

Self-Help Gambling Tools: A User Guide for Helping Professionals

Sylvia Hagopian

Michael Weyman

Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

www.ProblemGambling.ca

Acknowledgements

CAMH's Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario, CAMH's Information Management Group and Dr. David Hodgins at the University of Calgary played a significant role in the development of the Self-Help Gambling Tools and continue to play a role in the ongoing enhancement of our content and of our web and mobile applications.

ProblemGambling.ca is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

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Introduction

Current trends

In Ontario, government-operated gambling has steadily expanded in the past two decades, with revenues exceeding \$4.7 billion in 2009. Many people in Ontario gamble, and most do so without causing harm to themselves or others. However, about 3.4 per cent of Ontarians exhibit evidence of a gambling problem, and the resulting individual and social costs are significant. This trend is a global phenomenon. Gambling is one of the fastest growing businesses in the world, with a subgroup of people developing a problem. For this group of people, a range of financial and psychological impacts may occur, resulting in heavy social, economic and health costs such as mental illness, gambling-related crime, damaged relationships and bankruptcy.

Out of the more than 300,000 people in Ontario who are estimated to experience problems with gambling each year, only a very small percentage seek help from problem gambling treatment centres. Research has shown that only about one in ten gamblers with a lifetime diagnosis of gambling dependence will ever seek treatment (Cunningham, 2005). A key motivation for the development of these Internet-based tools was the desire to reach out to people with gambling problems who are not accessing traditional forms of treatment, whether due to shame, physical disability, geographic barriers or other reasons. Preliminary evidence shows that Internet therapy and other online interventions are more effective than no treatment, and as effective as face-to-face therapy for a large range of mental health disorders, including treatment of addictions and problem gambling (Monaghan & Blaszczynski, 2009). There is also growing evidence that people affected by gambling problems can be effectively supported with online interventions (Calbring & Smit, 2008).

Ontario Lottery and Gaming

In August 2010, Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) announced in an official press release that they would be extending their brand and game offerings to online gaming in the year 2012. “OLG will choose from a full range of offerings to be delivered on the internet, through an online site accessible via personal computers, laptops, and other internet-connected devices.” (OLG Media, 2010) In stakeholder meetings and conferences, OLG emphasizes that regulated online gambling already exists in other jurisdictions. Therefore, in order to stay competitive and offer Ontarians a similar range of convenience-oriented gaming products, they too needed to move into online gambling.

As health-care professionals, our main concern is how this regulated expansion will affect the public health of the people of Ontario. Will people be less tentative about gambling online with a Crown Corporation, therefore increasing the number of people who gamble? How will intoxicated people, gambling online from a private location, be identified and helped when there is no pit boss or croupier to keep an eye on things? Will there be an increase in gambling among younger adults, given their high use of the Internet and mobile devices? Will providing access to gambling 24 hours a day, seven days a week, also increase the risk of users developing problems?

Online help and addictions

People are increasingly turning to the Internet as a medium through which to obtain information and guidance in dealing with their addictions. For a comprehensive review, we recommend reading *Internet-based Interventions for the Treatment of Problem Gambling: A report prepared for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)*, by Sally Monaghan & Alex Blaszczynski. People can find screening tools, self-help tools, monitoring apps and more online for a wide range of mental health concerns. There are benefits and disadvantages to using web tools, which are reviewed in the section of this user guide entitled “Client Suitability for the Self-Help Gambling Tools.” When exploring online therapeutic intervention options, special attention should be paid to the reputation of the organization responsible for them.

Questions that should be considered include:

- Is there a fee for use/service?
- Are the online resources informed by research?
- What are the organization's credentials?
- Where will personal health information be stored?
- How is privacy protected?
- Who funds the development and ongoing hosting of these tools?
- Will there be regular reviews of content and improvements?

Whenever you consider sharing personal health information, give the matter special consideration before accessing any website. For example, would you speak to an unlicensed therapist for help with depression? Similar scrutiny should be given before accessing any e-therapy or intensive online treatment program.

Health and mobile applications

The word *app*, short for *application*, refers to computer software that has been developed to help an end user accomplish a certain task. In 2007 Apple Inc. launched the iPhone and soon after allowed external companies to develop apps that could be used with the iPhone interface. As a result, the popularity of this smart phone exploded, and today there are over 300,000 apps available for iPhones. Many of these apps are health-related tools to monitor health issues, such as insulin levels, diet, heart rate, exercise and smoking cessation. The trend lately is to develop more tablet computer applications. Tablet computers, such as the Apple iPad, are highly portable computers that can be used by a patient's bedside. Consequently, they are gaining popularity with health-care professionals such as nurses and physicians. Therapists can also use these portable devices with clients to complete assessment and treatment tools. Busy helping professionals find the convenience of tablets very appealing, as they can use them to quickly and easily access patient records, screening instruments, drug information, anatomy programs, medical encyclopedias and more.

As innovative as these health-care apps are, online gambling websites and apps sponsored by the gambling industry are unfortunately far ahead of the health-care response. Online gambling and slot machine apps number in the thousands, and the gambling industry uses many web and mobile tactics to build customer loyalty and, in turn, revenue and profit.

Research and collaboration

The Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto developed the website ProblemGambling.ca with funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care of the Province of Ontario. Since its launch in 2006, ProblemGambling.ca has offered a variety of interactive online technologies and evidence-informed content. The website continues to enhance public and professional knowledge sharing, to improve collaboration and to foster online community around problem gambling. The Self-Help Gambling Tools are the latest content developed by the PGIO for ProblemGambling.ca and are designed to help people negatively impacted by problem gambling.

The Self-Help Gambling Tools were developed in consultation with Dr. David Hodgins, clinical psychologist and head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary. Dr. Hodgins is internationally recognized as a leading clinician and researcher in various aspects of recovery from gambling-related problems, including minimal treatment interventions, minimal treatments for concerned family members and minimal approaches to relapse prevention in problem gamblers. In 1998, Dr. Hodgins published *Becoming a Winner: Defeating Problem Gambling, A Gambling Self-Help Manual* specifically for use as part of a study on minimal self-help interventions with people experiencing problems with gambling. A few years later in 2001, with funding from the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre, he released *Helping the Problem Gambler, Helping Yourself: A Self-Help Approach for Family Members*. This manual was developed specifically for a study on minimal treatment approaches for family members or concerned significant others.

Drawing from these research-validated self-help manuals, the PGIO undertook the detailed and comprehensive task of updating the content. This included integrating CAMH's clinical expertise, adapting the exercises to create user-friendly web activities and doing thorough end-user testing. We believe our online self-help tools fill a treatment gap and provide a new and unique option in the continuum of care for individuals and families who need help for problem gambling in Ontario.

For more information on the benefits of Internet-based interventions for problem gambling and other addictions, see the report prepared for the PGIO titled *Internet-based Interventions for the Treatment of Problem Gambling*:

http://www.problemgambling.ca/EN/Documents/InternetTreatmentforProblemGamblingCAMH2009_Final.pdf.

