

GAMBLING ADDICTION | THERAPY PACKET

*Affirmations for People Struggling with Gambling/Suggestion:
Print out the following statements and cut into strips. Read one daily out loud.*

"I am stronger than my urges and can overcome any challenge."

"Each day, I make choices that support my well-being and financial health."

"I am in control of my actions and make decisions that benefit my future."

"I deserve peace and stability in my life."

"I am committed to healing and growing from my past experiences."

"My worth is not determined by my financial status or losses."

"I am learning and growing, becoming the best version of myself."

"I seek help and support when I need it, and I am not alone in this journey."

"Every step forward, no matter how small, is a victory."

"I am resilient and capable of creating a fulfilling life without gambling/gaming."

CHILDHOOD ISSUES LEADING TO GAMBLING ADDICTION

Neglect and Lack of Attention:

Children who did not receive adequate attention or care may seek excitement and attention through gambling as adults.

Reflective Questions:

Did I feel neglected or overlooked as a child?

How has this influenced my need for attention or excitement as an adult?

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse can lead to low self-esteem, causing individuals to seek validation or escape through gambling.

Reflective Questions:

Did I experience emotional abuse during my childhood?

How has this affected my self-esteem and my relationship with gambling?

Family History of Addiction:

Growing up in a household where gambling or other addictions were present can normalize these behaviors.

Reflective Questions:

Did my family have a history of gambling or other addictions?

How has this influenced my own behavior and attitudes towards gambling?

Trauma and Stress:

Childhood trauma or chronic stress may lead individuals to gamble as a coping mechanism.

Reflective Questions:

Did I experience trauma or chronic stress during my childhood?

Am I using gambling as a way to cope with unresolved trauma or stress?

Financial Insecurity:

Experiencing financial instability during childhood can create an unhealthy relationship with money and risk-taking behaviors.

Reflective Questions:

Did I experience financial insecurity growing up?

How has this shaped my relationship with money and risk-taking?

Lack of Healthy Coping Mechanisms:

Without learning healthy ways to cope with stress or emotions, individuals may turn to gambling for relief.

Reflective Questions:

Did I learn healthy coping mechanisms as a child?

How can I develop and use healthier ways to cope with my emotions and stress?

Unstable Family Environment:

Growing up in a chaotic or unpredictable family environment can lead to a craving for control and predictability, often sought through gambling.

Reflective Questions:

Was my family environment unstable or chaotic?

Am I seeking control and predictability through gambling?

Modeling Risky Behavior:

Observing parents or guardians engaging in risky behaviors, including gambling, can influence a child's understanding of risk and reward.

Reflective Questions:

Did I witness risky behaviors, such as gambling, in my household?

How has this influenced my understanding and engagement in gambling?

Why Adults Gamble with a Sense of No Control in Their Life

Desire for Control:

Gambling can create an illusion of control, where individuals believe they can influence the outcome and regain control over their lives.

Reflective Questions:

Do I feel a lack of control in my life?

How does gambling give me a false sense of control?

Escapism:

Gambling provides a temporary escape from feelings of powerlessness, stress, or dissatisfaction in other areas of life.

Reflective Questions:

Am I using gambling to escape from feelings of powerlessness or stress?

What am I trying to avoid or escape from by gambling?

Thrill and Excitement:

The excitement and adrenaline rush associated with gambling can make individuals feel alive and in control, even if the feeling is fleeting.

Reflective Questions:

Do I seek the thrill and excitement of gambling to feel more alive?

How does this temporary excitement impact my overall well-being?

Instant Gratification:

Gambling offers immediate feedback and rewards, which can be appealing to those who feel they lack control over long-term outcomes in their lives.

Reflective Questions:

Do I seek instant gratification through gambling?

How can I focus on long-term goals and outcomes instead?

Compensation for Loss:

Adults who have experienced significant losses or setbacks may turn to gambling in an attempt to compensate for their perceived failures or regain what they have lost.

Reflective Questions:

Am I using gambling to compensate for past losses or setbacks?

How can I address these feelings of loss without resorting to gambling?

GAMBLING ADDICTION AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

“Grief/Loss” can represent a break-down, death, separation, abandonment, divorce, or break-up in a relationship.

Coping with Grief:

Gambling can become a way to cope with the intense emotions and pain associated with losing a loved one.

Reflective Questions:

How has the loss of a loved one impacted my gambling behavior?

Am I using gambling to cope with my grief?

Avoidance of Emotions:

Engaging in gambling allows individuals to avoid confronting their grief and emotions directly.

