

## **10 warning signs that you may have a gambling problem**

December holiday is that time of the year when a number of South Africans will be flocking to entertainment hotspots to relax and have fun. For most the perfect way to spend some time on holiday is a visit to a casino or racetrack for a couple of hours of entertainment.

Whatever the case, gambling can be a highly enjoyable holiday activity if it's controlled and managed. However it can quickly spiral out of control ruining relationships and draining finances if people are unaware of the early warning signs of problem gambling.

The South African Responsible Gambling Foundation (SARGF), the organisation which promotes and creates awareness about responsible gambling, how to manage and minimise the potential harmful effects of problem gambling, defines problem gambling as when a person has the continuous urge to gambling despite the negative consequences that may occur as a result.

"We estimate that 3 % of South Africans can be classified as problem gamblers with 0, 5 % being classified as pathological gamblers." says Sibongile Simelane-Quntana, Executive Director of SARGF. Pathological gamblers have an impulse control disorder that leads them to gamble uncontrollably which leads to significant damage to themselves and others. The Foundation manages a 24-hour helpline that provides free counselling and psychological support for gamblers and their families should a gambling problem develops.

"During this time of year we are expect to low volumes of calls and an increase in January to our help line as people have greater access to money from bonuses and thirteen cheques being paid out and more spare time on their hands," says Simelane-Quntana.



The Foundation through the National Responsible Gambling Programme (NRGP) has issued several warning signs that may indicate a person is developing a gambling problem.

These are:

1. Having constant thoughts about and a preoccupation with gambling
2. Lying or concealing gambling activities from family and friends
3. Attempting to recoup one's losses
4. Taking extreme measures access money to gamble
5. Preferring to gamble rather than attend other important events like a family get together
6. Feeling anxious or moody when not gambling
7. Racking up large debts due to gambling activities
8. Experiencing a deterioration in close relationships as a result of gambling
9. Neglecting personal needs like sleeping, hygiene and eating in favour of gambling
10. Manipulating people into lending or giving money to be used in gambling

Like any addiction the first step to receiving help and support is by admitting to the problem. A gambling addiction is difficult to fight alone and support is readily available via the SARGF 24 hour, free and confidential helpline 0800 006 008 or via SMS. SMS HELP To 076 675 0710 or email [helpline@sargf.org.za](mailto:helpline@sargf.org.za)

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**Editor's notes:**

The SARGF is a non-profit company, public-private initiative between Government and the gambling industry that is committed to promoting responsible gambling in South Africa and provides sustainable social solutions to the gambling Industry. The SARGF directs out a number of activities related to responsible gambling, including integrated treatment and counselling; public awareness; education; and training and research. The National Responsible Gambling Programme (NRGP) under the pay offline 'Winners Know When to Stop' is an initiative of the SARGF and The Foundation works closely with operators, regulators and civil society providing training to casino staff and operators to enable them to identify problem gamblers and direct them towards treatment and counselling.

- Website: <http://sargf.org.za/>
- Facebook: South African Responsible Gambling Foundation
- Twitter: @SARGFoundation
- Toll Free counselling line – 0800 006 008
- SMS line 076 675 0710