Client suitability for ProblemGambling.ca's Self-Help Gambling Tools

The Self-Help Gambling Tools are not intended for people who are in crisis. They are also not suitable for people who are at immediate risk of harming themselves or others. In emergencies, people should contact 911 or go to their nearest hospital emergency department. For more intensive treatment during a crisis, people are encouraged to call the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline. The Self-Help Gambling Tools are self directed and anonymous; consequently, CAMH therapists do not review people's use of the tools or make contact with them.

The Self-Help Gambling Tools can be suitable for individuals who gamble and are at risk of developing a problem, and for people currently getting help to change their gambling or who have completed a treatment program.

The Self-Help Gambling Tools can assist therapists in their treatment of people who gamble or their significant others. If a therapist uses the tools as an adjunct to treatment, their clients can print or e-mail their completed worksheets and monitoring reports for discussion during their sessions. To get to know the tools, therapists are encouraged to register on ProblemGambling.ca. Familiarity with the tools will help therapists recommend and use the tools with their clients.

Privacy

CAMH places a high value on privacy and is committed to maintaining the privacy of everyone who uses the resources at www.ProblemGambling.ca.

If you are recommending the tools on ProblemGambling.ca to your clients, we ask you to remind your clients that they do have some responsibility for maintaining their own confidentiality. For example, they should be encouraged to:

- use an anonymous e-mail address that doesn't include their name
- delete cookies and browser activity from their computer
- not save PDF files on a shared or public computer
- ensure they are entering the correct e-mail address when using the e-mail feature.

Please visit our privacy web page to learn more about CAMH's commitment to protecting personal information. <https://www.problemgambling.ca/gambling-help/website-privacy/>

How to use the Self-Help Gambling Tools

The following is a step-by-step outline of how people can create an account and access ProblemGambling.ca's Self-Help Gambling Tools. We strongly encourage you to follow along with the steps yourself on ProblemGambling.ca. This will help you familiarize yourself with the tools and deepen your understanding. Therapists, the public and people with gambling problems are all welcome to register and try out the tools.

Registration

To begin, go to www.ProblemGambling.ca and click on Information for You and Your Family.

Step 1) Register by clicking on the Register link at the top of the page.

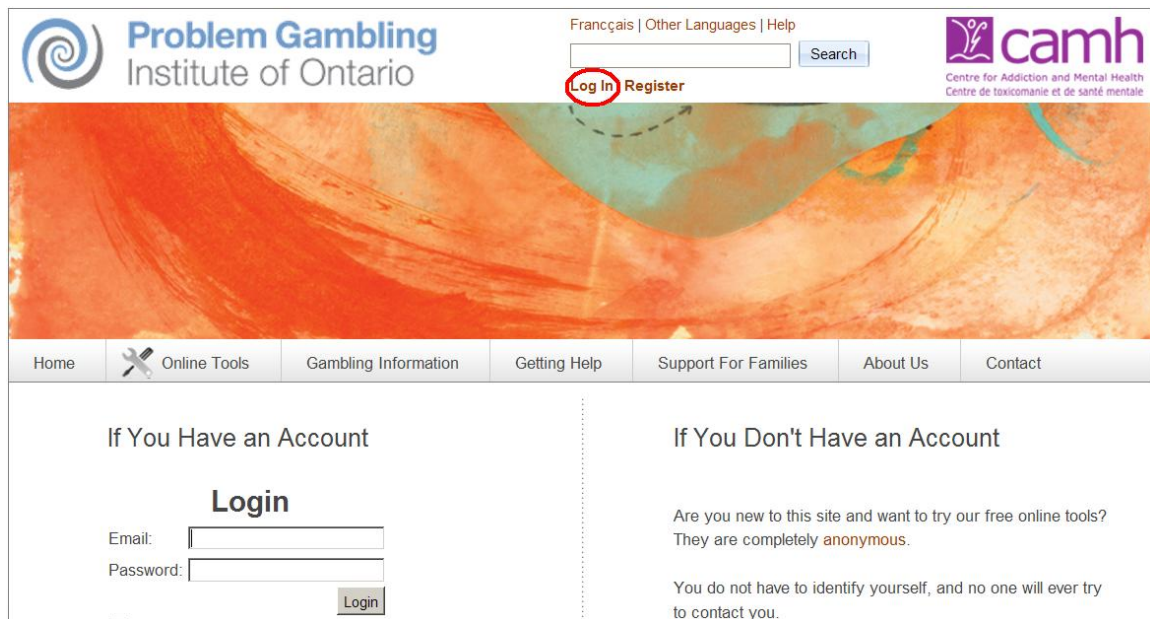


Step 2) Fill in all the required fields on the registration page. Please note that age, sex, racial ancestry, and country all have the option to select "I'd rather not say."

Step 3) After submitting the registration form, you should receive a confirmation e-mail at the address you provided. Be sure to follow the confirmation link in the e-mail within 48 hours or you will have to register again. If you do

not receive the e-mail, check that your junk mail filter is not hiding the message.

Step 4) Click on the Log In link at the top of the page. Then, log in using your e-mail address and password. (Note: For the Self-Help Gambling Tools log-in, **your e-mail address** is your username. This differs from log-in for the Problemgambling.ca Professional Groups, which requires that you remember a special username.)



The screenshot shows the website header with the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario logo, language links (Français | Other Languages | Help), a search bar, and the CAMH logo. The 'Log In' link is circled in red with a dashed arrow pointing to the login form below. The navigation menu includes Home, Online Tools, Gambling Information, Getting Help, Support For Families, About Us, and Contact. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'If You Have an Account' and 'If You Don't Have an Account'. The 'If You Have an Account' section has a 'Login' heading and fields for Email and Password, with a 'Login' button. The 'If You Don't Have an Account' section contains text about anonymous online tools and a statement that no personal information is collected.

You are now ready to use the tools!

Overall site features

On every worksheet page, you will find three icons:

Print: When this image is clicked, you will be able to print the worksheet or report.



PDF: When this image is clicked, you will be able to convert the worksheet or report into a PDF document for saving or e-mailing.



E-mail: When this image is clicked, you will be able to e-mail the worksheet or report to anyone you wish, including yourself. It is e-mailed in PDF format.



In addition to the three icons mentioned above, you will find three buttons at the bottom of each page related to the “status” of the worksheet. The status of each worksheet is displayed on the table of contents page or worksheet homepage.

Clear Worksheet: This button allows the user to clear everything they have entered on the page and start over. The status of the worksheet on the main menu will appear as though the page has not been started.



Save Progress: This button allows the user to save their progress in case they have been interrupted or need more time to complete the activities on that page. The status of the worksheet on the main menu will show as “In progress.”



Worksheet Complete: This indicates that the worksheet is complete. The status of the worksheet on the main menu will display the date the worksheet was completed.



