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Tips for women in early gambling recovery

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[Marilyn Lancelot](#) Published: January 13, 2014



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As most of us know (or have experienced personally), [gambling can ruin lives](#). However, gambling addiction and the recovery process differ slightly between men and women. [Gamblers who quit gambling](#) can face an uphill battle, even in the rooms of Gamblers Anonymous (GA). So how can a women position herself in early recovery for best chances of success? We review here, and invite your questions about the recovery process at the end.

Early recovery is a sensitive time

The journey of healing begins when we stop our addictive behavior. We uncover lies, and the shame and guilt begin to diminish. We establish the process of repairing relationships. At this time, it is strongly suggested that the female gambler try to attend a women's meeting because if she is involved in an abusive relationship, it may be difficult to share her story in a room filled with men.

In fact, this period of early recovery is a critical time for newcomers. Women are sensitive and fragile creatures and may experience low self-esteem. This is a time when she desperately needs a sponsor she can trust and attend as many 12-step meetings that fit into her schedule.

What happens in first weeks of gambling recovery?

In the beginning, she may experience some urges or memories that trigger her into thinking about her past behavior. A great strategy to utilize is to translate the word, “trigger” into the word, “warning sign”. So instead of something to fear, the trigger can become a warning that something in the mind or body needs fixing.

When these moments occur she must be cautious about replacing her past addiction with a new behavior. Switching her addictive pattern could lead to dependence on a new feel-good activity. Unfortunately, common sense is not one of the characteristics of addictions. For example: a compulsive gambler may turn to spending money compulsively, hoarding, over-eating, etc.

Sponsors can guide you through the pink cloud

With each day our strength and knowledge will grow and we may even undergo a pink cloud effect. A 12 step group sponsor will recognize this change and inform you that this will not last and to be ready for reality to return. When the short-lived cloud disappears, the newcomer may feel like she has taken a step backward and may even crave to be back in her addiction where she felt safe. Pain was familiar. Recovery is new.

Eventually, the pink cloud will become a period of serenity. Some new members even mistake the serenity for boredom. It is the first time in years that she has nothing to fill every moment in her life, her actions and her thinking. This is the time when her sponsor will suggest she start assuming responsibility, begin journaling, attending to health issues, and making phone calls to other members.

Actions that you can take

Making phone calls before we need them is helpful so when the critical time comes when we have to make that call, we will already have the experience of discussing our problems on the phone. Journaling is an important step for the newcomer. It is a cleansing process and we are encouraged to list not only negative issues but also the positive ones. It’s amazing how the words fill the paper in front of us once we pick up a pen. It’s also a great resource to refer to when a question regarding our actions arise. The new member will begin to live One Day at A Time and work on forgiving herself for her past.

The sponsor will stress the issue of staying away from gambling establishments, friends they gambled with, and even listening to stories from other gamblers about their own gambling. We will learn to set up healthy boundaries and realistic goals. It’s normal to want to change the world when we first discover we have stopped the gambling and forget that it’s a day at a time. This is where the Serenity Prayer helps settle the issues that may cause us stress.

By attending meetings, the member will learn the meaning of ‘utilize, don’t analyze’. In the beginning it is more productive to listen than to ask too many questions. Someone once said, “When I do all the talking, all I hear is what I already know.”

How do women sabotage their recovery?

There are several ways the newcomer can sabotage their recovery. Occasionally a person will tell themselves they don’t deserve to stop their addiction because they should be punished for the damage they created. Or may begin to skip meetings, tell harmless lies, start to judge others, and even convince themselves that they really aren’t that bad. It is not a good idea for a new member to isolate and could create a serious problem of self-pity. I learned early on in my recovery that if I didn’t want someone to tell me what to do, don’t tell them what’s bothering me.

Relapses begin in the brain before we return to the addictive behavior. When we become preoccupied with the triggers surrounding us, we get a chemical rush that registers in our behavior and interest, and creates excitement. Addictions do not have a conscience and the pain, guilt, and damage quickly disappear.

But if we practice page seventeen in the GA Combo Book, we can have a healthy recovery. Albert Einstein once said, “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” So, adapt new thinking to have a better chance of a lifetime of happiness and contentedness.

Questions about gambling recovery

Still have questions about recovery from gambling? Please write them below. We’ll do our best to respond to you personally and promptly.

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