

A CHANCE FOR

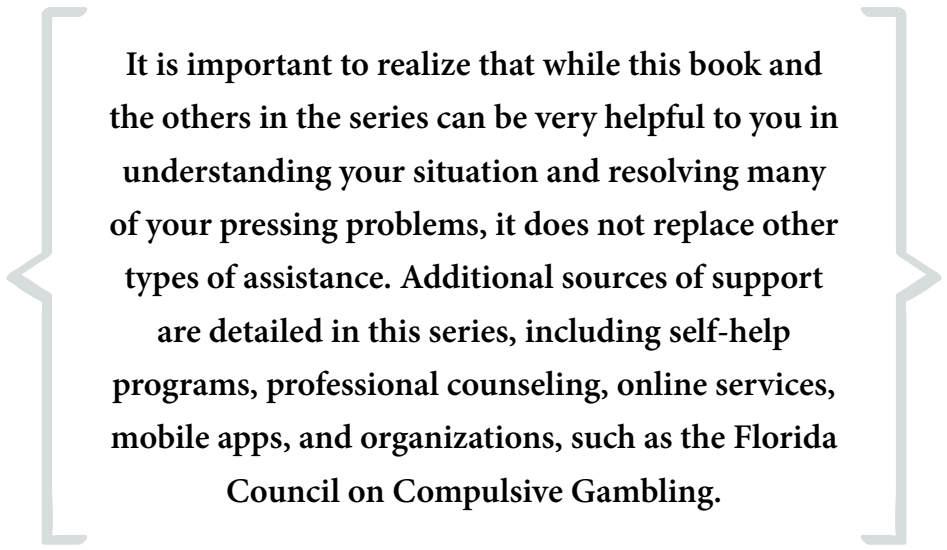
Change

Staying the Course

FOR COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS



BOOK THREE



It is important to realize that while this book and the others in the series can be very helpful to you in understanding your situation and resolving many of your pressing problems, it does not replace other types of assistance. Additional sources of support are detailed in this series, including self-help programs, professional counseling, online services, mobile apps, and organizations, such as the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling.

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A CHANCE FOR
Change

Staying the Course



This book is the third in a series of seven workbooks designed to aid in recovering from the adverse effects of problem and compulsive gambling.



The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG), established in 1988, is a non-profit educational and advocacy organization, under contract with Florida State government, dedicated to helping persons adversely affected by problem and compulsive gambling. The agency maintains a neutral stance on the issue of legalized gambling, while seeking to assist citizens in need of support. Primary responsibilities include:

- Operating the State's 24-hour confidential and multilingual toll-free Problem Gambling HelpLine, which offers supportive intervention, information, and referrals to self-help programs; professional treatment with certified providers; financial and legal services, online assistance, mobile apps, and more.
- Designing, implementing, and overseeing prevention, education, and outreach programs.
- Training mental health, medical and other health care professionals to assess and treat.
- Providing an Online Program for Problem Gamblers and Live Chat program.
- Sponsoring and performing research.
- Conducting education and/or responsible gambling training programs for government agencies, gambling operators, law enforcement authorities, academic and employee assistance organizations, and others.
- Implementing and overseeing gambling-specific outreach programs for impaired professionals; adolescents; military members, families and veterans; and seniors.
- Working with legal, law enforcement and judicial authorities on gambling-related cases.
- Offering a Speakers Bureau and a Peer Connect program.

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's development of *A Chance for Change* is the result of an identified need for alternate forms of education and assistance to those whose lives are negatively affected by a devastating gambling disorder (compulsive gambling).

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Staying the course



Take a moment to ask yourself a few questions

- ☐ Do you feel discouraged because you can't see that you are making progress on changing your life as it relates to your gambling?
- ☐ Do you feel incapable of honestly evaluating the effects of your gambling behavior?
- ☐ Have you tried to substitute gambling with other activities, but failed?
- ☐ Do you feel confused about how to repair the problems in your life relating to gambling?
- ☐ Are you feeling unsure about your ability to think clearly when it comes to gambling?
- ☐ Are there too many reminders of your gambling behavior that continue to tempt you to gamble?
- ☐ Do you feel like you know what to do, but are unable to follow through and do it?
- ☐ Do you feel that changing your life as it relates to gambling is impossible for you right now?

These questions and other thoughts may be going through your head right now as you are struggling to understand yourself, your gambling problem and the possible solutions to your current situation. From reading and working through the first two books of this

series, Book One: *Do You Have A Gambling Problem?* and Book Two: *Beginning the Process of Change*, you are starting to create a foundation for positive change. You have learned important information about the issues you may be facing as a compulsive gambler, some resources for

help and support, as well as techniques and skills that you will practice throughout this series to resolve problems and remain committed to a plan for a better way of living.

As you read through this book and the others in the series, words in **boldface type** will be explained in the text and/or defined in the *Glossary* found in the back of each book.

People who are undergoing tremendous change in their lives often experience feelings of doubt and uncertainty when they are entering unfamiliar territory.

You may be experiencing a range of emotions about your ability to take positive action and resolve the ever-growing list of problems you are facing because of your gambling. These emotions are common and frequently are described as feelings of **powerlessness**. When gamblers' lives become unmanageable, and they are unable to control their actions, it is because they are powerless over the addiction. At the same time, it is important to recognize that while compulsive

gamblers may not be able to "control" their gambling, there are other aspects of their lives where positive change can be made and where control can be exercised with proper guidance.

These emotions can be faced by calmly reviewing the basic steps you have read and written about in the first two books of this series. Take a deep breath, relax and remember what is most important right now as you begin the process of absorbing new information and skills.

1. You have honestly assessed your behavior as it relates to gambling and admitted that you have a serious problem.
2. You have sincerely sought help for your compulsive gambling, realizing that you can't ignore the problems or take charge of your gambling on your own.
3. You have made a commitment for long term change, which includes learning about yourself, identifying what you must do to create a positive life for yourself and seeking support and strength to carry out your plan.

