Recover with Pride

LGBTQ+ GAMBLING HARM SUPPORT

Mindfulness and Gambling Recovery

switchboard

REFRAME COACHING

University of Brighton

Mindfulness and Gambling Recovery

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and without judgement. Rather than becoming caught up in worries about the future or regrets about the past, mindfulness helps you focus on what is happening right now.

Many people experiencing gambling-related harm find themselves trapped in cycles of craving, stress, shame, financial worries, or thoughts about previous gambling losses. Mindfulness helps break this cycle by increasing awareness of thoughts, emotions, urges, and behaviours without automatically reacting to them.

For LGBTQ+ people, mindfulness can also be a valuable tool for managing the impact of minority stress, discrimination, identity-related challenges, social isolation, and difficult life experiences. It creates space to respond to challenges more thoughtfully and compassionately.

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How to Use This Tool

Mindfulness can be practised in many different ways and does not require any special equipment.

Simple mindfulness exercises include:

Mindful Breathing

Focus your attention on your breathing for a few minutes, noticing each inhale and exhale without trying to change anything.

Body Scan

Slowly bring awareness to different parts of your body, noticing sensations, tension, or areas of comfort.

Five Senses Exercise

Pause and identify:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Mindful Observation

Focus on a single object, sound, or activity and give it your full attention.

Mindfulness works best when practised regularly, even if only for a few minutes each day.

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How This Can Aid Recovery From Gambling Harm

Many gambling episodes happen automatically, driven by urges, emotions, habits, or attempts to escape difficult feelings.

Mindfulness helps create a pause between the urge and the behaviour.

Through regular mindfulness practice, you may:

- Become more aware of gambling triggers.
- Recognise urges before acting on them.
- Reduce impulsive decision-making.
- Improve emotional regulation.
- Better manage stress and anxiety.
- Reduce feelings of overwhelm.
- Increase self-awareness and self-control.
- Develop healthier responses to difficult emotions.

Rather than trying to suppress gambling urges, mindfulness teaches you how to notice them, understand them, and allow them to pass without acting upon them.

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LGBTQ+ Considerations

Many LGBTQ+ people live with additional sources of stress that can affect wellbeing and recovery.

These may include:

- Experiences of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, or discrimination.
- Identity concealment.
- Concerns about coming out.
- Social isolation or loneliness.
- Family rejection.
- Anxiety around acceptance and belonging.
- Gender dysphoria or identity-related stress.
- The cumulative impact of minority stress.

Mindfulness can help you develop greater awareness of how these experiences affect your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It encourages self-compassion and can help reduce self-criticism, shame, and emotional reactivity.

Importantly, mindfulness is not about ignoring challenges. It is about learning how to respond to them in a healthier and more balanced way.

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Practical Recovery Activities

To incorporate mindfulness into your recovery journey, try:

- Practising mindful breathing for five minutes each morning.
- Using the Five Senses Exercise when gambling urges arise.
- Taking a mindful walk and focusing on your surroundings.
- Completing a daily body scan before bed.
- Setting reminders to pause and check in with yourself throughout the day.
- Combining mindfulness with journalling or gratitude practice.
- Reflecting on emotions without judging yourself for having them.

Small moments of mindfulness throughout the day can have a significant cumulative impact on recovery and wellbeing.

Mindfulness and Gambling Recovery

How We Can Help

Our Recover With Pride Recovery Coaches can help you explore how mindfulness can support both your emotional wellbeing and recovery from gambling harm.

We can work with you to:

- Understand the principles of mindfulness.
- Develop mindfulness techniques that suit your lifestyle.
- Use mindfulness to manage gambling urges and cravings.
- Increase awareness of triggers and emotional responses.
- Build healthier coping strategies.
- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Develop positive daily habits and routines.
- Integrate mindfulness into your wider recovery plan.

Our coaches can help you build confidence in using mindfulness as a practical recovery tool, ensuring it becomes part of your everyday wellbeing routine rather than something you only use during difficult moments.

Over time, mindfulness can help you become more aware, more resilient, and better equipped to manage life's challenges without turning to gambling. Together, we can help you develop positive habits that support emotional wellbeing, strengthen recovery, and create a more balanced and fulfilling future.

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

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