Recover with Pride

LGBTQ+ GAMBLING HARM SUPPORT

Breathwork and Gambling Recovery

switchboard

REFRAME COACHING

University of Brighton

Breathwork and Gambling Recovery

What Is Breathwork?

Breathwork refers to a range of simple breathing techniques designed to calm the mind and body, regulate emotions, and reduce stress. While breathing is something we do automatically, consciously changing the way we breathe can have a powerful effect on our nervous system and overall wellbeing.

When we experience stress, anxiety, shame, fear, or emotional distress, our breathing often becomes shallow and rapid. Breathwork helps to slow breathing down, encouraging the body to move from a heightened state of stress into a calmer and more regulated state.

For LGBTQ+ people, experiences such as discrimination, identity-related stress, rejection, minority stress, social isolation, or concerns around acceptance can increase emotional pressure. Some people may turn to gambling as a way of escaping these feelings or seeking relief from difficult emotions.

Breathwork offers a healthy, accessible tool that can help reduce emotional intensity and support recovery from gambling harm.

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How to Use This Tool

Breathwork can be practised almost anywhere and takes only a few minutes.

A simple technique to try is:

Box Breathing

- Breathe in through your nose for four seconds.
- Hold your breath for four seconds.
- Breathe out slowly for four seconds.
- Hold again for four seconds.
- Repeat for several minutes.

You may also choose to:

- Practise breathwork when you wake up.
- Use it before bed to support relaxation.
- Use it when experiencing gambling urges.
- Practise during periods of stress or anxiety.
- Incorporate it into your daily self-care routine.

Like any new skill, breathwork becomes more effective with regular practice.

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How This Can Aid Recovery From Gambling Harm

Gambling urges are often driven by emotions rather than the desire to gamble itself. When we feel overwhelmed, stressed, lonely, anxious, bored, or frustrated, gambling can feel like a way to escape.

Breathwork creates a pause between the urge and the action.

Regular practice can help you:

- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Manage gambling urges more effectively.
- Improve emotional regulation.
- Reduce impulsive decision-making.
- Increase self-awareness.
- Improve sleep and relaxation.
- Develop healthier responses to difficult emotions.
- Build confidence in your ability to cope without gambling.

Sometimes the most important step in recovery is creating enough space to make a different choice.

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LGBTQ+ Considerations

Many LGBTQ+ people experience what is known as minority stress, the additional stress created by stigma, discrimination, exclusion, or fear of rejection.

You may be navigating:

- Homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia.
- Identity-related stress.
- Social isolation or loneliness.
- Family rejection.
- Workplace discrimination.
- Challenges accessing affirming services.
- Anxiety about coming out or being accepted.

These experiences can leave the body in a prolonged state of tension and alertness.

Breathwork helps calm the nervous system and can provide a sense of grounding during periods of uncertainty or distress. It can be particularly useful when LGBTQ+ experiences are contributing to stress that may otherwise increase the desire to gamble.

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Practical Recovery Activities

To build breathwork into your recovery, try:

- Practising for five minutes each morning.
- Using breathwork before making financial decisions.
- Completing a breathing exercise whenever gambling urges arise.
- Pairing breathwork with mindfulness or journalling.
- Creating reminders on your phone throughout the day.
- Recording how you feel before and after each exercise.
- Incorporating breathing exercises into your recovery plan.

Small, consistent practice often creates the biggest benefits.

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How We Can Help

Our Recover With Pride Recovery Coaches can help you understand how breathwork supports both emotional wellbeing and gambling recovery.

We can work with you to:

- Learn simple and effective breathing techniques.
- Identify situations where breathwork may be most beneficial.
- Use breathwork to manage gambling urges and emotional triggers.
- Build breathwork into your daily routine.
- Develop healthy coping strategies that replace gambling behaviours.
- Increase confidence in managing stress and anxiety.
- Create positive recovery habits that support long-term wellbeing.

Our coaches can help you practise these techniques, understand the benefits they can bring, and incorporate them into a personalised recovery plan. Over time, breathwork can become a valuable tool that helps you manage challenging emotions, strengthen resilience, and support lasting recovery from gambling harm.

Refer for support here:
www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/

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