



The Emotions of Being an Affected Other

Understanding the Emotional Impact of Gambling Harm



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Understanding the Emotional Impact of Gambling Harm

When someone you care about is experiencing gambling harm, it can bring a wide range of emotions. Many affected others tell us that the emotional impact can be just as difficult as the practical or financial consequences.

You may feel worried one day, hopeful the next, and then angry, frustrated, or exhausted shortly afterwards. Sometimes these emotions can all appear at the same time.

There is no "right" way to feel when supporting someone affected by gambling harm.

At Recover with Pride, we want affected others to know that their emotions are valid, understandable, and deserve recognition.



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It Is Normal to Have Mixed Feelings

Many affected others describe feeling pulled in different directions emotionally.

You may:

- Love someone deeply while feeling hurt by their actions.
- Want to support them whilst feeling exhausted.
- Feel compassion for their struggles whilst feeling angry about the impact on you.
- Hope things will improve whilst fearing they may not.
- Feel relieved when gambling stops whilst still struggling to trust again.

These experiences are common.

Having difficult feelings does not mean you care any less about the person involved.

Worry and Anxiety

Anxiety is one of the most common emotions experienced by affected others.

You may find yourself constantly worrying about:

- Whether someone is gambling again.
- How much money has been spent.
- What information may have been hidden.
- The impact on family members.
- Future financial security.
- Whether recovery will last.

Some people describe becoming hypervigilant, feeling as though they must constantly monitor situations, conversations, bank accounts, or behaviours.

Living with uncertainty can be exhausting.

Anger

Many affected others feel guilty for being angry.

However, anger is often a natural response to difficult experiences.

You may feel angry because:

- Trust has been broken.
- You have been lied to.
- Money has been lost.
- Family relationships have been affected.
- Promises have been broken repeatedly.
- You have taken on responsibilities you never expected.

Feeling angry does not make you a bad partner, parent, friend, or family member.

It often reflects the significance of what has happened.

Hurt and Betrayal

For many affected others, the secrecy associated with gambling can be deeply painful.

You may feel betrayed after discovering:

- Hidden debts.
- Secret gambling accounts.
- Financial deception.
- Broken promises.
- Information that had been withheld over a long period.

The loss of trust can sometimes feel more painful than the financial impact itself.

Trust can be rebuilt, but this often takes time, consistency, and patience.

Guilt and Self-Blame

Many affected others spend time questioning themselves.

You may wonder:

- Why didn't I notice sooner?
- Should I have done more?
- Did I make things worse?
- Could I have prevented this?
- Have I supported them enough?

These thoughts are common, but it is important to remember:

You did not cause their gambling.

You cannot control their gambling.

You cannot force someone to stop gambling.

Responsibility for gambling behaviour belongs to the individual making those choices.

Shame

Sadly, gambling harm often carries stigma.

You may feel embarrassed or worried about what others might think if they knew what was happening.

Some affected others keep their experiences secret because they:

- Fear judgement.
- Want to protect the person involved.
- Feel embarrassed by what has happened.
- Do not believe others will understand.

Shame can increase isolation and make it harder to seek support.

Remember: gambling harm can affect anyone, regardless of age, background, sexuality, gender identity, income, or life experience.

There is no shame in asking for help.

Sadness and Grief

Gambling harm can involve many different types of loss.

You may grieve:

- A relationship that has changed.
- Financial security.
- Future plans.
- Lost opportunities.
- Trust and stability.
- Time spent focused on managing the impact of gambling.

Some affected others describe feeling as though they have lost the version of the person they once knew.

Others grieve the future they had imagined for themselves or their family.

These feelings are valid and deserve space to be acknowledged.

Exhaustion and Burnout

Supporting someone affected by gambling harm can be emotionally draining.

Many affected others spend months or years:

- Worrying.
- Problem-solving.
- Managing crises.
- Covering responsibilities.
- Supporting loved ones.
- Trying to keep everything together.

Eventually, this can lead to emotional exhaustion.

Signs may include:

- Feeling overwhelmed.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Low motivation.
- Increased irritability.
- Emotional numbness.
- Feeling disconnected from others.

If this sounds familiar, it may be a sign that you need support too.

