

Minnesota Department of **Human Services**  
**TREATMENT WORKS**

**Tips for Talking to a Significant Other About Problem Gambling**

Tell them you're concerned. Express to them that your marriage/partnership is important and that you want them to get help for their problem gambling.

*Example: \_\_\_\_\_, I need to talk to you about something serious. I've noticed recently that you haven't been your usual self, and I'm concerned. Our marriage/partnership is important, and I don't want anything to damage it. I want to know if we can talk about what might be going on?*

Be specific about your concerns. Tell them how their gambling interferes with your personal lives and your marriage/partnership. Let them know how it is negatively affecting your marriage/partnership.

*Example: I'm concerned about the extent to which gambling has become a part of your life and how it's affecting our relationship. You are a very important part of my life.*

Don't judge, instead listen. If you want them to hear you out, you need to give them the same courtesy. Allow them to speak their mind, and let them know you heard what they have to say.

*Example: \_\_\_\_\_, I hear what you have to say and want to help you find a solution before the situation becomes worse.*

Say what you want them to do. The point of talking to them in the first place is so they know they need help. Above all, insist on professional help. Ask them to seek counseling or enroll in a gambling recovery group. Be specific and direct about your concerns.

*Example: I'd like to help you find a way to fix this. I know of a 24-hour, confidential hotline you could call (800-333-HOPE) and a few gambling recovery programs. I'd like us to explore one of these services.*

Offer to help; explain why you care. Let them know that you are approaching them because you truly care for their well-being. Listen to their concerns without judgment. Offer to make the call for them, if needed, and reassure them that you will offer your support as they go through recovery.

*Example: I want you to know that I am here to help in any way I can. I wouldn't have come to you if I didn't value you so much. If you need support, you have someone you can count on.*

Keep the door open for future talks. There is a difference between being aggressive and being firm. You can be direct without alienating your spouse/significant other. If you engage them in a hostile way, they will most likely shut down and ignore your attempts to help. Handle the subject with care so they feel like you are a resource in their recovery.

*Example: \_\_\_\_\_, you are a good person. You're human. Let's deal with this together. Take it one step at a time.*