**Take a deep breath,
relax and begin the
process of learning
new information
and skills.**

You're now ready to continue the process of working to understand how you can deal with the problems and issues you are facing. As you work through this book, remember to proceed at a pace you are comfortable with. Be certain you give yourself time to think about the information presented and relate it to your particular situation. This book focuses on several aspects of your change program that can enhance your success. As you read and work through the exercises that follow, remind yourself often of these first three steps you have already taken on your road to recovery.

It is important to realize that while this book and the others in the series can be very helpful to you in understanding your situation and resolving many pressing problems, it is not intended to replace other types of support. Additional sources of assistance detailed in this series include self-help programs, professional counseling, online services, mobile apps, and organizations, such as the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling and Gamblers Anonymous.

Identifying Triggers and Avoiding Relapse

When anyone, especially an addict, such as a compulsive gambler, commits to change, a relapse is a very real possibility. A **relapse** is defined as one slip, for a period of time that can vary in duration, when the gambler engages again in the addictive behavior, then re-commits to a change program.

In the beginning of any change program, relapse is likely. However, the best outcome is that you get right back on the program of change. Building strength for the long haul is what helps you stay on the path of change and avoid reverting to your previous gambling behaviors. It is important to commit and recommit, if necessary, to your change program.

Short-Term Relapse

A **short-term relapse** usually means a slip for a short period of time, where you re-engage in the gambling behavior. This kind of relapse can be frightening. You might feel that the



old behavior is going to return in full force and that none of the hard-earned change you had accomplished is going to be permanent. If a short term relapse does occur, it's up to you to make sure that it is a one-time slip and not a permanent return to old behaviors.

If you do experience a relapse, don't feel too discouraged. Relapse can be common, particularly during the early stages of recovery. Most people don't start something and then just move forward steadily with no bumps. Making change is very hard work. It might mean changing your value system, your beliefs, your thoughts, your habits, your job, your everyday behaviors, your friends, perhaps most things in your typical daily life. It can mean changing ways or patterns of behavior that have been ingrained in you for years and which are familiar and comforting.

Finding new activities you enjoy to replace these habits can take time. When you are under stress you are more inclined to revert to old behaviors because they are easy, reassuring, and familiar to you. If you are following a self-help program and experience a relapse, you can benefit by

speaking with others who are members of the same fellowship. This is important because there are certain ways in which relapse is addressed within self-help programs.

Self-help programs are designed to offer assistance to members who are actively working the program and who need and ask for help. One such example is Gamblers Anonymous (GA), a self-help support group of recovering compulsive gamblers who meet regularly to share their experience, strength, and hope. There are no dues or fees for membership in GA. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop gambling. As you become active in GA, you may wish to request a **sponsor** to assist you in your recovery. A sponsor is an experienced GA member who can provide newcomers with one-on-one support, and detailed information about how the 12-Step GA program works and additional resources. As you work through the information and exercises in this series, bookmark or highlight sections that you would like to discuss with your GA group and/or your sponsor.

Loved ones in your life may offer support, encouragement, and guidance in your commitment to change. Their support, however, might not be enough. One of the best things you can do, if you are not already a member of

GA, is to join immediately. Private counseling from a trained treatment professional can also be a great help. For referral information to self-help program options, as well as treatment professionals and other supports, contact the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's 24-hour toll-free confidential and multilingual HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT) by phone, live chat, text, email, via the 888-ADMIT-IT mobile app or on social media. Check the *Additional Resources* section in the back of this book for contact information and specifics.

Long-Term Relapse

A **long-term relapse** can take two basic forms:

1. You might have repeatedly experienced many short-term relapses and cannot maintain the commitment to change; or
2. You may have re-entered into a long and sustained period of engaging in the gambling behavior.

A relapse of either of these types can be viewed as an opportunity to work harder at recovery, a chance to discover what didn't work and to make an effort again with renewed strength. Remind yourself that recovery requires total honesty on your part and a sincere engagement with a self-help program on a regular, daily basis, very often coupled with professional treatment.

What can you do if you have a short-term relapse?

First, you have to acknowledge that you are human and reaffirm your strength and desire to change. You have to recommit and begin again where you stopped. The key is to recognize that this is a short-term slip and not a long-term relapse, so keep moving forward.

The most dangerous aspect of long-term relapse, when it consists of repeated short-term slips, is that you can be fooled into believing that because you are trying so hard that nothing more can be done. The real problem is that you are not truly committed to change. Often in the case of a long term relapse where the behavior is

sustained, you might have had a taste of change and then began to feel that you could take charge of your behavior. You have not yet accepted your powerlessness over your addiction. Your participation in a change program, a self-help program, and professional treatment are critical at this point.

Let's look at your efforts to manage a relapse.

Have you experienced a relapse in your change program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which was it? ☐ Short-term ☐ Long-term

What happened?

How did you handle it?

How did you cope with the actual circumstances?

continued on next page

Is there anything you could have done differently? If yes, what?

What will you do to prevent future relapse(s)?

What will you do if you experience another relapse?

Triggers — How to Recognize and Resist Them

One of the best ways to resist the temptation of relapsing is to have a plan. You need to think in advance about the possible things that might lead to a relapse and what you will do to avoid them. These are called **triggers**. Triggers can be people, places and things or they might be emotions or feelings. A trigger can lead to a chain of events that causes you to slip in your commitment to change and re engage in gambling. Everyone has a unique reaction to triggers based on their particular emotional makeup and experiences.

While you may be using this workbook as a private place to think about and prepare for your recovery, you may also find it useful to read and work through this section with support. Either on your own or with support, it is helpful to plan how you will respond to the particular triggers that can cause you to relapse. Part of that plan may include considering alternative behaviors that can prevent you from either experiencing and/or reacting to triggers and more importantly, from relapsing.

The following exercise will help you with the first step in creating a plan to resist relapse. Earmark or clip this page in the book because it is an exercise you will want to review from time to time and add to as you work on your change program.

Resisting Triggers and Relapse Exercise

Step One: Identifying Your Triggers

What are the situations, places, people, or feelings that make you want to gamble? Do you find yourself wanting to gamble when you are around certain friends, or if you have had an alcoholic beverage or two, or when you are feeling upset? Do you gamble to make yourself feel less anxious or to compensate for loneliness? Do you gamble because you want to feel excited or to get away from the pressures and responsibilities you feel in your life? Everyone has different triggers that are particular to them. In the spaces below, consider what your triggers might be for each of these areas.