Relief

Relief is sometimes an unexpected emotion.

You may feel relief when:

- Gambling is finally disclosed.
- Someone agrees to seek support.
- Debts are identified.
- Secrets are no longer being hidden.
- Recovery begins.

Feeling relieved does not mean the situation wasn't serious.

Sometimes relief comes from no longer carrying uncertainty alone.

Fear of the Future

Even when gambling has stopped, affected others may continue to experience fear.

You may worry about:

- Relapse.
- Financial recovery.
- Rebuilding trust.
- Future stability.
- Whether things will ever feel "normal" again.

These fears are understandable.

Recovery often takes time for everyone involved, not just the person who gambled.

LGBTQ+ Experiences and Emotional Wellbeing

LGBTQ+ affected others may experience additional pressures.

These may include:

- Minority stress.
- Discrimination or prejudice.
- Concerns about confidentiality.
- Family estrangement.
- Smaller support networks.
- Fear of being judged within communities.

Many LGBTQ+ people rely on chosen family networks, friendships, and community relationships for support.

When gambling harm affects these important relationships, the emotional impact can be significant.

At Recover with Pride, we recognise these experiences and provide an affirming space where people can discuss them openly.

Giving Yourself Permission to Feel

Many affected others believe they must remain strong at all times.

You may tell yourself:

- I need to keep going.
- They need me.
- My feelings are not important right now.

However, suppressing emotions often makes them harder to manage over time.

Recovery can begin by allowing yourself to acknowledge how you truly feel.

There is no expectation to be positive all the time.

There is no right or wrong way to experience the impact of gambling harm.

When Emotions Become Overwhelming

You do not have to cope alone.

Support may be helpful if:

- Your emotions are affecting daily life.
- You feel persistently anxious.
- You are struggling with sleep.
- You feel isolated.
- You are finding it difficult to cope.
- Your relationships are suffering.
- You would benefit from a safe space to talk.

Seeking support is not a sign of weakness.

It is a positive step towards understanding and managing the impact gambling harm has had on your life.

How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we understand that affected others often carry a significant emotional burden.

We provide a safe, non-judgemental and LGBTQ+ affirming space where you can:

- Talk openly about your experiences.
- Explore difficult emotions.
- Better understand gambling harm.
- Develop healthy coping strategies.
- Build confidence and resilience.
- Reduce isolation.
- Connect with support and resources.

You do not have to carry these feelings by yourself.



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Key Takeaway

If you have experienced anger, sadness, fear, guilt, exhaustion, relief, confusion, or grief because of someone else's gambling, you are not alone.

These emotions are common responses to difficult experiences, and they do not make you selfish, uncaring, or unsupportive.

Your wellbeing matters too, and support is available for affected others at every stage of their journey.

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Aila

Aila is a website for women in Scotland experiencing or affected by gambling harm, developed by women with lived and living experience. If you are being harmed by someone else's gambling, Aila brings together emotional support, financial and debt advice, and practical guidance on navigating conversations and setting boundaries, helping you find the right service at the right time. Our monthly Living Room offers a welcoming in-person and online space for women affected by their own or someone else's gambling, and the Lived and Living Library shares stories from women across Scotland. You are not alone.

Links

Website

aila-scotland.co.uk/explore-available-support/support-for-affected-others/

aila-scotland.co.uk/explore-available-support/are-you-supporting-someone-else/

aila-scotland.co.uk

Contact

hello@aila-scotland.co.uk



Ara

Ara provides free support for people across the South West affected by someone else's gambling, including partners, family members, friends and colleagues. Support includes one-to-one counselling delivered face-to-face, by telephone or online by professionally accredited, CBT-qualified counsellors. Sessions focus on emotional wellbeing, coping strategies, recovery and rebuilding confidence.

Ara also offers specialist relationship counselling support, where gambling has impacted trust, communication, finances or family life, helping people to rebuild relationships and move forward together. In addition, our easy access workshops provide practical advice, digital safety support, understanding gambling-related harms, and action planning for those seeking support at the earliest opportunity.

Links

Website

www.recovery4all.co.uk/

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Betknowmore UK

Behind every person experiencing gambling harm, an estimated 6-10 other people may be affected.

