



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING COUNCIL

Gambling without limits is like driving without brakes

March is Problem Gambling Prevention Month

Do you know the signs?

I have maxed out my credit card.

I have a friend who can't stop. Poker is destroying his life.

I have a huge problem. I lost two weeks pay in 20 minutes.

I need help and I don't know where to go.

TORONTO, March 1 - For most people, a game of Bingo, cards or blackjack is a source of entertainment, but that's not the case for the estimated 3 to 4 per cent of Ontarians who experience problems with gambling, which can lead to desperation and destroyed lives.

Within Limits Problem Gambling Prevention Month runs throughout March to increase awareness and shine a spotlight on the signs of problem gambling, which touches the lives of one-in-ten Ontario families.

"According to our research, 340,000 people in Ontario have moderate to severe gambling problems. Our goal is to share information about the signs of problem gambling, how to avoid the risks, and to ensure that people who have a problem know where to seek help in their communities," explains Responsible Gambling Council CEO Jon Kelly, PhD.

"Research shows that the more you gamble, the more your risk of developing a gambling problem intensifies. This March we are informing people about strategies to help them play within limits," says Kelly.

Kelly says not everyone who gambles frequently will develop a gambling problem. Problem gamblers come from all walks of life and defy easy characterization; however, most problem gamblers may experience the following:

Signs of Problem Gambling

- Spending more and more time on gambling activities
- Constantly thinking about gambling
- Chasing losses - trying to win back lost money
- Missing work, home and other obligations to gamble
- Lying to friends and family about gambling

"There are a few common signs that most gamblers with problems share, and one of the most important signs is the amount of time spent gambling. When that starts to escalate from once a month, to once a week to a few times a week, the risk of developing a gambling problem increases," explains Kelly.

Avoiding the Risks: Playing Within Limits

To protect yourself from the risks of problem gambling, the Responsible Gambling Council experts recommend the following strategies:

- Set a money limit and a time limit before you start and stick to it
- Use only money you can afford to lose
- Never borrow money to gamble
- Balance gambling with other activities

"It's very important to set time and money limits and stick to them. Take frequent breaks, which helps break the intense momentum sometimes associated with gambling," advises Kelly. "When your time is up, you leave, no matter whether you are ahead or behind."

Responsible Gambling Council

The Responsible Gambling Council is a non-profit organization that works with individuals and communities to address gambling in a healthy and responsible way. The council undertakes research and public awareness programs designed to prevent gambling-related problems.

In addition to youth gambling education programs, research and other initiatives, the Council, together with COSTI Immigrant Services and Chinese Family Services of Ontario leads March Problem Gambling Prevention Month.

This year, Within Limits Problem Gambling Prevention Month is reaching out to Ontario residents in 10 languages. The Within Limits program is made possible through financial support from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion.

For more information about Within Limits and problem gambling treatment support, please visit www.responsiblegambling.org or call the Ontario Problem Gambling Help line at 1-888-230-3505.

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