

Is your gambling uncovering mixed feelings? Know the signs before it can become a problem.

If your gambling has stopped being fun and become a source of stress and worry, it's time to take a break and reflect.

Anxiety, guilt or frustration are common early warning signals that, if ignored, can possibly lead to a gambling problem - the consequences of which can be emotionally and financially devastating, not just for you but also for your family and friends.

If you're having mixed feelings, know that help is available. Research from the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) shows that about 3.4 per cent of Ontarians have a moderate to severe gambling problem. That means that about 457,450 adults in Ontario are estimated to be negatively impacted.

During Problem Gambling Prevention Week, which runs in 18 Ontario cities, RGC is urging people to know the signs of a potential gambling problem.

Warning signs may include:

- Feeling guilty, anxious, frustrated or worried about gambling.
- Thinking or talking about gambling more than usual.
- Gambling more to win back losses.
- Experiencing extreme highs from gambling wins and extreme lows from gambling losses.
- Getting irritated more easily or having less patience when dealing with normal, everyday activities.

What to do when mixed feelings occur:

- The most important thing is to listen to your feelings and recognize that they are there for a reason. When they arise, take a break from gambling and do something else. Get back to other activities that you enjoy.
- Set a betting limit. Know what you can comfortably afford to lose and stick to it.
- Never chase losses by gambling more to win back lost money or get out of financial trouble. This usually leads to even greater losses.
- Set a time limit for your gambling and, when it's reached, walk away.
- Bear in mind that gambling is not a way to make money. Virtually all people with gambling problems hold the false belief that they are due for a big win. That belief can feed the development of problems.

How to get help:

There is free and confidential help available for those who feel they may have a problem. You can find contact information for local resources at www.knowthesigns.ca or you can call the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline **1-888-230-3505**.