People

Places

Events

continued on next page

Feelings

Activities

Step Two: Learning to Identify, Prepare and Self-Protect Against Triggers

It is important to note that when you respond to triggers, you are limiting your choices. You can choose to be **proactive** or **reactive**. Being proactive means that you are going to take charge of the situation, and yourself, by thinking about your response and not just responding emotionally. Being reactive means that you are going to allow the trigger to control the situation, resulting in a response without thinking through the consequences. You can take charge of your own behavior and reaction in advance or at the moment. The key is to think of things that will help you identify, prepare and self protect against triggers in order to maintain a sense of balance when these circumstances may present in your life. It is important to remember that you can take charge of *you*.

Identifying triggers and planning how to respond to them is an important skill for recovery. Once you have worked on this section by yourself, share your responses with your support group, sponsor or therapist. Their suggestions or feedback can help you further develop this skill.

For each of the triggers you have listed, take a moment to think about why it is a trigger. For example, if you have listed a person, why does this person make you want to gamble? Is it because you have a history of gambling with him and that is the only way you relate to each other? If you listed a feeling, such as needing excitement, think about why you choose gambling to give you excitement, and whether there are any other ways to experience this same feeling. Do this for each of the items.

Trigger	
Why is this a trigger?	
What could you do to prepare and self-protect against this trigger?	
Trigger	

continued on next page

Why is this a trigger?

What could you do to prepare and self-protect against this trigger?

Trigger

Why is this a trigger?

What could you do to prepare and self-protect against this trigger?

continued on next page

Trigger

Why is this a trigger?

What could you do to prepare and self-protect against this trigger?

Trigger

Why is this a trigger?

continued on next page

What could you do to prepare and self-protect against this trigger?

Note: The above exercise is a particularly good one to use with a sponsor, support group, professional therapist or another person. Sharing your responses and inviting feedback to what you wrote can help you more closely identify the triggers unique to you and your situation.

No matter how a situation, place or person makes you feel, you can take charge of that feeling. In every event that happens in your life, you can choose to simply react or to respond proactively. One way you can do this is by entering the space between moments (VanDeventer, 1999). This is the space between one moment and the next where you can consciously choose your behavior. Even if an event makes you feel a certain way, you can enter that space between moments and choose not to react with that feeling. Suppose you feel angry with someone who cuts you off in traffic. You can react by cursing, or getting upset,

or pursuing them, all of which can present unknown consequences. Or you can respond by entering the space between moments and choose to remain calm. In that space you can choose a different way to respond, rather than simply reacting with anger.

It sounds simple, but it is not always easy. You will need to practice this to become good at changing your response to situations. However, this simple behavior can allow you to live your life with awareness and decisiveness, while remaining in charge of your impulses.

When you are faced with a trigger, the ability to enter the space between moments can help you. Some people have found it helpful to write this short sentence on a small card or sticky note:

Pause, breathe, think, and then respond.
Placing your note where you can see it often may remind you to do it — especially when you need it.



Take a break — think about the following questions and write down your answers.

When you're ready, move on to the next section.

Are your triggers more often related to people/places/things, or to feelings/emotions?

Why do you think this is so?

Which of your triggers do you feel most able to manage or work on taking charge of at this point?

Give an example of what you could do to manage your response to the trigger identified above.

Planning for Abstinence

Gamblers Anonymous, and most compulsive gambling therapists, recommend abstinence as the preferred method of treatment for compulsive gamblers. While you, like many gamblers, may believe you can control your gambling and get to the point where you can engage in moderate gambling, it is simply not realistic. When you are a compulsive gambler, gambling even a little may lead to out-of-control

gambling. In fact, the belief that you can manage your gambling by yourself is one of the significant factors that lead to relapse. Robert Ladouceur, a prominent researcher on compulsive gambling, compiled a list of five potential results of attempting to control gambling (Ladouceur, et al 2002).

Think about it. Have any of these five events ever happened to you? Place a checkmark ✓ beside any you have experienced. What is the common element of each of these potential results? In all situations, the gambler continues to gamble and eventually loses. Each of these choices prolongs the deception and false thinking that characterize compulsive gambling. None of these options is a solution for making personal and positive change. Abstinence from gambling must be the path of choice if you are to succeed at changing your life. One way to accomplish this is to create new behaviors and activities to take the place of gambling. While this may seem difficult or impossible to you at this moment, it can work. It has worked for thousands of gamblers before you and it can work for you, too. The key is to take it one step at a time and to have a firm belief that you can accomplish change.

First, let's take a look at other activities you enjoy or would like to do. In the beginning, these will not feel the same to you as gambling. Perhaps none of them ever will. What you are working toward is to change how you feel about gambling and to change the act of gambling by engaging in new behaviors. We know it won't be easy but change of any kind is never easy. You have to start with small steps.

Check any events that are familiar to you

- ☐ You gamble and win, then want to do it again or win more money. You continue to gamble and eventually lose.
- ☐ You gamble and win and are able to leave with your winnings. You then tell yourself that gambling is a good way to get money quickly and return to play, eventually losing.
- ☐ You gamble, win, play your winnings and lose them. You tell yourself that the next time you will be able to stop sooner. You return to gambling and lose.
- ☐ You gamble and lose, then want to get back the money you lost. You keep playing and lose.
- ☐ You gamble and lose, then tell yourself that next time will be better. You return to play and eventually lose.

In the list below, put a checkmark ✓ beside any of the activities you presently enjoy doing, or that you could spend more time on. Put a star * beside any that are new activities for you that you feel you might like to do. For now, avoid analyzing how you will be able to do these things or coming up with reasons why it will be impossible or impractical for you to consider an activity. Simply identify some hobbies, interests and activities that sound interesting to you. At the bottom of the list are blank spaces to write in anything not listed.

