motivation, and performance.

Those who adopt a growth mindset are more likely to:

- Embrace lifelong learning
- Believe intelligence can be improved
- Put in more effort to learn
- Believe effort leads to mastery
- Believe failures are just temporary setbacks
- View feedback as a source of information
- Willingly embrace challenges
- View other people's success as a source of inspiration



### **Additional benefits of a growth mindset include:**

- Fewer psychological problems such as depression and anxiety
- Fewer behavioural problems
- Reduced burnout

### **The Neuroscience of a Growth Mindset**

Scientists have measured the electrical activity in the brain to understand how this leads to a growth mindset. Using neuroimaging, researchers have found a link between a growth mindset and activation in two key areas of the brain.

The Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC) - involved in learning and control

The Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex (DLPFC) - involved in error-monitoring and behavioural adaptation.

A growth mindset appears to be linked to higher motivation and error-correction. It is also associated with lower activation in response to negative feedback.

### **Can a person's Mindset Change?**

Neuroscience shows us that the brain continues to change and develop, even as adults. The brain is similar to plastic in that it can be remoulded over time, as neural pathways form. This has led scientists to identify the tendency of the brain to change through growth and reorganisation as neuroplasticity.

The brain can grow new connections and strengthen existing ones.





# Developing A Growth Mindset

## Realise that, scientifically, it is possible

One of the most direct methods of fostering a growth mindset is by understanding our brains are built to grow and learn. By challenging yourself with new experiences you can form or strengthen neural connections to 'rewire' your brain.

## Remove the 'Fixed Mindset' inner voice

Many people have a negative inner voice that works against a growth mindset. Try to flip thoughts such as '*I can't do this*' to '*I can do this if I keep practicing*', in order to nurture a growth mindset.

## Reward the process

Reward the effort exerted in developing a growth mindset. Studies have shown that rewarding effort over results improves performance.

## Get feedback

Try to seek feedback on your work. When students are provided with progressive feedback about what they did well and what they can improve, it creates motivation to keep going. Feedback is also associated with a pleasurable dopamine response and enhances a growth mindset.

## Get out of your comfort zone

When faced with a challenge, try to choose the harder option that will allow you to grow.

## Accept failure as part of the process

Failures and setbacks are all part of the learning process. When trying something new, see occasional 'failures' as positive learning opportunities and enjoy the discovery process along the way.

*'The secret to change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new'*

Socrates

# CHALLENGING YOUR INNER NARRATIVE

## Self-Limiting Beliefs

Our beliefs are our assumed truths. They are our inner statements about ourselves in which we are emotionally invested. They have shaped us and probably unbeknownst to many of us, they have been with us since childhood.

Self-limiting beliefs are the ones which have the greatest potential for impacting negatively upon you achieving your full potential. We develop limiting beliefs to protect us from future pain. Usually, they develop in response to painful experiences. From these experiences we create our own, often skewed generalisation about life. These generalisations become deeply embedded in our subconscious and then manifest as limiting beliefs that influence much of what we think, say, and do. When we allow our lives to be shaped by limiting beliefs, the behaviours that we adopt reinforce our own beliefs and so we become expert in creating our own self-fulfilling prophecies.



# **Steps to Overcoming Self-Limiting Beliefs**

## **Identify any self-limiting beliefs and what behaviours they have resulted in**

Are there any beliefs you know of that might be holding you back? Choose 1 - 2 beliefs to focus on and try to reflect on the detrimental impact that these beliefs may have had on your behaviour or your interactions with others. Do they make you avoid doing certain things? Do they make you feel or act defensively?

By recognising how these beliefs manifest themselves in us, we build up a self-awareness that allows us more easily spot behaviours when they re-occur in our daily lives. When we can spot and name these behaviours and beliefs, we have taken the first step to creating a new narrative with new behaviours for ourselves.

## **Consider where these beliefs may have come from**

Reflect on what the source of these beliefs could be. By looking into the root cause of our beliefs and questioning them - we can realise that the evidence we have previously used to justify these beliefs is flawed, limited, or circumstantial, and, in turn, we can begin to crack the foundations of these beliefs.

## **Reflect on instances where these beliefs have been shown to be incorrect**

If our self-limiting beliefs are deeply entrenched into how we perceive ourselves, we can find that we begin to interpret current or other past events as further 'proof' that we are in some way deficient. In the process, we can ignore examples that would act as evidence against our self-limiting beliefs. By re-evaluating the 'evidence', we can begin to redress this balance and perhaps realise that we haven't been fair to ourselves.