A partner losing sleep. A parent caught between worry and responsibility. A young person living with tension in their home. A friend who wants to help but doesn't know how. A colleague covering up mistakes at work.

If this is you, Betknowmore UK is right behind you.

We offer digital peer support service for anyone aged 18 and above. Our Peer Supporters have City and Guilds assured training and lived experience of gambling harms. They understand what you are going through.

Supporting you through shared lived experience

As part of the statutory levy, Betknowmore UK is funded to provide 1:1 and group support to affected others in England and Scotland.

This support aims to ensure that through peer-led engagement and intervention, people are offered the most appropriate support to address their specific needs.

Links

Website

www.betknowmoreuk.org/affected-other

Breakeven

Breakeven

Breakeven offers counselling support for partners, family members and friends affected by someone else's gambling. Gambling harm can put pressure on relationships, finances and the wider household, and support is available for you too.

You can receive support even if the person who gambles is not ready to seek help. Breakeven works with affected family members and friends to help them understand their experiences and find ways to cope with the impact.

Its family and friends resources also offer guidance on looking after yourself, understanding gambling harms and having supportive, non-judgemental conversations.

Links

Website

www.breakeven.org.uk/family-and-friends

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Chances

As part of Cyrenians' homelessness prevention strategy – Chances offers person-centred, non-judgemental, and non-time limited support to anyone aged 16+ in Scotland who is impacted by gambling harm. For affected others - the service adopts a Community Reinforcement & Family Training approach focused on their recovery and not the person gambling and supports with:

- Promoting self-care, general wellbeing, independence, and boundary setting
- Understanding gambling behaviour and a loved one's triggers
- Improving communication with the person gambling through positive reinforcement techniques
- Guidance & tools to encourage the person gambling to reduce the harms experienced

Online and phone options are offered Scotland wide and in-person in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Falkirk. Organisational and self-referrals are welcome via email or phone on **07983 137239**. Alternatively, a referral form can be completed (available upon request).

Links

Website

[Chances: Gambling Support](#)

Contact

[07983 137239](tel:07983137239)

chances@cyrenians.scot



Gambling Recovery Therapy

Founded by Lorraine Perrons and Claire Jones, Gambling Recovery for All CIC and Gambling Recovery Therapy Limited combine family experience of gambling harm with specialist professional training.

The CIC's Rebuild & Rise: Reclaim Your Life is a fully funded, trauma-informed 12-week online programme for eligible women across the UK affected by someone else's gambling. It focuses on emotional wellbeing, financial resilience, boundaries, confidence and rebuilding a sense of choice and control. Women can seek support whether or not the person who gambles has stopped or sought help.

Gambling Recovery Therapy Limited also offers private paid one-to-one therapy for people experiencing gambling harm and those affected by someone else's gambling, with a complimentary 30-minute introductory conversation.

Links

Website

www.gamblingrecoverytherapy.com/affected-other

forms.gle/aMA4fJbgDMSpg0Tb9

www.gamblingrecoverytherapy.com/brochure

Contact

contact@gamblingrecoverytherapy.com

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Recover Together

Recover Together provides a safe and supportive space for people affected by gambling harm, including family members, partners, friends and others impacted by someone else's gambling. Reaching out can feel difficult, and people may not always know what support they need or where to start. We're here to listen and walk alongside them, helping them find a way forward that feels right for them. Our approach is shaped by lived experience of gambling harm and recovery, and we meet people with empathy, honesty and no judgement, providing support, understanding and connection.

Links

Website

recoverttogether.org/what-we-do/affected-others/



Shiltons' Silverlining

Shiltons' Silverlining supports partners, family members, friends and loved ones affected by someone else's gambling. Its Affected Others service offers a confidential space to talk, be heard and feel understood.

The charity recognises that someone else's gambling can bring anxiety, financial pressure, relationship difficulties and isolation. It offers emotional support, guidance and information to help people cope with the impact and find a way forward.

Built on lived experience, the service recognises that affected family members and friends need support for their own mental health, wellbeing and relationships too.

Links

Website

shiltonssilverlining.org/affected-others/

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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