

wee changes can make a big difference

tips to find healthier ways to feed the 'Hungry ghost'

What is the 'Hungry Ghost'?

Sometimes we feel there is something missing inside ourselves, or in our lives. We have a need to constantly seek relief from the emptiness even fear this causes, this can often lead to unhelpful coping strategies, which do not feed the need, we have at all, and in some ways can make us feel even more empty. No matter how much effort we put into feeding this unhelpful habit, we return to feeling empty inside. Unhelpful coping strategies won't replace what is missing, it will only take even more from us. Like a hungry ghost, never satisfied, always wanting more.

What can lead to unhelpful coping strategies?

Sometimes it's a past hurt or trauma, a painful experience which leaves an ache, which can lead to unhelpful coping strategies. Feelings such as stress, depression, loneliness, fear, and anxiety can trigger a gambling problem, or other unhelpful strategies like misuse of drugs or alcohol to try and manage these feelings. Believing the unhelpful strategy will take the pain, stress, anxiety away, but sadly often, only bringing more.



Know when it's no longer fun and stop!

When life is challenging we may seek diversion, entertainment as we are bored, or lonely and turn to gambling. It is so important when the fun stops, we stop and to know when it has stopped being fun. The challenges start when it stops being a diversion, begins to be a coping strategy and then becomes a way of life. Chasing the next big win. But as gambling can become a hungry ghost, no win is ever big enough, it never is satisfied and will push you more and more to risk losing more and more, maybe till you lose everything.



How do I know my gambling is a problem?

If gambling has become more important than other things in your life, if you are ignoring all the warning signs, of stress associated with feeding your habit, finding money to feed your habit, maybe spending money that was for bills, or using a money lender, you have a problem.

Ask for help

If you are finding it difficult, you don't have to handle your issue with gambling on your own. There are some excellent groups who can really help you, and your family, face the problems you have with gambling.

Self-awareness

A part of us knows when our habits are getting out of control, but sadly we often ignore it. Those who try to point out we may have a problem we become angry at, or secretive with. Part of us is ashamed at what we are doing, but we just don't know how to stop. We may even think about suicide, and if gambling has you thinking of suicide, please speak to someone now.

Talk about it

Talking about gambling problems with somebody you trust and someone who won't judge you can really help. It can also reduce the stress that can cause you to continue to gamble.



You matter

Sometimes lack of compassion for ourselves, can lead to gambling. Somewhere in our heads we have hit a self-destruct button, we see where this is going and feel powerless to stop, a part of us knows we should, but we don't think we can and we continue to cause ourselves further pain by not knowing how to stop, or, ask for help and show ourselves compassion.

Face the feelings and the fear

Admitting you have a problem can sometimes leave you feeling ashamed and guilty. This is totally normal and by acknowledging the problem and asking for help, you can change your life for the better.



Look for alternative ways to feel fulfilled



People can fall into gambling through boredom. Try and find a new hobby or try voluntary work, learn a new skill, explore a new job. If not having enough company is an issue join a community group, find others with the same interests as yourself. If there is something missing in your life, you feel gambling is replacing, maybe speak to someone about how you feel. Gambling isn't a healthy coping strategy to a life challenge.

Be kind to you

Admitting you have a problem is a big hurdle to overcome, so well done! Focus on the positive changes you are making and keep reminding yourself of them. Find new ways to have self-compassion and remember, people can help you. Sometimes we all need help to remember to be kind to ourselves.

Who will help?

Citizens Advice Bureau Scotland W: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/get-help-with-gambling-problems/#!

GamCare T: 0808 8020 133 **W:** www.gamcare.org.uk

GambleAware W: about.gambleaware.org

Gamblers Anonymous: W: www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

RCA Trust T: 0141 887 0880 **W:** www.rcatrust.org.uk

Samaritans T: 116 123 **W:** www.samaritans.org

**The Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit
W:** www.tsscot.co.uk/illegal-lending/loan-sharks

COPE Scotland Tips on kindness to the self, others and the planet W: www.cope-scotland.org

“No society can understand itself without looking at its shadow side.”

Gabor Maté, In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction

You matter, your wellbeing matters

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