

# GAMBLING AWARENESS

## Responsible Play THE CT WAY

**Gambling Problem? Help is available.**

### WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING?

Gambling responsibly means taking steps to reduce risks or harms to yourself that can occur when gambling. There are those that can get themselves into trouble financially. For others, their gambling can cause issues with friends and family, or some may drink too much and/or use other substances while they play. It's important to remember that all gambling activities have risk and to enjoy a safer playing experience, you must be aware of the risks and how you can minimize them. Using strategies when you gamble like setting a budget before you leave your house, taking breaks, and educating yourself on how the games work are just a few tips on being the safest and smartest player that you can be.

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**UCFS Healthcare**

BETTOR CHOICE GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM

860-823-3094

# MANAGING CRAVINGS

We've all experienced them. Those insatiable desires for the ONE THING we are working so hard to avoid, be it chocolate, alcohol, cigarettes, or a problematic behavior, such as video gaming or gambling. We know the scenario all too well. We wake up in the morning and declare, "Today is the day I am going to change (fill in the blank)!" And so we make up our minds, set our commitment, march off into battle, and sail along swimmingly for a day or two until, BAM! We are confronted with our nemesis in a stare down contest that we know from past experiences rarely goes in our favor. Hard as we try, we find ourselves downing that sleeve of cookies, having that glass of wine, smoking that cigarette, etc. Feeling defeated and discouraged, we begin to wonder if we'll ever be able to gain control, even as we decide to give it the 'ole college try again tomorrow. What **are** these things we call cravings, and how do we gain control over them?

Cravings are the result of a physiological process that begins with a cue, or a trigger. These cues can be tricky because they may be quite subtle or hidden. Triggers may be emotional (stress, sadness), sensory (sounds, smells, sights), or physical in nature (associating with others that remind us of an activity, seeing an advertisement on TV). If the trigger is subtle, we may not be immediately aware of the chain of events that is about to begin. For example, certain aromas may trigger a subconscious thought that reminds of the very thing we are trying to avoid. The trigger causes a particular part of the brain, the amygdala, to generate an increased amount of a neurotransmitter called dopamine.

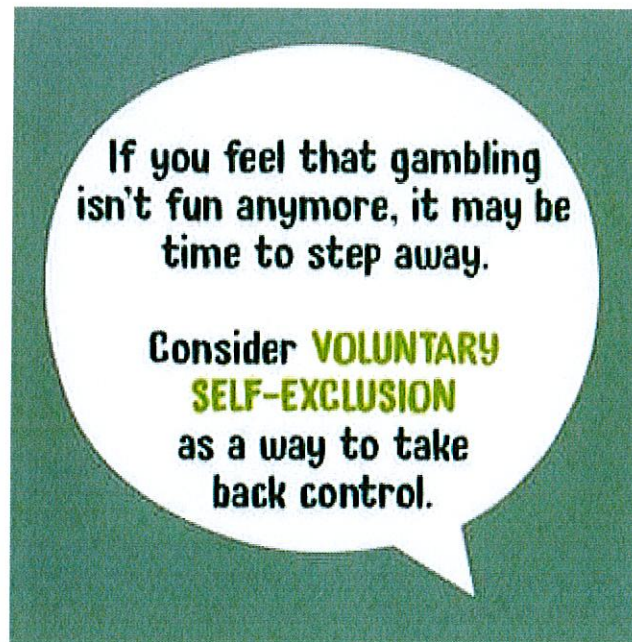


Dopamine creates a feeling of wellness, and as such it is sometimes referred to as the “feel good” chemical. According to Marc Lewis, Ph.D., author of *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain*, another characteristic of dopamine is that it serves to decrease “the noise” in our brains, allowing us to better focus. Think of being in a room filled with hundreds of objects, and allow yourself to block out the distracting background visual stimulation in order to concentrate your focus on one single object. The result of this process is to inhibit the weaker thoughts and emphasize the strongest one. So try as we might



to talk ourselves out of a behavior, the competing arguments become weaker as the voice of desire gains in strength and volume. Dopamine narrows our field of alternatives, leaving us to think only of the one thing we are trying to avoid. This explains those experiences of “I was feeling stressed from a difficult day at work, and all I could think about was...” So what can we do to better arm ourselves against this archenemy we call craving? The following suggestions may be helpful:

