

## National Responsible Gambling Programme

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For the overwhelming majority of people, gambling is harmless recreational fun. For most people, gambling (be it horse racing, playing the lottery, or at a casino) is a form of leisure and entertainment. They go to the races, or bet on sport events, knowing how much money they can afford to spend. They don't spend more time than they can afford to on gambling either.

Certainly, they do not neglect their families and dependants because of gambling, nor does gambling affect their work adversely. Neither do they get into serious financial difficulties because of gambling, and then hope that more gambling will solve their financial problems.

However, for a small number of people, gambling does become a problem in their lives. In particular, they suspect that it would be better if they stopped gambling, or at least cut down and controlled their gambling. For some of these people, gambling may become an addiction.

**Question 1** – Because I'm quite well off, educated and mature, surely it means that I can control my gambling?

Not necessarily! Anyone can become a problem gambler regardless of age, race, religion, educational attainment, economic status and moral character. Problem gambling is like a disease, which can affect anyone. Some people seem to develop problems with gambling, just as some people have a tendency to develop addictive problems with alcohol or other drugs.

In these cases they know that gambling is getting them into serious trouble and they try very hard to control it. Unfortunately, they find that, no matter how hard they try, they simply can't stop or cut down their gambling by themselves.

Some people, in order to overcome their difficulties, will need help from others who have a special understanding of gambling problems. Africa's first National Responsible Gambling Programme has been devised to prevent the development of problems with gambling, and to provide help to those who nevertheless do develop such problems.

Sponsored by the gambling industry in Southern Africa, the programme is managed by independent experts from the National Centre for the Study of Gambling, which is based at the University of Cape Town. It has three components: public education and prevention; a treatment and counselling service for problem gamblers, their families and friends; and research, which ensures that the first two components operate with the most accurate scientific knowledge available both nationally and internationally.

Remember that it is illegal for children under 18 to participate in gambling. At a casino for example, be sure that you always know what your children are doing. A responsible parent will never leave children unattended. Most casinos offer crèches and other supervised childcare amenities. Use them, but don't leave your children for long periods just because there is someone looking after them. They are still your responsibility. Very importantly, do not ask your children to place bets on your behalf, or allow them to buy lottery tickets.

**Question 2** – Will I have to pay to receive help if I have a problem with my gambling?

Local South African calls to the helpline (0800 006 008) are free\*, and if it is necessary for a caller to get out-patient treatment from one of the NRG's medical professionals, these costs are borne by the programme, not the patient.

**Question 3** – Isn't it very shameful to admit to having a problem with gambling?

No! Problem gambling is like a disease, it is not your fault if you contract it, but it is your responsibility to do something sensible about it. What is shameful is to continue doing serious damage to yourself and your loved ones and doing nothing about it. Obviously, it's best if people can avoid the situation in which their gambling becomes uncontrollable. To do this, people need to be aware of the danger signals which can give them an early warning. They may then be able to take appropriate action without seeking further help. One way of doing this is to approach a casino manager, for example, and ask that you be prevented from gambling. This is called self-exclusion.

If you stick to these rules you can avoid problems with your gambling

- Decide beforehand how much money you are willing to spend. Stick to your limit.
- Don't try to recoup your losses. They may only increase.
- Beware how often, and for how long you play.
- When you are winning, take occasional breaks. Think about the smart time to stop.
- Remember that gambling is entertainment. It's not a way to get rich quickly, or pay off your debts.
- Don't forget that gambling is a game of chance. There are no systems or formulas to guarantee success.

If you need help with a gambling problem, for yourself, a friend or for someone you care for, call the National Responsible Gambling Tollfree Counselling line on **0800 006 008**

\*International number 00 27 21 674 5830 (standard telephone rates apply).



Sun International

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Sun International supports responsible gambling. Gambling only for persons 18 years and older. Winners know when to stop. National Responsible Gambling Programme Tollfree Counselling Line 0800 006 008. Sun International Casinos are licensed casinos.