## **Explore what beliefs could better support you**

To properly undo self-limiting beliefs and make real and meaningful changes, we must lay the foundations for new affirming beliefs about ourselves which can be reinforced with new experiences. To do so, it is best to ask yourself what kind of behaviours you want to display and then work backwards to what beliefs could best serve you in doing this. This direction will be vital in keeping you focused as you try to create new beliefs and develop new behaviours.

### **Challenge your thoughts**

As you seek to develop new behaviours, it's important that you work hard to respond to the old behaviours and thoughts when they reappear (which they will). This means watching both your behaviours and your thought process closely, and consciously trying to respond and modify these. This can be the hardest part as it is likely that these behaviours will be deeply entrenched and so are bound to show up whether you want them to or not. Recognise that you are in a process of growth and development.

### **Developing new behaviours - practice and reinforcement**

The final step is to undertake actions that are aligned to the new behaviours you wish to develop. If you find yourself worrying that everything you do must be perfect, try doing a few tasks to a level that is 'good enough' and consciously encourage yourself to move on.

By practicing these behaviours and making small changes over time, this will lead to big changes to your thought processes and your inner narrative. To reinforce these new, more affirming beliefs, ensure that you focus on your new actions and the positive outcomes which will come from them.

## Empowering Beliefs

How we believe drives our actions, often rather more than natural truths. What and how we believe has a huge impact on what we do and whether or not we succeed. Empowering beliefs lead to growth, success, and happiness.

### Helpful Empowering Beliefs to Get Started:

***'I understand my potential'*** - you can achieve amazing results when you put your mind to it.

***'I learn from my mistakes'*** - you can make setbacks work for you by focusing on the lessons that they contain.

***'I embrace change'*** - focus on the present moment and prepare yourself to adapt to whatever circumstances come your way.

***'I dream big'*** - expand your wishlist. Setting demanding but attainable goals gives you adventures to look forward to each day.

***'I take responsibility'*** - you are in charge of your own life, no one else!

***'I listen to feedback'*** - you grow faster when you gather solid input that you can translate into positive action.

***'I can connect with others'*** - surround yourself with loving and encouraging family and friends.

***'I try new things'*** - be open to experimentation.





# IMPOSTER SYNDROME



Imposter syndrome normally occurs when there is a tension between two views - yours and what you believe others expect of you. Alternatively, the tension may be between the standards you set for yourself and how you assess yourself as doing. It can affect anyone no matter their social status, work background, skill level, or degree of expertise.

## Characteristics of Imposter Syndrome

- An inability to realistically assess your competence and skills
- Attributing your success to external factors
- Berating your own performance
- Fear that you won't live up to expectations
- Overachieving
- Sabotaging your own success
- Self-doubt
- Setting very challenging goals and feeling disappointed when you fall short

### **Possible Causes**

- Family upbringing
- Low self-efficacy
- Perfectionism
- Social anxiety

## **Tackling Imposter Syndrome**

### **Share your feelings**

Irrational beliefs tend to fester when they are hidden and not talked about.

### **Focus on others**

Helping others will help you build confidence in your own abilities.

### **Assess your abilities**

Make a realistic assessment of your abilities, then write down your accomplishments and what you are good at - then compare both.

### **Take baby steps**

Rather than focusing on perfectionism, do things reasonably well and reward yourself for taking action.

### **Question your thoughts**

Are you thinking rationally?

Does it make sense to feel like a fraud, given everything you know?

### **Stop comparing**

Every time you compare yourself to others in a social situation, you will find some fault with yourself that fuels feelings of not being good enough.

When you feel discomfort remind yourself that this is just how you feel, not how things are.

When these thoughts and feelings come up, think about the different possible explanations there may be for them.

Ask yourself:

- What is the evidence for this?
- Would it stand up in court?
- What else could be going on here?
- How would I see this if a friend were saying it to me?
- Do I have any experience that shows a different view?





# GRATITUDE

Cultivating gratitude is an important part of recovery. Gratitude is recognised as one of the foundational virtues in the creation of happiness. If you are grateful to be on the road to recovery, then it is less likely that you will relapse because you will feel empowered to move forward.

Positive thinking and a positive outlook can influence behaviour and aid in leading a sustainable, recovery-orientated life.

Often people in active addiction tend to be depressed, self-centred and think only of their own needs. With gratitude comes a less selfish attitude and more satisfaction in needs being met. By practising gratitude, you will become more optimistic, feel more in control of your own life, and feel less stressed in your environment.

A study at the University of California found that a sense of gratitude results in many personal benefits including:

## ***Physical:***

- Stronger immune system
- Reduced sensing of aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Increased interest in exercise and health
- Better, more restful sleep

## ***Psychological:***

- Increased levels of positive emotions
- Feeling more alert, alive, and awake
- Increased sense of joy and pleasure
- Increased feelings of optimism and happiness

## ***Social:***

- Increased desire to be helpful, generous, and compassionate
- Increased feelings of forgiveness
- Increased interest in being outgoing
- Reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation

Gratitude allows you to celebrate the present and be an active participant in life.