Self-Help Gambling Tools: Content overview

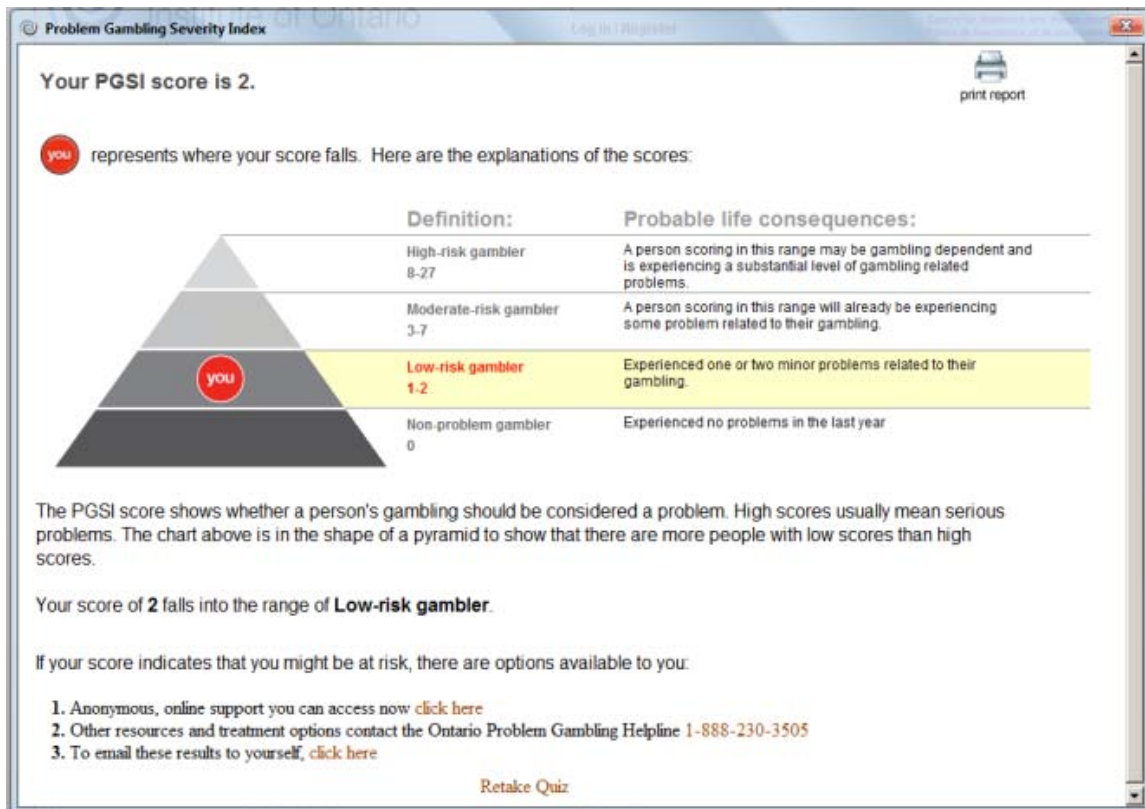
Four major tools are available to individuals who create an account on ProblemGambling.ca. The following tools are outlined in detail below.

- Gambling Quiz
- Self-Help for Those Who Gamble
- Self-Help for Family and Friends
- Monitor Your Gambling & Urges

Gambling Quiz

The Gambling Quiz is a nine-item questionnaire officially called the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). The PGSI is a research-validated screening instrument based on the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. It can be used as a self-assessment tool. It can also be included as part of a clinical screening process and discussed in client interviews. Users can easily print or e-mail their Gambling Quiz results.

Gambling Quiz results example:



Self-Help for Those Who Gamble

Self-Help for Those Who Gamble is an online self-help tool for people concerned they have a gambling problem. The tool helps users explore their gambling behaviour and decide on goals that may include moderating or quitting all or some of their gambling activity. Completing the worksheets helps users become more aware of their gambling and learn pragmatic strategies for gaining greater control.

The tool was developed as self-help—to be used anonymously and to be self guided. Therefore, the information a user enters while completing worksheets is not read or responded to by a professional, unless the user chooses to share it with a current or future

therapist. To share it, a user would need to print or e-mail their worksheets to their therapist.

Self-Help for Those Who Gamble has four categories of worksheets:

- **Self-Assessment:** helps a user understand the extent and nature of their problem
- **Making Your Decision:** helps a user define their goal of either moderating or quitting
- **Reaching Your Goal:** helps the user develop and implement plans for reaching their goal
- **Maintaining Your Goal:** discusses ways to help the user stick with their goal

Users can view and complete the sections and exercises in any order they want. However, they are encouraged to complete the worksheets in sequence to benefit from the logic and incremental flow and development of the exercises.

Self-Assessment

This section helps users examine their gambling and more clearly understand the extent and nature of their problem. It is intended to help them become more self aware when it comes to their gambling activities. The Self-Assessment section includes three worksheets:

Negative Consequences of Gambling

This worksheet helps users reflect on the negative consequences of their gambling in various domains of their life, both currently and in the future if they continue gambling. The aim is to foster greater motivation for tackling the gambling problem. The rationale of the worksheet is that as a user becomes more aware of the negative consequences of their gambling and the potential for these problems to worsen, they will also become more motivated to address their behaviour.

Understanding Your Gambling

This worksheet helps users to monitor and become more aware of emotional, cognitive and environmental triggers for their gambling.

Identifying Your Reasons for Gambling

This worksheet allows a user to reflect on and build awareness of their reasons for gambling, including perceiving it as a source of pleasure or using it as an escape from painful emotions.

Making Your Decision

This section helps users define their personal goals by looking at the costs and benefits of gambling, as well as their options for either quitting or cutting back. The Making Your Decision section includes the following two worksheets:

Benefits and Costs of Gambling

This decisional balance worksheet encourages a user to examine and record the benefits and costs of both gambling and not gambling. The user is also directed to review the content of their decisional balance to evaluate whether the costs outweigh the benefits. The aim is to build commitment to change if the decisional balance is tipped toward the costs.

Quitting or Cutting Back

This worksheet encourages a user to commit to a behaviour change goal for their gambling. It describes three options: (1) abstinence, (2) quitting problematic forms of gambling and (3) cutting back. It provides guidance on how to evaluate whether a moderation goal will be realistic and encourages the user to be cautious and thoughtful before arriving at a moderation goal. The worksheet has the user “sign” their stated goal electronically to help foster commitment to the change goal.

Reaching Your Goal

This section assists users in developing and implementing plans for reaching their goal—whether they wish to quit or cut back. It helps them learn a variety of ways to cope and encourages them to practise these coping methods. The Reaching Your Goal section includes the following seven worksheets:

Changing Your Thinking

This worksheet helps users to identify irrational ideas that they hold about gambling. It assists them in evaluating these cognitive distortions and in finding more rational replacement thoughts about gambling.

The Concept of Randomness

This worksheet explains the concept of randomness. It also has the user reflect on how misconceptions about the nature of chance have influenced their gambling behaviour.

Dealing with Urges

This worksheet explains the central role of coping strategies in overcoming urges to gamble. It leads the user through a systematic process of examining and recording their current effective coping strategies. The worksheet concludes by directing the user to summarize their best current ways of coping.

Staying Away from Gambling

This worksheet describes the importance of developing non-gambling activities as a replacement for gambling. It has the user reflect on and write down activities that interest them and that could serve as an alternative to gambling.

Limiting Your Access to Money

This worksheet explains that money can be a powerful trigger for gambling urges and that finding ways to limit access to money can be a key step to overcoming a

gambling problem. It has the user think about and decide on practical methods to limit their access to money.

Facing Large Debts

This page describes the risk that large and unresolved financial problems can have on the recovery of a person with a gambling problem. It recommends the user address financial problems directly by seeking financial or credit counselling. To help users find this assistance, it also provides a link for locating resources.