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| ☐ Additional Schooling | ☐ Decorating | ☐ Meditation | ☐ Tai Chi |
| ☐ Aerobics | ☐ Dining Clubs | ☐ Music | ☐ Target Shooting |
| ☐ Antiquing | ☐ Driving | ☐ Opera | ☐ Tennis |
| ☐ Archery | ☐ Fishing | ☐ Painting | ☐ Theatre |
| ☐ Ballet | ☐ Flower Arranging | ☐ Photography | ☐ Traveling |
| ☐ Baseball/Softball | ☐ Flying | ☐ Playing Board Games | ☐ Visiting Family |
| ☐ Basketball | ☐ Football | ☐ Playing an Instrument | ☐ Visiting Museums |
| ☐ Boating | ☐ Gardening | ☐ Racing | ☐ Volleyball |
| ☐ Bowling | ☐ Genealogy | ☐ Racquetball | ☐ Volunteering |
| ☐ Camping | ☐ Going to Art Shows | ☐ Reading | ☐ Walking |
| ☐ Carpentry | ☐ Going to Movies | ☐ Remodeling | ☐ Watching TV |
| ☐ Ceramics | ☐ Golfing | ☐ Rollerblading | ☐ Weightlifting |
| ☐ Climbing | ☐ Hang Gliding | ☐ Running | ☐ White Water Rafting |
| ☐ Coin Collecting | ☐ Hiking | ☐ Sailing | ☐ Windsurfing |
| ☐ Computing | ☐ Hockey | ☐ Sculpting | ☐ Writing |
| ☐ Concerts | ☐ Horseback Riding | ☐ Sewing | ☐ Woodworking |
| ☐ Cooking/Baking | ☐ Housework | ☐ Skiing | ☐ Yoga |
| ☐ Crafts | ☐ Karaoke | ☐ Singing | ☐ Other (specify): |
| ☐ Crochet/Knitting | ☐ Karate | ☐ Soccer | _____ |
| ☐ Cycling | ☐ Kayaking | ☐ Stamp Collecting | _____ |
| ☐ Dancing | ☐ Learning a Language | ☐ Swimming | _____ |

Are you surprised at the number of things you might be interested in? Learning to enjoy life in different ways is largely a matter of how you think and of establishing new routines. As you make a commitment to change how you spend

your time and abstain from gambling, you will have to replace your old habits with new activities. You may have to learn more about some of the activities on the list to decide if they interest you.

In the next exercise you will begin thinking about how to establish some new habits or activities. From your list, select at least one item you placed a checkmark ✓ beside and one you put a * beside and write them down in the spaces provided. These will be a place to begin.

Something I would like to do more of is:

Something new I would like to do is:

Now list some steps you will take to begin each of these activities. For instance, if you checked that you would like to do painting, your list might look like this.

Something I would like to do more of is: Painting

I will start to do this by taking the following steps:

1. Get some books or magazines on the subject from the library or bookstore
2. Find out if there are any continuing education classes nearby
3. See if there are any local artists who teach classes
4. Check the television schedule to see if there are any painting classes
5. Look online for more information
6. Check at local arts and crafts stores for more information
7. Buy some supplies and begin on my own

Now it's your turn. For two of the items you marked in your chart, list your beginning steps.

Something I would like to do more of is: _____

I will start to do this by taking the following steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Something new I would like to do is: _____

I will start to do this by taking the following steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Another way of getting involved in new activities is to think of other people who are doing things you might find interesting. For instance, maybe your brother likes to fly-fish and would be willing to teach you. Or maybe your best friend is a gourmet cook and would love to help you learn more about it.

In the spaces below, list people you know and their hobbies. Then consider if any of these might be right for you and if they might be willing to help you get started.

[illegible]

Refer frequently to these lists for suggestions of things to do and people to contact. Update when you think of new activities or meet new people. Be proactive by thinking about the changes you can add to your list and about opportunities that may come your way to participate in new hobbies or interests.

It is also important to be attentive to the words you use because they impact upon your thoughts and behaviors. More specifically, people who say "I will try" do not often realize that they have given themselves permission to fail. No matter

what happens, in these instances, a person can always say that they "tried". Often, people who make statements such as "I will try", do not realize they are fooling themselves by thinking there's a chance they will actually succeed. Therefore, it's important when making a life plan and determining how you will proceed, that you be attentive to the words you use. For example, instead of noting "I will try", you can state "I will do" or "I will participate in" or other options that reflect your true intent.



Take a break — think about the following questions and write down your answers.

When you're ready, move on to the next section.

How much are you willing to invest in time, thought and effort into developing replacement activities for gambling?

What do you think will be the greatest challenges to doing this?

What will you do to make sure you succeed?

Making Amends

A major part of the recovery process for compulsive gamblers is to identify mistakes they have made and to make **amends** to those whom they have hurt or wronged. Often, compulsive gamblers begin their recovery program and immediately think they have to make up for all the trouble or problems they may have caused. It is very important that you take the time to carefully think about this issue before attempting to respond. The advice and counsel of an experienced GA member or professionally trained therapist on how best to proceed with this aspect of your change program is a valuable supplement to the information included in this workbook.

The heart of making an amend is taking responsibility for something you have done. Sometimes amends will take the form of an apology, an explanation, or a longer conversation, and sometimes it might include actions.

Making amends is a process that requires patience and perseverance. To begin, it is important that you reaffirm your commitment to the change process. Your ability to strongly agree to the following statements will help prepare you for the work ahead.

- I admit that I have a serious problem with gambling that I cannot control.
- I am actively seeking help to understand and resolve my problems.
- I wholeheartedly commit to working on my program for long-term change.



The first step is for you to take some time and think about who you might have hurt and how.

Wrongs can take many forms. They might be financial, social, emotional, physical or combinations of these. Sometimes problems and misunderstandings result from a failure to do something or from neglect. In some cases, despite your attempt to make amends, there might be no true words or actions that can make up for what you have done or the hurt you have caused.

For example, perhaps you hurt someone who has since passed away, or maybe you have caused financial damage to such an extent that you don't think you can ever repay it. Maybe your actions ruined another person's reputation or a relationship. In cases like these, consider the very best you can do to rectify the wrong and do it. Know that after you have done your best, you must not beat yourself up with guilt, but allow yourself to move on.