## Practicing Gratitude

### 1. Keep a gratitude journal

Recall moments of gratitude daily by recording 1-3 things which you are grateful for, including people, places, objects, moments, and successes. Journalling your gratitude moments becomes a habit, and the mind shifts into a permanent way of being.

### 2. Focus on what is important

Concentrating on the people around you and your relationships is a key part of long-lasting happiness.

### 3. Appreciate the small things

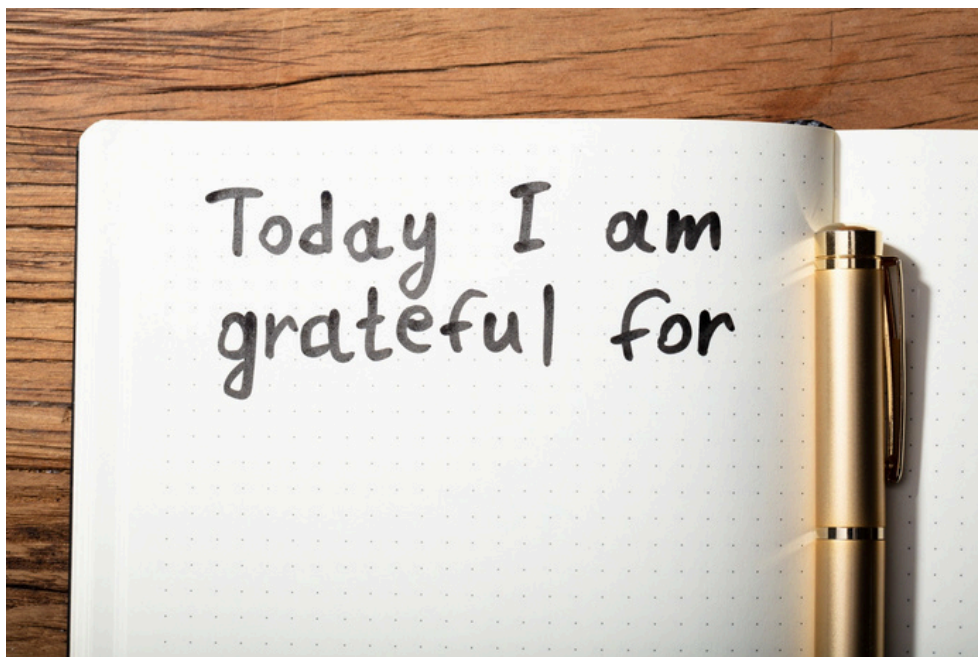
Think about the things you take for granted and what life would be like without them. You will have a renewed appreciation for the things you do have and the people in your life.

### 4. Share your appreciation

Think about those that have made an impact in your life and share your gratitude with them.

### 5. Give back - express your gratitude through volunteering

Once you feel your needs are met and you have a strong sense of gratitude, your capacity to give to others will increase.



# SECTION 8: RESOURCES

# RESOURCES

## PODCASTS

- **The Problem Gambling Podcast** - Barry Grant & Tony O Reilly (Ireland)
- **All In: The Addicted Gambler's Podcast** - Brian Hatch (USA)
- **All Bets Are Off** - Ryan Pitcher & Chris Gilham (UK)
- **The Broke Girl Society** - Christina Cooke (USA)



## BOOKS

***The Girl Gambler: A young woman's story of her escape from gambling addiction*** - Stacey Goodwin

***Might Bite: The Secret Life of a Gambler*** - Patrick Foster

***Tony 10: The astonishing story of the postman who gambled €10,000,000... and lost it all*** - Declan Lynch & Tony O Reilly

***Hooked: Addiction and the Long Road to Recovery*** - Paul Merson

***A House in the Countryside: Living Gamble Free and Happy*** - William Halstead



# USEFUL CONTACTS (ROI)



**Phone No:** 1800 247 247



**Alcoholics Anonymous  
Ireland**

**Phone No:** 01 842 0700



**Phone No:** 01 661 7211



**Phone No:** 1800 477 477



**Phone No:** 1800 459 459



**Phone No:** 116 123



**Phone No:** 1800 341 900

# USEFUL CONTACTS (NI)



**Phone No:** 0800 043 40 50



**Phone No:** 0300 304 7000



**Phone No:** 0800 088 6042



**Phone No:** 028 9032 6803



**Phone No:** 116 123



**Phone No:** 0800 915 4604



# End