

Recipe for breaking free of gambling addiction

This is like breaking into the secret vault in the corporate headquarters of the world famous beverage company and finding their formula which they have carefully guarded for nearly a hundred years.

The first thing you have to know is what you fear.

This is what the compulsive gambler fears: That he won't be able to keep his promises about stopping gambling. Sure, he'd like to stop. He will promise anyone anything they want to hear. But he knows he won't be able to. That is why it is so hard. It is not the lure of easy riches, the chasing of the 'high' or the 'rush'. It is not the feeling of escape to a dream world, (although it may have been in the beginning). By the time you are an addict, the only thing you want is to not to have to part with your longtime companion, your gambling.

1) **Identify your enemy:** **Your enemy is your fear of not being able to quit.**

Here is what the non-gamblers don't understand. They think if they talk about the odds, the difficulty it is to win the big score, the responsibilities of providing for your family, paying your bills on time, caring about your loved ones, caring about morality, etc, etc. then that will cause you to wake up from your dream world and get over the addiction. Bah. That is all garbage. Throw it out the window. The addict knows what he knows. He knows he has tried before to stop but he can't. Gamblers are typically bright, responsible people. They know they have messed up. They have lost money. There is a sense of fairness about them and that dictates that they keep gambling until they even the score and win back enough money to recover their losses, and then they can quit. That's the illusion that is so hard to break free from.

2) **State your Basic Assumptions about your problem:** **The only thing that is keeping you from breaking free from your addiction is that you can't stop. You just can't. Because you are addicted. Addicted to gambling.**

Until you grasp the basic premise that gambling is just a bad habit you got into and that you can also get back out of, you will never be cured. If you believe you are licked by it, you will be. If you believe it will be a lifelong affliction, it will be.

3) **State who you are:** **You are either a gambler or a non-gambler. The choice is yours and yours alone.**

Who are you? "I am a compulsive gambler"

Who are you? "I am NOT a compulsive gambler"

Choose one (you can only choose one at any given moment) but you can go back and forth as often as you like throughout the day. If you're buying tickets, you're a gambler. If you're not gambling, you're not a gambler. **You're not one thing or the other, you are what your behavior is proving you to be at that moment.**

4) Learn how to identify a gambling opportunity, “a moment of truth” whereby you can pause and determine if you will proceed to gamble or walk away: **At the moment of purchase, right before you get to the counter, say to yourself the following (have this in writing in your pocket and read it to yourself).**

The reason the gambler can't stop gambling is because he just can't stop. He just can't. And why? Because he is addicted to gambling.

5) Ask yourself this question, “If I know that the reason I can’t stop is only because I just can’t stop, can I at least stop for just this one occurrence? I know I can come back later and gamble.” If you can’t, you simply just can’t, that is ok, it just means you’re not ready. Go ahead and gamble without guilt. If you can walk away and turn around and go home without gambling for that one episode then score yourself one successful ‘moment of truth.’

6) Keep a notebook and record each date and time of a successful ‘moment of truth’ when you were able to walk away from that one encounter even though you may have gone back later and gambled.

7) Earn for yourself one hundred successful ‘moments of truth.’ It may take a few weeks or a few months. It doesn’t matter.

8) Figure this out: If at a moment of truth, you turn and walk away, is it not true that you are indeed a non-gambler... at that moment? And isn’t our life nothing more than a bunch of moments?

9) Think about the wizard of Oz, how when the curtain was pulled back there was nothing scary there after all.

10) Realize that the only thing between you as a compulsive gambler and you as a non-gambler is a brief one or two second moment in time when you place a bet. After practicing this technique of walking away over and over you will be helped by what the psychological literature refers to as ‘extinction.’ You will develop the ability to stand up to a gambling opportunity and say to yourself, “That’s not me. That’s not who I am. I am Not a Gambler. I’ve proved it to myself over and over that I do indeed have the strength to walk away. I am back in control of my life. I no longer have to gamble because I am not a gambler.” Chills will go up and down your spine when this breakthrough moment arrives. You’ll realize that gambling no longer tempts you. The shackles that held you in chains for so long just slip away and melt into nothingness. Because that is what that awful, fearful grip of addiction was, and is - a bunch of nothingness. It was just signals in your brain that had been conditioned to believe that gambling was a necessary part of you and once you go through extinction the brain will relearn that you don’t need to gamble anymore because you are no longer a gambler.