

# TALKING TO TEENS ABOUT GAMBLING

Teenagers' attitudes towards betting start to form long before it's legal for them to gamble. Gambling ads, Australia's betting culture and many mass media messages consumed by young people promote the idea that gambling is a normal, fun activity. When something feels normal, it doesn't seem risky.

## Conversation starters

It is important to talk to your teen about the risks and potential harms associated with gambling so they are able to make informed choices down the track.

Much like having 'the talk' about drinking, drugs and sex, initiating a conversation about gambling may seem a bit uncomfortable.

These conversation starters can help introduce the topic of gambling in a non-threatening way.

- Have you noticed the betting ads on TV? What do you think of them?
- Do you think sports betting seems less risky than other types of gambling because it involves some skill?
- Do you think people feel they have to gamble to enjoy the footy or other sports?
- What do you think about gambling? Does it seem like an easy way to make money?
- Have any of your friends ever gambled? What did they bet on?
- This gambling ad has popped up on my phone. Have you seen anything like that on your phone?

## Discussion points

Starting the conversation provides an opportunity to explore with your teen how gambling and the gambling industry work. Here are some points you may like to discuss.

- Betting companies need to make a profit to stay in business. Gambling is designed so that betting operators are more likely to win than punters.
- Gambling works on the rules of probability – the odds of winning don't change the longer you play.
- There's no such thing as a 'sure bet'. While a punter's knowledge and skills might statistically increase the chance of winning, luck and other factors outside their control will always influence the outcome.
- Gambling advertising can – incorrectly – make betting seem less risky through offers like 'cash back' and bonus bets.

## How to communicate so the message lands

When communicating with teens, the delivery is just as important as the message. When the topic is gambling, it's important to create an open, non-judgemental dialogue. Here are some tips for a positive discussion.

### 1. De-personalise the conversation

Talking with empathy about the experiences of others can be a non-threatening way to get a point across. For example, 'A friend at work told me her son lost a lot of money betting on sport. She's really worried about him. Have you ever heard of this happening?'

## 2. Learn to listen

Teens are more receptive to discussing issues when they know you will listen to their thoughts or experiences. Respect their point of view, even if you disagree with it.

## 3. Choose the right time

Casual situations with no direct eye contact provide good opportunities to talk about gambling with your teen – driving to footy practice, sitting on the couch, or putting something in their room, for example.

## 4. Use humour

You might think that if you lighten things up, the importance of the message will be lost. But if the conversation becomes too intense, your teen may switch off.

## 5. Tailor your message

Keep your teenager interested in the discussion by making it relevant to them. For example, you might consider talking about the link between sports and gambling, or gaming and gambling.

## 6. Leave them wanting more

You might feel like you're on a roll and want to ram home the message with some more examples. It's actually more effective though to have lots of short conversations than a single marathon discussion.

## Reinforce the message

Teens notice what you do, as well as what you say, and are influenced by it. If they see you gambling regularly or only ever talking about the wins, they are likely to think this is normal. Reinforce your discussions with them by explaining the risks involved in any gambling you do and that you only gamble what you can afford to lose.

