

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS®
INTERNATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE



EMAIL: isomain@gamblersanonymous.org

WEBSITE: www.gamblersanonymous.org



FOR MEETING INFORMATION
IN YOUR AREA CALL
(855) 2-CALL-GA
(855) 222-5542

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GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING WITH URGES TO GAMBLE

When the Craving Hits, What's Your Next Move?

Anyone walking the path of recovery knows that the urge to gamble doesn't fade overnight. It waits in the background, showing up when you least expect it. Sometimes, these cravings hit with such sudden, overpowering force that they blindside you, threatening to tear down everything you have worked so hard to build.

A relapse doesn't happen because you are weak; it happens because you didn't have a shield ready when the storm hit. This pamphlet is your shield. Open it now to discover immediate, real-time coping mechanisms to stop a craving in its tracks and keep your future secure.

SUGGESTIONS TO PREVENT URGES FROM OCCURRING

Strengthen Your Recovery Network

- **Attend GA meetings** at least once a week, or as often as needed.
- **Get actively involved** by taking on a trusted servant role in your group.
- **Call other GA members** on a regular basis to stay connected.
- **Find a sponsor** to guide you through the program and offer direct support.
- **Read the GA Combo Book** repeatedly; everything you need is in that little yellow book.
- **Live the Steps of Recovery** with the help of your sponsor to naturally reduce future urges.

Remove the Temptation

- **Block all access** by staying far away from physical casinos and blocking internet gambling sites.
- **Shop smart** by choosing stores and supermarkets that are completely gambling-free.
- **Filter what you see** by avoiding sports sections, stock tickers, lottery tickets, and racing programs.
- **Change your circle** by walking away from people who gamble, even if they are friends or relatives.
- **Shut down talk** and avoid getting caught up in conversations about betting.

Create Financial Barriers

- **Carry bare-minimum cash**—only what you absolutely need for the day.
- **Protect your income** by setting up direct deposit and letting a trusted person manage your finances.
- **Destroy plastic traps** by getting rid of credit, debit, and ATM cards to cut off easy cash.

Shift Your Mindset & Habits

- **Track your time** by celebrating your anniversary date to build healthy inner confidence.
- **Change your vocabulary** from "I *have* to stop gambling" to "I *want* to stop gambling."
- **Work on character defects** like anger, impatience, or self-pity, which often lead back to betting.
- **Move your body to heal your mind**; better physical fitness leads to a healthier, stronger mental state.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHEN YOU HAVE AN URGE TO GAMBLE

Pause and Intercept the Thought

- **Acknowledge the urge** immediately by telling yourself: *"Right now, I want to gamble. Too bad I don't gamble anymore."*
- **Use the 10-minute rule** to delay placing a bet, finding a distraction, and repeating the delay until the urge passes.
- **Change the slide** in your mind by closing your eyes and actively replacing gambling thoughts with images of loved ones or work.
- **Shut down inner debates** and reject dangerous lies like *"it will be different this time"* or *"I'm due for a win."*

Lean into Spiritual and Mental Tools

- **Recite the Serenity Prayer** continuously until your mind quiets down and the pressure dissipates.
- **Surrender the craving** by working Steps Two and Three, visualizing yourself handing the urge over to your Higher Power.
- **Try the disintegration meditation** by closing your eyes, imagining the urge as a solid object, and watching it shatter into tiny pieces.

Take Immediate Physical Action

- **Go to a GA meeting (physical or virtual)** right away, no matter how bad or unmotivated you feel
- **Call someone you trust** immediately and speak openly about the intense craving you are experiencing.
- **Leave all money behind** by locking away cash, checks, and cards, then immediately going to meet a friend.
- **Get outside of yourself** by shifting your focus away from your own thoughts and finding someone else to help.

Expose the Reality of the Bet

- **Think the bet through** completely by focusing on the mathematical certainty that you will eventually lose.
- **Remember past losses** to remind yourself that gambling is the direct root cause of your current financial problems.
- **Deconstruct the illusion of winning** by admitting that any new winnings will just become ammunition to keep gambling until it's all gone.

Reframe Your Time and Focus

- **Write a pros and cons list** on paper, rating each item from 1 to 10 to see an honest, mathematical score of how gambling ruins your life.
- **Plan your free time** ahead of time so you never find yourself bored, isolated, or wandering into old habits.
- **Commit to just today** by focusing all your energy on staying clean for the next 24 hours instead of worrying about forever.