

Are you concerned about someone's gambling?

By Diana Degan

If you are the spouse, a family member or friend of a person with a gambling problem, you probably want to help. The problem is the person may not be ready to admit he or she has a problem. Even if the gambling is having a negative effect on you and your family, you can't force someone to stop. The Responsible Gambling Council offers these tips on how to deal with the situation.

Be prepared.

- Get informed before you raise the issue. Go to www.responsiblegambling.org or other web sites that can help you understand the problem.
- Be cautious. If there is any chance of violent or abusive behaviours, get a support system in place.
- Choose your moment carefully. If the person is expressing remorse about gambling, this may be a good time to talk.

Raise your concerns.

- Talk from your own point of view. Express your feelings with "I feel" or "I think". The person will feel less defensive than if you say "You...."
- Be calm. Keep a cool head when talking about the person's gambling and other sensitive issues like family finances.
- Be firm. Make clear your expectations about future gambling, managing finances and managing responsibilities.

Follow-up.

- Recognize positive steps. Give praise for success.
- Get help for yourself. A counsellor or self-help group can help you communicate effectively, reduce your guilt and raise your self-esteem.
- Remember that change takes time. It may take several tries before the person successfully changes gambling behaviour.
- If necessary, make arrangements to protect your own finances.

For more money management strategies, safer gambling tips, tips on recognizing signs of potential problem gambling and the new, free Cost2Play Calculator, go to www.noregrets.ca.

