



C. Reaching Your Goal

8. Dealing with urges

V.1

People with gambling problems who decide to stop or to control their gambling must learn to cope with urges and temptations. Urges are usually the strongest during the first few weeks of quitting or cutting back.

It is important to develop new ways of coping when this happens, but first it is necessary to evaluate your existing coping skills. This will help you identify factors that cause you to gamble and will increase your awareness about situations where you may be at risk.

There are two types of effective coping:

- 1. By thinking** — Using self talk to fight the urge to gamble. In research, almost all the people interviewed who had successfully overcome a gambling problem said that they used “thinking” strategies, such as remembering past gambling problems and thinking about how well they were doing, to accomplish their goal.
- 2. By acting** — Doing things that will help you stay away from your gambling. Over half the people interviewed who had successfully overcome a gambling problem reported that they made a change in their leisure and recreational activities. Almost half made a change in their social life.

Recording your urges and coping strategies can increase your understanding of the role that gambling plays in your life, and it can help you to identify the approaches that are most effective for avoiding gambling.

Record times when you have already effectively coped with an urge to gamble:

Example:

- Where were you and with whom?
I was driving alone after a fight with my partner.
- Describe how you were feeling?
I was feeling angry, upset, and bored.
- What did you say to yourself?
I told myself that if I went gambling (and lost) I would just end up feeling worse. I also told myself that there were plenty of other things I could do to calm down.
- What did you do instead?
I drove to a friend's house to talk things over and watch TV.
- Did your coping work?
Yes, my coping worked.



C. Reaching Your Goal

Example 1

Where were you and with whom?

Describe how you were feeling:

What did you say to yourself?

What did you do instead?

Did your coping work?

Example 2

Where were you and with whom?

Describe how you were feeling:

What did you say to yourself?

What did you do instead?



C. Reaching Your Goal

Did your coping work?

Example 3

Where were you and with whom?

Describe how you were feeling:

What did you say to yourself?

What did you do instead?

Did your coping work?

Make a summary of your best ways of coping:

Once you have completed this worksheet, try using the **Monitor Your Gambling & Urges** tool on our website. It's a helpful way of monitoring your behaviour and strengthening your coping strategies.

Disclaimer: Information on this site is not to be used for diagnosis, treatment or referral services and CAMH does not provide diagnostic, treatment or referral services through the internet. Individuals should contact their person physician, and/or their local addiction or mental health agency for further information.
©2013 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health