Telling Others of Your Plan

This worksheet has the user make a list of people they have told, or will tell, about their gambling recovery goal. The aim is to help them build their social support in reaching their goal.

Maintaining Your Goal

This section helps users develop strategies and plans for sticking with their goal. It also covers ways to manage slips and relapses, to repair relationships and to deal with other problems. The section includes the following four worksheets:

Planning Ahead

This worksheet leads the user through a process of developing a relapse prevention plan. First, it has them reflect on their triggers for gambling, which were examined and recorded earlier in the self-help tool. Second, it has them identify and record ways of coping with each trigger. Third, it has the user rate their level of confidence in being able to resist the trigger. Finally, if the user is not fully confident in any area, it has them review the worksheets in the Reaching Your Goal section to broaden and strengthen their coping strategies.

Slipping and Relapses

This worksheet assists by providing users with strategies for preventing and dealing with slips or relapses. It helps the user keep track of triggers and

situations that resulted in gambling and also helps them learn how they might be able to prevent slips or relapses in the future.

Repairing Relationships

This worksheet describes the importance of working to repair relationships hurt by gambling problems and provides some practical strategies for doing so. It has the user make a list of what they did, or failed to do, in their relationships hurt by gambling. Finally, it has the user think of what they can do to make it up to the other person.

Dealing with Other Life Problems

This is the final worksheet of the series. It explains that people recovering from gambling problems may become aware that gambling has been hiding or overshadowing other life problems. It has the user reflect on and write down problems in other life areas that they need to tackle. The page also provides a resource for finding additional help and informs the user that they can come back to the tool in the future to review and update any of their responses.

Self-Help for Family and Friends

Self-Help for Family and Friends is an online self-help tool for people affected by, or concerned about, someone else's gambling. The tool was developed in recognition of the hardship a gambling problem can cause family, friends and others close to the person with a gambling problem. The tool helps people learn about problem gambling and develop new skills to deal with the difficulties caused by the problem even if the person with the gambling problem is currently unwilling to change their gambling behaviour.

The tool was built on established family support resources for problem gambling and other addictions. One of these resources was David Hodgins's family self-help manual, *Helping the Problem Gambler, Helping Yourself: A Self-Help Approach for Family*

Members. This manual was published in 2001 and was developed with funding from the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre. Another resource used in the development of this self-help tool was the family addictions support manual *Families CARE* (2008), written for CAMH by S. Bubbra, A. Himes, C. Kelly, J. Shenfeld, C. Sloss and L. Tait. In addition, the tool calls upon the research-validated work of O’Grady and Skinner, published in CAMH’s *A Family Guide to Concurrent Disorders* (2007). Finally, it also incorporates the clinical expertise at the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario at CAMH.

Self-Help for Family and Friends was developed as an anonymous, self-guided tool. Therefore, the information a user enters while completing worksheets is not read or responded to by a professional, unless the user chooses to share it with a current therapist or a therapist they see in the future. To share it, a user would need to print or e-mail their worksheets to their therapist.

Self-Help for Family and Friends has nine categories of worksheets:

- **About Problem Gambling:** helps family and friends become more aware of problem gambling and reflect on whether someone they know is showing signs of a problem
- **Impact on Family and Friends:** has a user reflect on the effects of a gambling problem
- **Taking Care of Yourself:** encourages family and friends to put in place healthy methods of looking after themselves
- **Problem Solving:** assists a user through a step-by-step process of working on challenging problems
- **Taking Care of Finances:** helps family and friends reflect on their financial situation and learn ways to protect their finances from further damage
- **Setting Limits:** builds understanding about how to set limits with a person with a gambling problem
- **Staying Safe:** helps family and friends learn about safety risks related to problem gambling and how to keep themselves and others safe from harm

- **Encouraging Them to Seek Treatment:** builds understanding about the problem gambling recovery process and how family and friends can support this process
- **Next Steps:** provides further resources for coping with the gambling problem

Users can view and complete the sections and exercises in any order they want. However, they are encouraged to complete the worksheets in sequence to benefit from the logic and incremental flow of the exercises.

As an additional source of support in case it's needed, a notice for the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline appears on the bottom of every page of this self-help tool.

Below is a description of each section and page of the Self-Help for Family and Friends tool.

About Problem Gambling

The “About Problem Gambling” section helps family and friends learn more about problem gambling and assess whether someone they know is showing signs of a problem. This section includes three pages:

What is problem gambling?

This page provides a brief description of gambling and problem gambling. It also includes an easy-to-use worksheet, which has users reflect on the areas of their family or friend's life that have been adversely affected by gambling. The rationale for this page is twofold: first, to lay a basic foundation for understanding what problem gambling means, and second, to raise awareness of the range of impacts gambling might be having on the life of the person who is gambling.

Video about warning signs

This page provides an educational video about signs and indicators of gambling problems. The video is under two minutes and was produced by the CAMH Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario as part of *Gambling: The Human Factor*, a

problem gambling awareness presentation. The purpose of including the video is to offer this key information both verbally and visually so as to enhance the educational experience and to appeal to different learning styles.

More about warning signs

This worksheet identifies common warning signs of a gambling problem in more detail than the video on the previous page. It has the user check off the signs they have observed. It also provides space for the user to add other signs that are concerning them. The worksheet then asks the user to reflect on their observations and identify whether they remain concerned that their family member or friend has a gambling problem. If they remain concerned, the page encourages the user to continue with the self-help tool.

Impact on Family and Friends

This section of the tool focuses on how a person's gambling problem impacts those around them, especially their family and friends. In particular, it asks family and friends who are using the tool to reflect on the effects of the gambling problem on them and their dependants. It divides the potential impacts on family and friends into six domains with corresponding worksheets: "Money Problems," "Emotional Impacts," "Feeling Isolated," "Relationship Conflicts," "Physical Problems" and "Impact on Children." Depending on the areas affected, it offers suggestions for further help, either within the remainder of the self-help guide or externally. The intention of this section is fourfold: (1) to help family and friends become more aware of the range of impacts, (2) to validate some of the difficulties they are having, (3) to instil hope that help is available and (4) to provide direction for seeking further help. This section includes seven pages:

Money problems

This worksheet asks users to itemize areas of financial difficulty that they are experiencing as a result of someone else's gambling. It also gives them an opportunity to fill in their own areas of financial concern. Finally, the page highlights the importance for family and friends of protecting their own finances

from another person's gambling and provides a link to the "Taking Care of Finances" section within the self-help tool.

Emotional impacts

This worksheet has a user identify emotions they have experienced as a result of their friend or family member's gambling problem. It initially asks them to check off common emotional experiences from a list. It also provides space for the user to write down other emotional reactions. The page concludes with two resources for further help: the "Taking Care of Yourself" section of the self-help tool and the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline.

Feeling isolated

This worksheet identifies feelings of isolation as a common impact of a gambling problem on family and friends. It asks users to identify if they are feeling isolated as a result of living with another person's gambling problem, and if so, in what ways. Finally, it also offers a link to further help.

Relationship conflicts

This worksheet has users check off types of relationship problems they are experiencing in connection to their friend or family member's gambling problem. It also includes free space for the user to write down other relationship problems they are having. Again, the worksheet concludes with links to further sections of the self-help tool, including "Taking Care of Yourself," "Staying Safe" and "Setting Limits."