Reflective Questions:

Am I using gambling to avoid dealing with my emotions and grief?

What emotions am I avoiding, and how can I confront them more healthily?

Seeking Comfort and Distraction:

The act of gambling can provide a temporary distraction and sense of comfort during a difficult time.

Reflective Questions:

Do I find comfort or distraction in gambling?

How can I find healthier ways to seek comfort and distraction?

Feelings of Isolation:

The loss of a loved one can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, which some individuals may try to alleviate through gambling.

Reflective Questions:

Do I feel isolated or lonely after the loss of a loved one?

How can I connect with others and reduce feelings of isolation without gambling?

Attempt to Reclaim Joy:

The excitement and potential rewards of gambling might be seen as a way to reclaim joy and positive emotions after a period of mourning.

Reflective Questions:

Am I trying to reclaim joy through gambling?

How can I find joy and positive emotions in healthier ways?

Creating a Void:

Losing a loved one often creates a profound sense of emptiness or void. Gambling can be an attempt to fill this void with the excitement and temporary highs that come from the activity.

Reflective Questions:

Do I feel a void or emptiness after my loss?

Am I trying to fill this void with gambling, and how can I address this feeling more healthily?

Illusion of Filling the Void:

While gambling may provide momentary relief or distraction, it creates an illusion of filling the emotional void. In reality, the underlying grief and loss remain unaddressed, often leading to further emotional and financial turmoil.

Reflective Questions:

Does gambling give me a false sense of filling the void left by my loss?

How can I address my grief and loss more directly?

False Sense of Belonging and Control:

Gambling can provide a false sense of belonging, as individuals may feel connected to the gambling community or environment. It can also offer a false sense of control over their lives and outcomes.

Reflective Questions:

Do I feel a sense of belonging when I gamble?

How can I find a genuine sense of belonging and control in my life?

Self-Sabotage:

Gambling can be a form of self-sabotage, where individuals knowingly engage in destructive behavior as a way to punish themselves or reinforce negative beliefs.

Reflective Questions:

Am I using gambling to self-sabotage or punish myself?

How can I break this cycle of self-destructive behavior?

Seeking Autonomy:

Gambling or spending money without seeking permission can be a way to assert autonomy and do exactly what one wants without constraints or oversight.

Reflective Questions:

Am I using gambling to assert my autonomy and independence?

How can I assert my autonomy in healthier and more constructive ways?

Holding on to Resentment:

Losing a loved one can lead to holding onto resentment and anger, which may be directed towards oneself or others.

Reflective Questions:

In what ways have I held on to resentment for my loss?

Who do I resent, or who am I angry with?

How have I not grieved, and why?

Shame and Guilt:

Gambling can lead to feelings of shame and guilt, which can perpetuate the cycle of addiction.

Reflective Questions:

How has gambling given me a reason to later beat myself up or suffer in shame and guilt?

How can I address these feelings of shame and guilt without turning to gambling?

Self-Reflective Questions for Understanding Gambling Behavior

Triggers and Motivations:

What emotions or situations trigger my urge to gamble?

What do I hope to achieve or escape from when I gamble?

Impact on Life:

How has gambling affected my relationships, work, and personal well-being?

What financial and emotional costs have I incurred due to gambling?

Patterns and Behaviors:

When did I first start gambling, and how has my behavior changed over time?

Are there specific times or places where I feel more compelled to gamble?

Coping and Alternatives:

What healthier activities or hobbies can I engage in to replace gambling?

How can I manage stress and emotional triggers without resorting to gambling?

Support and Resources:

Who can I reach out to for support when I feel the urge to gamble?

What resources (books, therapy, support groups) can help me understand and overcome my gambling addiction?

Self-Worth and Future:

How do I view myself, and how does gambling influence my self-esteem?

What are my long-term goals, and how does gambling align with or hinder those goals?

Grief and Loss:

How has the loss of a loved one affected my gambling behavior?

How has my gambling given me a false sense of belonging, control, or dissociation?

Have I used gambling to self-sabotage myself? How so?

How have I used gambling or spending money to do exactly what I wanted to do without permission from anyone?

In what ways have I held on to resentment for my loss?

Who do I resent, or who am I angry with?

How have I not grieved, and why?

How has gambling given me a reason to later beat myself up or suffer in shame and guilt?

These affirmations, reflections on childhood issues, and self-questions can provide a framework for understanding and overcoming gambling addiction. As a family therapist, incorporating these elements into therapy sessions can help clients gain insight and develop healthier coping mechanisms.