

EARLY COPING STRATEGIES



The first few weeks after changing your gambling can be a difficult time. Some people compare it to losing a best friend and can feel sadness without it.

There are some important things you can do right away to help prevent relapse. Try out as many of the following suggestions as you can. The more action you can take, the easier it will be to keep your gambling goal during this time in your recovery.



Break off contact with people you gamble with. This can be done by clearly telling them you don't want any further contact with them. If you are concerned about your safety, discuss your plans with a professional.



If your goal is harm reduction, set a clear limit on time and/or money spent.



Try Gamblers Anonymous or other self-help groups. This means trying out a number of different types and locations of meetings so that you can make an informed decision about finding a self-help group that is right for you.



Limit the cash you carry or can access.



Try a new activity.



Ask a trusted friend, family member or support to help you manage your money.



Talk with supportive friends, family or health professionals about situations that are difficult for you.



Tell supportive friends (people who don't encourage play) that you are making these changes.



Self-exclude.

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Practice Exercise

Now come up with your own plan to help you cope in early recovery.

1. What high-risk people do you need to avoid at this time?

2. What high-risk places/activities do you need to avoid at this time?

3. What high-risk things do you need to avoid? (e.g., carrying cash, visiting websites, etc.)

4. What are some strategies that are working for you now?

5. What are some safe activities? Where can you seek support?

Adapted from: Herie, M.A. & Watkin-Merek, L. (2006). *Structured Relapse Prevention: An Outpatient Counselling Approach* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.