It is important for you to realize that even though you might be ready to ask for forgiveness for past mistakes and make amends, those whom you have wronged might have their own time schedules. Making amends is not just throwing out a half-hearted apology with no consideration of whether or how it will be received. The process of making amends involves your reflecting on how your behavior affected the other person and their life. It will require thinking and insight on your part to consider the most effective way to approach the wronged individual.

In the spaces that follow, there are places to record information about specific people and actions that you can consider in the process of making amends. List each person you have wronged, the nature of the wrong, and how you plan to proceed.

For instance, will you apologize to them? In person or by telephone? Will you write them a letter? Will you explain what happened and take responsibility for your actions? Will you do something specific to rectify the wrong? If so, what?

There are additional worksheets in the back of the book to continue this activity beginning on page 42.

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

continued on next page

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Look back over what you have written. Do you feel capable of making the amends you described? If so, plan a time when you think you might be able to carry out your strategy. This is another example of an exercise you could share with your self-help group, your GA sponsor or a therapist. The FCCG's 24-hour toll-free confidential HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT) is also a valuable resource for suggestions on how you can work on this important aspect of your recovery. As you read over this section and your responses to the questions, remember that your honest commitment to change is the foundation of everything you do for recovery.



Take a break — think about the following questions and write down your answers.

When you're ready, move on to the next section.

How does thinking about making amends make you feel?

How do you think the process of making amends will change you?

What do you think will be your greatest challenges to actually making amends?

Establishing a Mindset: Reflection and Spirituality

One of the best steps you can take to move forward in a change program is to alter your way of thinking. It has been stressed throughout this series of books that your thoughts lead to new behaviors. Your thoughts become words, your words become actions, and your actions can change your life.

At this point, your awareness of your thought process and how it contributes to your problems might just be emerging. You may be starting to feel it is possible to retrain yourself to think differently. To do so, you must stop and consider how and why you act in the ways you do. This is the beginning of a process called reflection.

Reflection

Reflection can help you to understand yourself and your motivations, with a goal of leading you toward new behaviors. Reflection is the process of thinking about what you have done, the motivations for your actions, and the consequences of your behavior.



**Reflection is a powerful
tool for learning about
yourself and your
motivations.**

Maybe you are the type of person whose mind is running a hundred miles a minute and you find it difficult to concentrate on your thoughts. Or maybe you feel sad and are unable to separate your emotions or to think clearly. However you are thinking now, complete the following exercise to focus your mind.

1. Stop what you are doing and go to a quiet place.
2. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, letting it out slowly.
3. Do this several times until your mind is quieted.
4. Now with your body relaxed and your mind calmed, you are ready to think about any issues of importance and allow the answers to come to you.

As you remain calm and consider your actions and their consequences, be aware of how you feel about what you are thinking. Book Two, *Beginning the Process of Change* discussed at length the process of recognizing the *real you* by engaging in a similar activity. When you are still and thoughtful, an honest understanding of yourself comes to mind. You will be able to concentrate on how you really feel about all the important things you are thinking about.

You might find it useful to keep a journal of your reflections, writing the issues you are thinking about, the questions you are asking yourself, the process of your thinking, and your own answers. Looking back through this journal over time will help you to see how your thinking is changing and progressing. Your journal can offer significant clues to your motivations and behaviors.

Another activity to consider is reading a book of meditations, especially one that emphasizes change and recovery. Reading a short piece first thing in the morning can help you focus and

set a positive tone for your day. Also, having something inspirational or calming to read during the day can be beneficial, as it can be in the evening prior to relaxing or sleeping.

Reflection is a critical skill in the process of change. It is one of the aspects of the cognitive part of **cognitive behavioral change** used in these books. Cognitive change involves thinking and learning about yourself and your motivations. Behavioral change involves changing your actions. The exercises in this series combine thinking and learning how to make changes in the way you act.

In the spaces that follow, write down at least two issues you could reflect on now. If you can't decide where to begin, choose a topic from this list.

- Am I happy with the life I am leading now?
- How would I like to change my life?
- How have my actions and behaviors surrounding gambling affected others?
- What feelings does gambling bring about in me and where else could I get these same feelings?
- What are my dreams for my life?
- Why is making amends important for me?
- How will abstaining from gambling make me feel?

These possibilities for reflection are unlimited and are determined completely by you and the questions you can ask to direct and re-direct your life.

List two issues you will reflect on today.

1. _____

2. _____

Think about and identify a time in your day when you can concentrate on the reflection process and the issues that are important to you. If now is a good time, re-read this section, close the book and think about the issues you've chosen for reflection.

Besides reflection, another mindset that may help you make positive change in your life is spirituality.

Spirituality

Spirituality is the process of developing a human connection to a higher power, God, or whatever name you give to the universe greater than yourself. Adding spirituality to your life can help you to find meaning, peace, and joy. It can include informal and personal explorations of an inner life that lend depth and meaning to an outer life. Spirituality means looking at yourself and your life in order to find the answers to big questions such as,

- "Why am I here?"
- "Why is this happening to me?"
- "What am I meant to do in life?" or
- "How can I make a difference?"

Very often, when you experience something uncomfortable or painful you are given the opportunity to look beyond the daily details of existence and consider larger questions of the heart. It is often painful life events that cause people to enter into self-examination. Perhaps you already have a strong spiritual component in your life. If so, it can offer a lifeline of strength and hope to your feelings of frustration. Tap into it regularly.

Spirituality and reflection are two approaches to examining yourself and your situation in life. Take the time to explore how they can help you in your change program.

If there is no spiritual aspect present in your life right now, you are in a position to do something that can bring you emotional relief. The presence of spirituality can provide a sense of comfort to you that can lead to improved physical and emotional health. Ideas for incorporating different aspects of spirituality into your life are provided in the following section.

What do you think?

Do you think it is possible that developing the spiritual side of your life could help with your change program?