- **Remember** you are not responsible for the existence of cravings. You are responsible for your response to them.
- **Remind** yourself that you have control over what to do about a craving. If you can think of a strong enough reason to not act on a craving, you won't.
- **Avoid** high risk situations - individuals, groups, times, places, activities – that are likely to be triggering.
- **Distract** yourself - engage your mind in a simple activity done at high speed (count the number of tiles on the ceiling, say the alphabet backwards, tighten then muscles in your body over and over again, organize the items in your pocketbook, etc.)
- **Redirect** your attention – Make a list (or review) a list of benefits for not engaging, set a timer, engage in physical activity, create and read a coping statement, play a “benefits movie” in your mind as you picture yourself without the addiction, imagine the craving as an enemy that you are fighting back.



## **What is Voluntary Self-Exclusion?**

Self-exclusion allows a person to request to be excluded from legalized gaming activities in Connecticut. Individuals who enroll in self-exclusion are prohibited from collecting any winnings, recovering any losses or accepting complimentary gifts or services or any other thing of value from a licensee or operator. Operators may choose to exclude participants in the Connecticut Self-Exclusion list from their services in other states or countries.

## **How can Voluntary Self-Exclusion be Helpful?**

Voluntary self-exclusion can be a beneficial and empowering tool for those who feel they may be developing or have a problem with their gambling. By creating a barrier, it allows those who want to decrease or stop their activity, reduce the harms associated with gambling.



## **When Voluntary Self-Exclusion May Be An Option?**

- Gambling is no longer fun or entertainment
- Issues sticking to preset time or money limits
- Gambling is causing financial, health, or relationship problems
- Taking a break would be beneficial
- Gambling is causing feelings of stress, anxiety or concern
- The urge to gamble is becoming uncontrollable
- There is a focus on winning back losses
- Gambling has taken priority over other areas of life

**See the following websites for self-exclusion forms or contact us here at the Bettor Choice Gambling Treatment Program at (860) 823-3094 for assistance.**

<https://www.foxwoods.com/siteassets/casino/gc-202f-patron-voluntary-exclusionform1-26-2010.pdf>

<https://mohegansun.com/content/dam/mohegansun/PDF/Misc/self-exclusion.pdf>

[https://gaming-exclusion.service.ct.gov/selfexclusion/s/registration?language=en\\_US](https://gaming-exclusion.service.ct.gov/selfexclusion/s/registration?language=en_US)

### **KEEP GAMBLING SAFE & AFFORDABLE**



**Set a limit** on how much time & money & stick to it.

**View** gambling as entertainment, not as a way to make money.

**Balance** gambling with other leisure activities.

**If you gamble and spend more time & money than planned, take a break.**

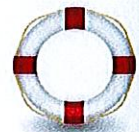
**CONCERNED ?**

**HELPLINE Confidential 24/7  
1-888-789-7777**

### **KEEP THE PROBLEM OUT OF GAMBLING**

● **Gamble with limits on time, frequency, & duration.**

● **Gamble in a social setting with others, not alone, & with money you can afford to lose.**



**Problem Gambling Helpline: 1-888-789-7777**  
[www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs)

### **Low Risk Gambling is**

A form of recreation, not to make money nor to make up for previous losses.

Setting limits on time, frequency, and duration.

In a social setting with others, not alone.

With money you can afford to lose.



### **High Risk Gambling is when**

Coping with grief, loneliness, anger or depression.

Under financial pressure and stress.

Recovering from mental health or substance use disorders.

Using alcohol or other drugs, or is under legal age to gamble.

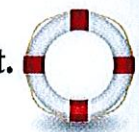
Problem Gambling Services, CT State Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services  
[www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs)

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**CONCERNED?**

**HELPLINE 1-888-789-7777**