Physical problems

This worksheet asks users to identify if they are experiencing physical problems due to the stress of the gambling problem. It begins with a checklist of common stress-related physical complaints. It also provides space for the user to fill in other physical problems which concern them. Finally it provides a link to further

help and encourages the user to consult with their doctor about physical complaints.

Impact on children

This worksheet begins with a description of how problem gambling can impact children and teens in the family. It asks users to identify any impacts they've noticed with their children. This topic then continues onto the next page, "Ways You Can Help Children."

Ways you can help children

This page offers information about how families can help children cope with a gambling problem in the family. It also encourages users to get further help if their children are showing signs of emotional or behavioural problems. The page concludes with resources for the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline and the "Next Steps" section of the tool, which contains several relevant resources.

Taking Care of Yourself

This section is the first among five to focus on building a user's ability to cope with a friend or family member's gambling problem. Here the topic is self-care. The goal of this section is to foster the use of healthy and effective self-care methods to increase family and friends' capacity to cope with stressful situations. It pursues this goal (1) by increasing understanding about the nature and importance of self-care in coping, (2) by providing information about different domains of self-care and (3) by having users construct and commit to their own self-care plans. The section starts off building motivation for self-care by highlighting its purpose and benefits. It then moves into relating information on self-care methods, along with providing an opportunity for users to construct practical ways they can care for themselves. It also encourages users to set specific, concrete goals for self-care in the short term. The section includes five pages:

Why take care of yourself?

This worksheet begins with some background information about coping with someone else's gambling problem. It highlights why self-care can be beneficial for friends and family members. It asks users to identify ways that self-care might help them, first by providing a checklist of options and then by offering space for users to enter other ideas.

Quick self-care methods

This worksheet starts by providing information about potential brief and fast-acting self-care activities. Examples listed include taking a short break, going for a walk and taking a few deep breaths. It describes how these brief activities can help calm someone who is under stress in the near term. The worksheet then asks users to reflect on quick self-care activities that they have used in the past two weeks. It concludes by asking users to list similar self-care activities they will try over the next week. The rationale of this worksheet is (1) to provide psycho-education on the nature and benefits of self-soothing techniques, (2) to encourage users to reflect on methods that they already use, and finally (3) to focus them on practising some methods over the short term.

Looking after your health

This worksheet explains how health and wellness activities can improve one's capacity to cope with stress. It asks users to rate themselves on five key health and wellness dimensions, including sleeping and eating. Based on these ratings, it then encourages them to focus on the areas that they are tending to the least. It finally asks that they identify specific activities they can do over the next week to look after these key areas of health and wellness.

Getting social support

This worksheet begins by describing how social support can be beneficial in coping with a family member or friend's gambling problem. It then asks users to

identify (1) who has given them positive support, (2) who else might be supportive and (3) whom they will seek support from over the coming week.

Understanding and dealing with anger

This page provides introductory information about the nature of anger, including describing possible cognitive and affective components of the emotion. The page normalizes the experience of anger and describes some differences between healthy and potentially destructive manifestations of the emotion. It offers some quick methods of coping with anger in the short term and provides a resource for further help.

Problem Solving

This section of the Self-Help for Family and Friends tool assists users through a step-by-step process of working on challenging problems, which involves a combination of psycho-education and interactive worksheets. The rationale for the section is that family and friends of people with gambling problems frequently face serious and complex problems as a result of the person's gambling. These problems can feel overwhelming, especially in their early stages. The section describes a systematic model for working on such complex problems. The aim is to help users of the tool feel more empowered and confident to address the difficulties they are facing. It also encourages users to seek outside help if needed during the problem-solving process. The section includes four worksheets:

Dealing with overwhelming issues

This worksheet addresses the early stage of problem solving. It describes how to define a problem so that it's easier to tackle and how to break it down into manageable parts. After providing this explanation, the worksheet walks the user through a series of three questions to help them try out the technique using an example from their own life. The aim is that by the end of the worksheet the user has identified a specific part of the problem they can use on the next worksheet.

Looking for solutions

This worksheet follows on from the previous one. It describes a process of reflecting on a specific and manageable part of the problem, brainstorming for possible solutions and choosing solutions to try out. It again walks the user through the technique by using a current example from their life. It concludes by highlighting the importance of considering safety when choosing options to try.

Trying out your solution

This worksheet also continues from the previous one. It helps a user put in place a plan for trying out the solution they selected in the previous worksheet. The worksheet describes key factors for the user to consider when putting together an action plan. Through a series of questions, it has the user write down their action plan, making it more concrete and specific. In the process, the page has the user identify for potential investigation resources and supports that can help them work on their solution.

Taking stock, and next steps

The final worksheet of this section begins by having the user reflect on their implementation of the action plan from the previous worksheet. It encourages the user to affirm their efforts and to take stock of what has improved (if anything) by trying out their solution. It also provides guidance on possible next steps in the problem-solving process, depending on whether the chosen solution worked. The aim is to help the user build a sense of confidence, competency and persistence in solving complex problems.

Taking Care of Finances

This section of the tool focuses on handling financial problems, which are often prominent issues for family and friends of people with gambling problems. It provides the user with some methods and resources for addressing financial problems and for protecting their finances from further damage. The aim is to help the user regain some

sense of security about, and effectiveness in dealing with, their financial situation. The section includes four pages:

Do you lack money for basic needs?

This initial worksheet has the user identify whether their basic needs, such as housing and adequate food, are compromised. If they are, it directs the user to seek help right away within their local community and describes, in simple terms, how they can find this help in Ontario. The worksheet also asks the user to check off, or type in, the initial steps they will take to make their plan for help more specific and concrete. The rationale for this page is to help the user assess whether this self-help guide is appropriate for their level of need at this time and to redirect users who need more intensive help to more suitable resources.

Protecting your finances

This worksheet provides information on protecting finances and describes some steps that family members and friends can take to protect their finances from damage. It is divided into five sections: “Speaking to Your Financial Institution,” “Getting Legal Advice,” “Seeing a Credit Counsellor,” “Checking Your Credit Rating” and “Seeking Social Assistance.” The page describes the role that each of these activities can play in resolving problems and protecting against further damage. It asks the user to reflect on their own situation and identify which steps would be helpful for them to take.

Setting short-term goals to protect your finances

The aim of this worksheet is to have the user identify and write down specific and time-limited goals for learning about and protecting their finances. It describes how the user can construct such goals, gives some examples and provides space for the user to enter three goals.

Learning more about your finances

This page describes how learning about one's financial situation is a critical part of protecting and managing money. It provides a link to the Financial Inventory Worksheet, which is an adjunct to this self-help tool. When the user clicks on the link for the Financial Inventory Worksheet, it is downloaded to their local computer as a PDF document. The user can then print or save the document.

The Financial Inventory Worksheet helps the user prepare a detailed summary of their financial situation. Because the worksheet is downloaded to their local computer, a user can print it out and complete it in writing. This Financial Inventory Worksheet is detailed and uses specialized financial language. Consequently, the user is encouraged to seek help from a financial adviser or credit counsellor if they do not understand how to complete the form.