Some suggestions for adding spirituality into your life include:

Ideas for Activities

- Sign up for a class on a spiritual or philosophical topic at a local college.
- Attend a place of worship you may not have been to for a while or visit a new location.
- Attend a self-help support group meeting, such as Gamblers Anonymous. (See *Additional Resources* for description.)
- Join a meditation group.
- Take a yoga class.
- Read a book on a spiritual topic.
- Spend time with nature, in peaceful surroundings, where you can think and reflect.
- Write short, positive statements on sticky notes, small sheets of paper or on mirrors with a dry erase marker, to remind you of your change program throughout the course of the day. Inspirational notes such as, “I can do this,” “Keep going” and “One day at a time” can be uplifting, hopeful and serve as gentle reminders of your commitment to change.

Ideas for Personal Examination

Prayer

You do not have to believe in God, in a traditional sense, to pray. Prayer can be a personal avenue to a higher spirit or power — a connection with something larger than you. You can pray for understanding, strength, fortitude, compassion, guidance, clarity, etc. You can pray for others. Prayer will focus your thoughts and channel your emotional energy. It works.

Gamblers Anonymous and most 12-step programs talk about accepting that there is a higher power to which you can relinquish control. Prayer is your way of connecting with this higher power, or your own personal vision of God. It is important to realize that prayer can provide comfort and guidance as you continue to make positive change in your life.

You may have tried prayer in desperation for help when gambling. Many gamblers say they have prayed to God to help them win “just this once,” and promising if that happens that they will change their lives.

continued on next page

Others may say that if prayer really worked they wouldn't be in the situation they now find themselves. Prayer can be most beneficial when you humbly ask for guidance in determining what you really need to be doing with your life, instead of just asking for help in avoiding or escaping the problems you've experienced due to gambling.

Prayer can be a personal avenue to a higher spirit or power — a connection with something larger than you. You may be comfortable discussing this issue with your self-help group or sponsor. Often, participants in support groups find that the group itself can help them connect with their spirituality. Prayer can be combined with reflection to lead you to a calmer and more focused mindset and give you strength to take charge of your gambling compulsion. Prayer can help to channel your emotional energy and revitalize your commitment to change. It has worked for many people and it can work for you, too.



Look inside yourself

- What do you feel about your place in life?
- What is causing you pain?
- What does your heart tell you?

At some level, deep inside, you know all the answers for your life. Listen to your heart, as well as your mind. Pay attention to what you learn from reflection. Instead of running away from your pain and problems, run toward building a new life.

Imagine

Create a vision of what you want your life to be. At first, this might seem difficult, but start with small desires. As you grow in reflection and prayer, fill your vision with details, with people, with events. What do you see for your future? Visit this vision at least once a day. Your thoughts are the first steps to change. Your thoughts become words. Your words become actions. Your actions can change your life. Imagine.

Something I would like in my life is: _____

continued on next page

One of the things my heart tells me is: _____

A vision for my life is: _____



Take a break — think about the following questions and write down your answers.

When you're ready, move on to the next section.

How does the process of learning to reflect make you feel?

When in your day could you set up a time to practice and incorporate spirituality and reflection to help create change in your life?

What do you think will be the greatest challenges in practicing reflection and prayer?

What steps will you take to make sure you succeed?

How Programs Help with Recovery



Self-help programs, such as Gamblers Anonymous, are important factors in real, lasting change. What these programs can offer is the support and understanding of others like you. In a support group you can talk about your problems and experiences in an anonymous, non-judgmental atmosphere that is comforting and accepting.

Self-help programs will have members at all levels and with extensive experience at abstinence and at solving problems you may be facing. While you might be feeling alone, anxious or frightened right now, participation in a self-help group can offer you acceptance, understanding, and support.

Another source for help with recovery is to work with a professional therapist. Through individual or group counseling, professional therapists can help you identify your particular problems and create a recovery plan that fits your situation and needs. Again, many of the activities in this series could be helpful in working with a professional therapist.

While it is possible to see some progress independently from reading books such as these, your chances of long-term success at a change program and in stopping gambling are considerably enhanced through participation in self-help programs and/or counseling with a trained therapist. If you are serious about change and about committing to a new life, contact the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling 24-hour toll-free HelpLine (888-ADMIT IT) for information about self-help programs and trained professional therapists in your area. Additional in-person, online and phone support options are also available pending individuals needs and circumstances.

**Everyone needs
different types
of help. Finding
what works for you
is important to
your recovery.**

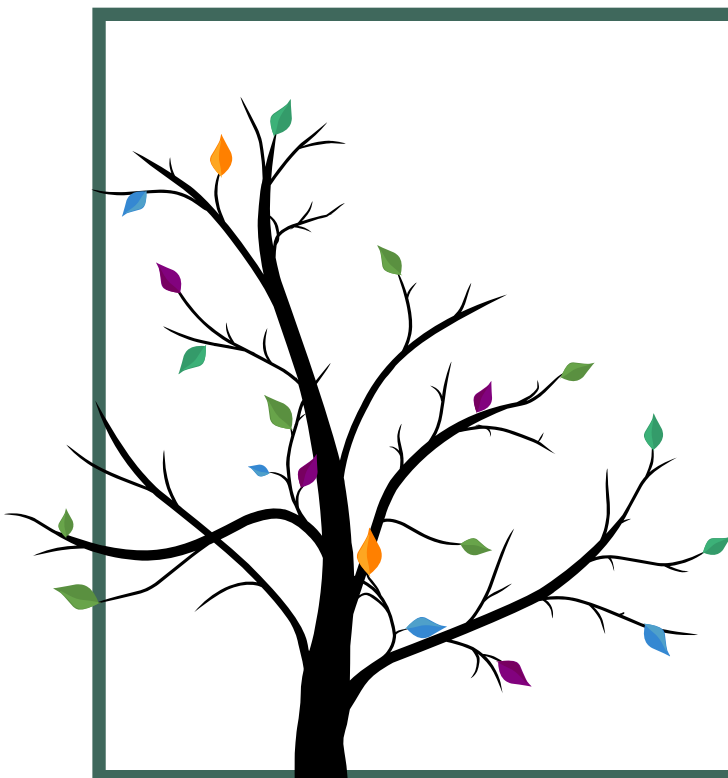
Summary

This book covers several intense and complex issues that cause you to consider the possibility of relapse and what it means. You have identified people, places, events, emotions, and activities that might act as triggers for relapse and have considered ways to avoid these triggers. In addition, you have considered substitutes and different actions in response to your triggers. Abstinence and ways to make amends are other topics you have explored here in reading, thinking and planning your actions. Finally, you have considered reflection and prayer as helpful mindsets to continue your progress. While this book has addressed many powerful concepts, strategies and ideas, you

have practiced answering a number of difficult questions which will help you understand yourself and the process of change better. As you move forward in your change program, keep this book handy and return to it regularly to help you remain focused and committed. Keep practicing the steps in this book. You can make change in your life.