Setting Limits

The “Setting Limits” section also aims to build a user's ability to cope with a friend or family member's gambling problem. It does so by teaching about limit setting—the act of communicating what one will and won't tolerate in a relationship. The section explains the nature and purpose of setting limits and outlines common barriers to this activity. It continues by describing tips and explaining a technique for communicating limits. The rationale for including this section is that family and friends commonly have difficulty having their limits respected by the person with the gambling problem. In addition, developing healthy limit-setting skills is typically a key part of the coping and recovery process of family and friends. This section includes five pages:

About setting limits

This worksheet begins by explaining what limit setting means. It continues by describing how people with gambling problems can challenge normal limits. It then asks the user to check off ways that limits have been challenged in their own situation and provides space for the user to add other examples.

Why set limits?

This worksheet describes why setting limits is an important part of healthy relationships. It asks the user to check off reasons why setting limits would be helpful in their case. It also provides space for the user to enter other reasons. A goal of the worksheet is to build motivation for setting reasonable limits.

Is there anything preventing you from setting limits?

This worksheet aims to validate that limit setting can be difficult to do. It provides a checklist of common barriers for setting limits and asks users to identify any that apply for them. The page concludes by offering resources for addressing these barriers. The purpose of the worksheet is to help users reflect on their own barriers for setting limits and to build motivation for addressing those barriers.

Tips for communicating limits

This page provides a list of practical tips that can be helpful in communicating limits. The aim is to educate users about simple factors for setting healthy limits in a safe and constructive manner.

How to set limits in a caring way

The worksheet on this page describes a practical method of communicating limits to a friend or family member. The method is based on a three-step process: first, the friend or family member describes a problem situation in terms of specific behaviour; second, they specify what they would prefer to occur; and third, they communicate a positive payoff if the limit is respected, and a potential consequence if the limit is not respected. Through a series of questions, the worksheet helps a user plan to use this method in a particular situation. As part of the plan, the worksheet asks the user to write down ideas about what they will say using the model, and ideas about how they will keep themselves safe from harm if necessary. It also provides a link to the “Staying Safe” section of the tool.

Staying Safe

The “Staying Safe” section helps family and friends learn about safety risks related to problem gambling and about ways to keep themselves and others safe from harm. As well as providing information on safety, the section walks a user through creating a safety plan. The section includes four pages:

Tips for preventing, or limiting, a crisis

The first page of the section offers information on how to head off and manage a crisis. The page includes a recommendation to develop a plan and provides a link to a crisis plan worksheet. The aim of the page is to educate the user about some key factors to consider in limiting crisis situations.

Handling suicide risk

This page provides brief, point-form information about how the person reading can respond to suicide risk, either their own or someone else’s. It suggests practical steps that the person can take to get help. It also outlines possible warning signs signalling that a person may be having thoughts of suicide.

Responding to family violence

This page gives brief, practical information on how to respond to family violence, including abuse of children. It advises the user to respond to the risks and realities of violence in their family. The page provides resources for further help, including a link to the Next Steps section of this tool. It encourages the user to seek this help as soon as possible if it is needed.

Creating a crisis plan

This final page of the section offers a worksheet on developing a crisis plan. The worksheet follows a three-step process. Step one asks the user to reflect on early warning signs of a crisis or safety risk and then to enter them on the sheet. Step two requests that the user identifies specific actions they can take to limit a problem or prevent it from developing. Step three has the user investigate and

enter in the names and contact numbers of key supports in their community. Resources are provided to help the user locate these key supports.

Encouraging Them to Seek Treatment

This section of the Self-Help for Families and Friends tool builds understanding about the problem gambling recovery process and about ways family and friends can support this process. Family and friends often want to know how they can motivate someone with a gambling problem to stop gambling, and this section responds to that interest. The section aims to foster a sense of efficacy and hope, while at the same time encouraging realistic expectations. It includes seven pages:

First steps

The section begins by emphasizing that people with gambling problems need to make their own effort to overcome the problem and that, consequently, it is beneficial for family and friends to develop their own coping skills as a way of handling the challenges caused by the gambling. The page then encourages users to complete earlier sections of the self-help tool and provides links to sections that help users build their coping skills.

Understanding change

This worksheet explains the stages of change model that was developed by Prochaska and DiClemente to explain addiction recovery. As described here, the model includes five stages: (1) pre-contemplation, (2) contemplation, (3) preparation, (4) action and (5) maintenance. The worksheet provides a description of each stage from the perspective of problem gambling recovery. It then asks the user to reflect on how these stages of change correspond to what they have observed with their family or friend and to identify the stage that they think their family member or friend is in. The aim is to help the user of the tool gain greater understanding of how stages of change impact the thinking, attitudes and behaviour of someone with a gambling problem.

Responding to the person's stage of change

This page follows on from the previous worksheet. It highlights that it is beneficial to adjust one's response to someone with a gambling problem based on their stage of change. The page first asks the user to recall what stage of change they thought their family or friend was in. It then describes how the user can adjust their response to a person with a gambling problem based on their stage of change. The purpose of this page is to help the user better understand how they can encourage someone to seek treatment based on their stage of change, and thus foster a sense of realistic hope and effectiveness in the user given their particular situation.

Finding out about treatment options

This worksheet begins by referring to the previous pages on the stages of change model. It highlights that in certain stages of change a person with a gambling problem will be more likely to benefit from help finding treatment resources. It also provides information about how the user of the tool can locate treatment resources in Ontario. It then asks the user to reflect on which treatment resources they believe their friend or family member will be most and least responsive to. The aim of the worksheet is to help the user learn about treatment options in their community and understand better what they can offer.

Identify times when the person may be more open to treatment

This page describes when people with gambling problems are more open to treatment. In part, it explains that people are commonly more open after a frightening event that was precipitated by their gambling. The aim of the page is to help the user understand when it can be more helpful to suggest treatment options.

Suggest treatment in a way that is more likely to succeed

This page describes how a friend or family member can suggest treatment options to someone with a gambling problem. In doing so, it addresses the possibility of

the person rejecting the suggestion. Furthermore, the page includes options if a person rejects all attempts to encourage treatment. The purpose of the page is to help the user develop some realistic and practical ideas about suggesting treatment to someone with a gambling problem.

Be prepared for the person to leave treatment early or to relapse

This page provides information on potential setbacks in the process of recovery from a gambling problem. It aims to validate the difficulty that these setbacks can cause family and friends and to foster a sense of hope and resiliency.

Next Steps

The “Next Steps” section, which is the final section in the tool, begins by highlighting that there is additional help available for family and friends of people with gambling problems. It then provides an annotated list of key resources in Ontario that can help family and friends cope with gambling problems. By increasing awareness of the range of options available, the section aims to build hope and a sense of empowerment. The section includes two pages:

There is more help available

This page begins by congratulating the user in completing the Self-Help for Family and Friends. It also highlights that the tool is only one of a range of options to support family and friends of people with gambling problems. Finally, the page links the user to the accompanying list of key resources in Ontario.

Key resources

This final page aims to educate the user about select provincial resources. It provides a list of these resources annotated to describe what each resource provides. This list is organized according to topic area, such as “Finding Mental Health Services,” “Finding Help for Women Who Are Being Abused,” and “Finding Credit Counselling.” The provincial resources listed can normally direct a person to more local options as needed.