Remember, your thoughts become words, your words become actions, and your actions can change your life. Reflection and prayer can help you to avoid triggers and find the strength and resolve to move forward.

You can do it!



Remember, your thoughts become words, your words become actions, and your actions can change your life. Reflection and prayer can help you to avoid triggers and find the strength and resolve to move forward.

Glossary

Amends: Making an amend means that you are taking responsibility for what you have done. Sometimes amends will take the form of an apology, sometimes it will include an explanation or a longer conversation, and sometimes it might even include actions. The process of making amends involves you reflecting on how your behavior affected the other person and their life.

Cognitive Behavioral Change: Cognitive behavioral change is an approach to recovery based on the belief that dysfunctional thinking can be replaced with more realistic thoughts and beliefs that can positively impact behavior. In treating problem and compulsive gamblers, a cognitive behavioral approach provides opportunities for learning, reflection and acquiring skills in decision making and problem solving.

Long-Term Relapse: A long-term relapse means re-engaging in the gambling behavior in one of two ways: (1) You may have experienced many and repeated short-term relapses and cannot maintain the commitment to change; or (2) You may have entered into a long and sustained period of engaging in the gambling behavior.

Powerlessness: Powerlessness is the belief that you can do nothing to alter your circumstances. You may feel that you have no control over

certain behavior or actions. This is only a belief. There is always something you can do.

Proactive: You are proactive when you take steps to control the situation, and yourself, by thinking about your reaction and not just responding emotionally.

Reactive: You are reactive when you let someone else control the situation and you react to what they do and say.

Reflection: Reflection is the act of examining your thoughts and emotions.

Relapse: A relapse occurs when an addict or codependent person slips in their commitment to change. Relapses may vary in duration or amount of time and may involve situations where the gambler or codependent engages again in the behavior, then re-engages in their commitment to change. Relapses can be short- or long-term. Relapse can also refer to you in your own change program. Relapse can involve a slip in which you again engage in the former behavior — the behavior you are attempting to change.

Short-Term Relapse: A short-term relapse usually means a slip for a short period of time, where you re-engage in the gambling behavior.

Spirituality: Spirituality is the process of developing a human connection to a higher power, God, or whatever name you give to the universe greater than yourself.

Sponsor: A sponsor is an active participant in a self-help program who has experience and understanding about the recovery process and wishes to help a newcomer to the program.

Trigger: A trigger can be people, places and things or they might be emotions or feelings that cause you to react or respond in a manner that can be detrimental to your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Triggers often lead to relapse.

Additional Resources

There are several resources you might access to help you deal with gambling related issues mentioned in this book. Some of these are listed below:

Statewide Assistance

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) offers a toll-free confidential and multilingual 24-hour Problem Gambling HelpLine and referral service that provides supportive intervention, information about problem and compulsive gambling, self-help, and professional treatment referrals. The FCCG trains medical and healthcare professionals to assess and treat compulsive gamblers and loved ones. For additional information about the programs and services of the FCCG, refer to the page prior to the Table of Contents, as well as the following sub-section, *FCCG Resources*.

Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.
24/7 Problem Gambling HelpLine
Confidential/Multilingual
888-ADMIT-IT (888-236-4848)
Office: (407) 865-6200
E-mail: fccg@gamblinghelp.org
Live Chat: gamblinghelp.org
Text: 321-978-0555
888-ADMIT-IT App:
<https://landing.appypie.com/888-admit-it>
Website: www.gamblinghelp.org

FCCG Resources

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine offers in-person, online and phone supports for persons experiencing difficulties due to gambling, including an Online Program for Problem Gamblers (OPPG) and a Peer Connect option, free to Florida residents. The OPPG is an 8-week program that allows participants to use self-paced exercises, videos and readings, while interactive questionnaires provide individual feedback on participant results from licensed mental health professionals, as well as an assessment upon completion. The HelpLine further provides a Peer Connect service, which enables individuals seeking help for a gambling problem to speak with a recovering compulsive gambler. 888-ADMIT-IT offers referrals to financial and debt counseling; professional treatment; legal assistance; self-help programs; practical how-to resources, such as this workbook series, *A Chance for Change*, in addition to other print resources, including information and tools for financial recovery, self-exclusion options and other supportive measures.

The FCCG HelpLine may be contacted by phone, text, live chat, email, and on social media platforms. To learn more, visit the 888-ADMIT-IT mobile app.

Self-Help Programs

Self-help is a critical part of the recovery process. Self-help programs can assist you with tools for recovery by providing support, direction, motivation, resources, and a sense that you are not dealing with the gambling problem alone. An aspect of many self-help programs is sponsorship. Sponsors may provide additional information, encouragement, fellowship, and guidance to newcomers on a voluntary basis. They may also furnish assistance and offer suggestions to newcomers on a case-by-case basis.

While there are several self-help organizations, there are primarily two programs dedicated to compulsive gamblers and those they adversely affect.

Gamblers Anonymous (GA) is a support group for compulsive gamblers — a fellowship of men and women of all ages, social and economic backgrounds, races, and religions, who meet regularly to share their experience, strength and hope. The only requirement for membership in GA is the desire to stop gambling. There are no dues or fees for membership.

Gamblers Anonymous offers a Pressure Relief Group that assists the gambler and family members in addressing financial, legal, and other problems. Pressure Relief is typically performed after a gambler has participated in

GA for a specified period, at which time a budget is devised, and a repayment plan is recommended. Pressure Relief requires special training and as such, not all GA fellowships within the State of Florida offer this service. In instances where it is unavailable, individuals can receive financial, legal and other assistance via the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine.

Gamblers Anonymous
International Service Office
1306 Monte Vista Avenue, Suite 5
Upland, CA 91786
Office: 909-931-9056
Email: isomain@gamblersanonymous.org
Website: www.gamblersanonymous.org

Gam-Anon is for persons adversely affected by the gambler's activities (e.g., spouse or partner, sibling, child, parent, or friend). Gam-Anon assists members in learning acceptance and understanding of the gambling illness, using the program and its problem-solving suggestions as aids in rebuilding loved ones' lives and, upon recovery, giving assistance to those who suffer. It is not necessary for the gambler to attend Gamblers Anonymous in order for a friend or other loved one to participate in the Gam-Anon program.

Gam-Anon
International Service Office, Inc.
P.O. Box 307
Massapequa Park, NY 11762
Office: 718-352-1671

Additional Resources (continued)

Email: gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org

Website: www.gam-anon.org

You can contact the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling HelpLine directly for additional information and a current list of in-person, phone and online meetings.

Professional Treatment

There are times when guidance and support can be particularly helpful when provided by a trained therapist or counselor. These professionals can aid you in sorting out options and strategies when learning to cope with situations or difficulties that may arise in your life. Professional treatment differs from self-help programs in that it allows you the opportunity to share very personal information in a one-on-one dialogue with a trained specialist. Such treatment also provides you with an option of participating in individual, couple, or group counseling sessions.

While there is a cost for professional treatment, some insurance companies will provide coverage. So, it is important to review your policy closely to determine whether you and your loved ones are covered for such medical help. It is also important to note that the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling can refer Florida residents to certified counselors who will furnish you and loved ones with treatment supports, based upon an ability to pay. For more information about professional treatment options, call the FCCG 24-hour HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT.

Online Supports, Podcasts and Mobile Apps

Online Supports, Podcasts, and Mobile Apps can provide real-time, and ongoing motivational messaging, meditation techniques, support networks, and other self-care and stress release activities, that support behavioral change and assist individuals during their lifelong path to recovery from a gambling addiction. These options enable individuals to access help as needed and serve as supportive measures from anywhere at any time. While many of these options are identifiable upon conducting online searches on a computer or on a mobile device, the 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine can provide some helpful options for those struggling with difficulties due to compulsive gambling.

Print Resources

There are numerous resources designed to help problem and compulsive gamblers with issues ranging from stress reduction to financial and legal assistance. While many can be very helpful, they should not be considered stand-alone programs for change. Some recommended resources include:

Cuban, M. (2016). *Gambling Addiction Cure: Gambling Addiction Cure and Recovery of Your Life*, Independently Published.

Cunliffe North, R. (2008). *Women Overpowered by Compulsive Gambling*, Xlibris Corporation.

Custer, R. & Milt, H. (1985) *When Luck Runs Out*. NY, NY: Facts on Files, Inc. Publications.

Davis, D.R. (2009). *Taking Back Your Life: Women and Problem Gambling*, Hazelden Publishing.

Estes, K. & Brubaker, M. (1994). *Deadly Odds: Recovery from Compulsive Gambling*. Newport, RI: Edgehill Publications.

Gamblers Anonymous (2013). *Fourth Step Inventory Moral Book*, Los Angeles; Gamblers Anonymous Publishing, Revised March 2007, Printed October 2013.

Gamblers Anonymous (2007). *Big Book - Sharing Recovery Through Gamblers Anonymous*. Los Angeles: Gamblers Anonymous Publishing.

Hardin, R., Abott, W., Braastad, J., Frahm, J., Lindel, R., Phillips, R., & Steinberger, H. (2013). *SMART Recovery 3rd Edition Handbook*, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Self Help Network, Inc.

Journal of Gambling Studies (1990). National Council on Problem Gambling. NY, NY: Human Sciences Press.

King, A. (1999). *The Diary of a Powerful Addiction*. Crown Publishing, Tyndall, Canada.

Lee, Bill (2005). *Born to Lose: Memoirs of a Compulsive Gambler*, Hazeldon Publishing.

Lesieur, H. (1984). *The Chase: Career of the Compulsive Gambler*, Cambridge: Schenkman Books, Inc.

Mawer, P. (2019). *Overcoming Gambling (Overcoming Common Problems)*, Sheldon Press.

Peltz, L. (2013). *The Mindful Path to Addiction Recovery: A Practical Guide to Regaining Control Over Your Life*, Trumpeter.

Wexler, A. & Wexler, S. (2015). *All Bets Are Off: Losers, Liars, and Recovery from Gambling Addiction*, Central Recovery Press.

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Esterley, R. & Neele, W. (1997). *Chemical Dependency and Compulsive Behavior*. Marwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Additional Resources (continued)

Gardner, H. (2004). *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Keller, J. M. (1983). *Motivational Design of Instruction*. In C.M. Reigeluth (Ed.) *Instructional design theories and models: An overview of their current status*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kramlinger, K. (2001). *Mayo Clinic on Depression*, Rochester, MN.

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LeDoux, J. (1996). *The Emotional Brain*. NY, NY: Touchstone Publishing.

Miley, W. (1999) *The Psychology of Well Being*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publications.

Neenan, M. & Dryden, M. (2002). *Life Coaching, A Cognitive, Behavioral Approach*. NY, NY: Brunner-Routledge.

Perkinson, R., Jongsma, A. & Bruce, T. (2022). *The Addiction Treatment and Planner, Sixth Edition*, NY, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Saltz, G. (2004). *Becoming Real*, NY, NY: Riverhead Books.

Seligman, M. (2007). *What You Can Change and What You Can't: The Complete Guide to Successful Self-Improvement*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Notes



Notes



Notes



Planning Worksheet

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Planning Worksheet

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Planning Worksheet

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____

Person I have wronged: _____

What I did: _____

How will I make amends: _____



The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's development of *A Chance for Change* is the result of an identified need for alternate forms of education and assistance to those whose lives are negatively affected by a devastating gambling disorder (compulsive gambling).

www.gamblinghelp.org