Monitor Your Gambling & Urges (MYGU): Web and Mobile App

This is a diary tool that will help a user get a better understanding of their urges to gamble and whether or not they choose to gamble. Research has shown that in order to gain better control over gambling behaviour, it is important to track the triggers that lead up to it. A trigger—such as hoping for a big win, trying to win back lost money, loneliness or a need for escape—can be a reason for gambling. In order to be effective, this tool should be used every time someone feels an urge to gamble, regardless of whether or not they gambled. If the person continues to gamble, the tool tracks their wins and losses over time.

Users are asked to input information about their urges and triggers into the MYGU app every time they feel an urge to gamble. There are drop-down options available for users to easily select from; however, users are also given the option to input up to three unique fields if the drop-down selections are not applicable to them. Once the unique fields are entered, users click “Update” and the new fields will be populated to the drop-down list, allowing users to easily select them again.

MYGU example: What do you think triggered your urge?

The screenshot displays the MYGU app interface. On the left, there is a form titled "What do you think triggered your urge?" with a dropdown menu showing "< Please select >". Below this is a link: "Don't see your trigger listed? Click Here". Further down is another question: "Did you gamble?" with two buttons: "Yes" and "No". At the bottom are "Back" and "Next" buttons. On the right, there is a "Help Guide" section with a question mark icon. It contains two sections: "What do you think triggered your urge?" explaining that a trigger is the reason for gambling and that tracking them helps in coping, and "Did you gamble?" explaining that tracking gambling after an urge helps in keeping track of wins and losses. A progress bar is visible below the help guide.

MYGU example: What do you think triggered your urge? Drop-down selection

The screenshot shows the MYGU website interface. The main heading is "What do you think triggered your urge?". Below it is a drop-down menu with the text "< Please select >". The menu is open, showing a list of triggers: "A friend asked me to go", "Avoiding people", "Being social", "Boredom", "Being broke", "Calls from a collection agency" (highlighted in yellow), "Celebration", "Depression", "Entertainment", "Escape", "Excitement", "Feeling lucky", "Habit", "Having money", "I have a winning system", "I have something to prove", "Loneliness", "Problems at work", "To prove I'm not addicted", "Other", "Don't know", and "Stressed about exam". To the right of the menu is a "Help Guide" link. Below the menu is a "Site" section with links: "home", "Getting", "Contact", "about", "site", and "discla". To the right of the "Site" section is a "Follow Us" section with links to "Facebook" and "Twitter". To the right of the "Follow Us" section is an "Ontario Pro" section with a phone icon and the number "1-888". At the bottom of the page is a disclaimer: "who Gamble and Friends ing & Urges Gambling & Urges d for diagnosis, treatment or referral services and CAMH does not provide diagnostic, t".

MYGU example: What do you think triggered your urge? Entering unique fields

The screenshot shows the MYGU website interface. The main heading is "What do you think triggered your urge?". Below it is a drop-down menu with the text "< Please select >". A red circle highlights the text "Don't see your trigger listed? Click Here" below the menu. Below the menu is a "Did you gamble?" section with "Yes" and "No" buttons. Below the "Did you gamble?" section are "Back" and "Next" buttons. To the right of the "Did you gamble?" section is a "Help Guide" link. Below the "Help Guide" link is a "What do you think triggered your urge?" section with a text area for entering a trigger. Below the text area is a "You do not have to fill in all 3:" section with three text areas for "Optional Trigger One:", "Optional Trigger Two:", and "Optional Trigger Three:". Below the text areas is an "Update" button.

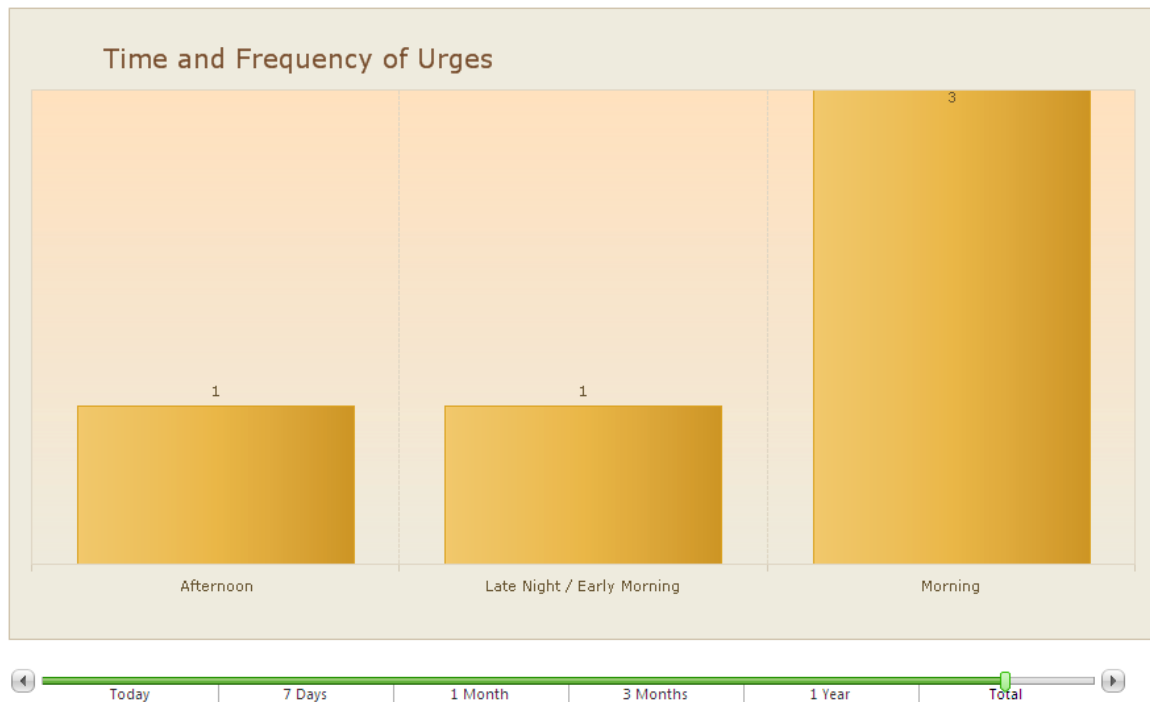
MYGU reports

The information entered will provide users with a comprehensive summary report of the following information:

- Gambling activities / frequency of gambling
- Total amount won/lost
- How many times (I gambled or resisted)
- Triggers
- Time spent
- Who do I gamble with?
- Feelings after I gambled
- Feelings after I resisted gambling
- Things I did instead of gambling
- What happened as a result after I gambled
- What happened as a result after I didn't gamble
- Time and frequency of urges

The reports above can be reviewed by current date or for the past week, month, three months or year, as well as total to date.

MYGU report example: Time and Frequency of Urges



This example report indicates that the user experienced the urge to gamble in the morning more frequently than at other times.

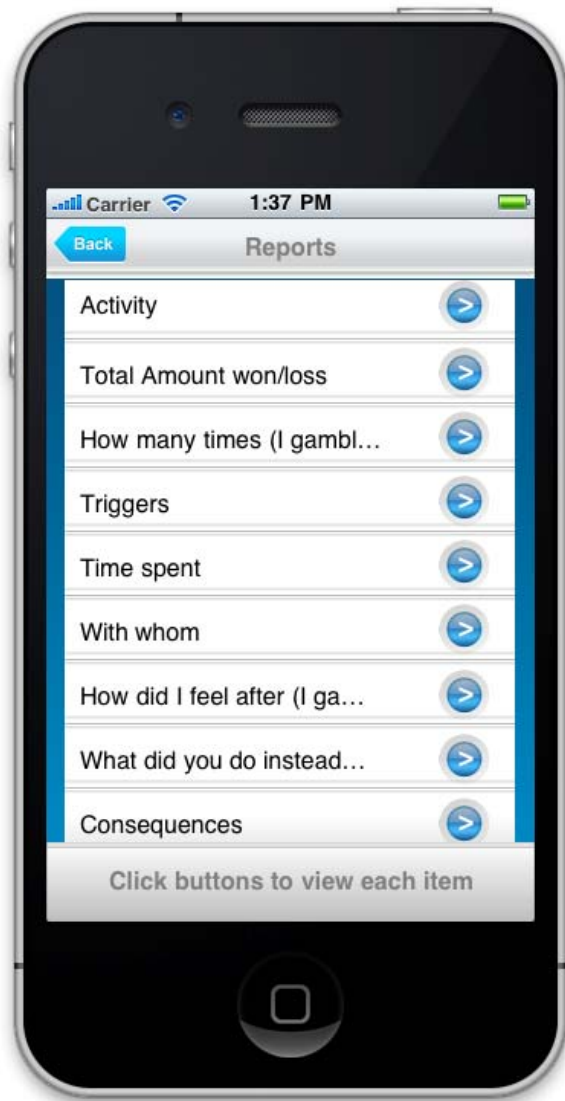
MYGU mobile

The MYGU tool has also been converted into a mobile app, which allows users to conveniently track their urges from a mobile device, like a smart phone. When a user logs in to the app on their mobile device, their data is synchronized with their Self-Help Gambling Tools account. This synchronization allows users to use the web and mobile version of MYGU interchangeably. Functionality and content of the web and mobile versions are similar.

MYGU mobile example: What triggered your urge?



MYGU mobile reports example:




Individual reports can be viewed by touching the corresponding blue arrow.

Feedback

We encourage your feedback on this first release of Self-Help Gambling Tools. Let us know what your clients are saying about it and whether we can improve anything in any way.

You can fill out the feedback form by clicking on the link found in the footer of every page of the website.

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|---|---|---|---|
| Site Home Getting Help Contact About Us Site map | Online Tools Gambling Quiz Self-Help for Those who Gamble Self-Help for Family and Friends Monitor Your Gambling & Urges Mobile Monitor Your Gambling & Urges | Follow Us Facebook Twitter | Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline  1-888-230-3505 |
| <small>Disclaimer: Information on this site is not to be used for diagnosis, treatment or referral services and CAMH does not provide diagnostic, treatment or referral services through the Internet. Individuals should contact their personal physician, and/or their local addiction or mental health agency for further information.</small> | | | |
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You can also e-mail Webmaster@ProblemGambling.ca with any questions, comments or concerns.

Additional problem gambling help services in Ontario

In Ontario, counselling is free to anyone affected by problem gambling—not just the person who gambles. In most areas, an agency that offers specialized counselling for problem gambling is available close to home. Telephone counselling is also available. Contact the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline for information on treatment services in Ontario. A complete list of problem gambling treatment agencies in Ontario can be found at <https://www.problemgambling.ca/gambling-help/getting-help/treatment-agencies.aspx>. You may also contact us at ProblemGambling.ca or by phone at (416) 535-8501 x 3912 for more information.

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Glossary of Terms

As you familiarize yourself with new technology, you might find the following definitions helpful (although not every item defined is discussed in this user guide).

Adapted from www.Webopedia.com and www.Wikipedia.com.

Android: The Android platform is Google Inc.'s open and free software that includes an operating system and applications for use on mobile devices, including smart phones.

Android phone: A smart phone using the Android operating system. The open and free nature of the Android software platform is boosting the popularity of Android-based smart phones and tablet computers.

App: Commonly refers to mobile apps, which is software made for mobile devices. This term can also be used to refer to application software, which is software developed for a specific purpose or help the user to perform specific tasks.

BBM: Short for BlackBerry Messenger, a popular instant messaging program used between BlackBerry devices.

BlackBerry: A line of mobile e-mail and smart phone devices developed and designed by Canadian company Research In Motion (RIM) since 1999. BlackBerry devices are smart phones, designed to function as personal digital assistants, portable media players, internet browsers, gaming devices and much more. They are known for their ability to send and receive e-mail and instant messages while maintaining a high level of security. You can also download and use apps on a BlackBerry device.

Cookies: Also known as an HTTP cookie, web cookie or browser cookie, and used for an origin website to send information to a user's browser and for the browser to return the information to the origin site. Cookies can be used to store sign-in and user-profile information so the user doesn't have to enter the information into the website over and over again.

iPhone: A line of Internet and multimedia-enabled smart phones marketed by Apple Inc. An iPhone can function as a video camera, a camera, a portable media player and an Internet client with e-mail and web browsing capabilities. It can also send texts and receive visual voice mail. You can also download and use apps on an iPhone device.

PDF: Stands for Portable Document Format, a file format created by Adobe Systems. PDFs can be saved locally on your computer, printed or attached to e-mail.

Smart phone: A high-end mobile phone built on a mobile computing platform, with more advanced computing ability and connectivity than a regular cell phone. The first smart phones were devices that mainly combined the functions of a personal digital assistant (PDA) and a mobile phone or camera phone. You can also download and use apps on a smart phone.

Tablet: A mobile computer that is larger than a mobile phone or personal digital assistant. It has a flat screen that operates by touching the screen rather than an external, physical keyboard. You can also download and use apps on a tablet computer.

Author Biographies

Sylvia Hagopian, Assistant Manager PGIO

Manager of Communications and Online Services

Sylvia has overseen the development and continuous improvement of ProblemGambling.ca since 2005. She is currently responsible for communications, management of online and mobile tool development and implementation, and ongoing content enhancement of Problem Gambling–CAMH online resources. She has been broadening her communications planning expertise for over 10 years by incorporating diverse media channel solutions for targeted message delivery such as web, mobile and social media. Her experience in public relations management includes strategic communication planning for CAMH Public Affairs and the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario. sylvia_hagopian@camh.net 416 535-8501 ext. 4757

Michael Weyman, MSW, RSW, Social Worker / Education Specialist

Michael is a clinician, trainer and resource developer at the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto, Canada. His career has spanned social work and information technology for more than 15 years. Since 2007, he has been a social worker at CAMH developing clinical expertise in mental health and addictions. Currently, he is heavily involved in the development of a suite of online and mobile problem gambling treatment resources at the PGIO. In this work he has done extensive content design, development and testing for the PGIO's Online Gambling Tools. He holds a bachelor of arts and sciences degree from McMaster University and a master of social work degree from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Michael_Weyman@camh.net

