

# Internet Gambling Is No Game for Teens

Most young people think gambling is a harmless pastime, with consequences no more serious than losing a few dollars. However, the increase in gambling in the United States over the past two decades has led to an increase in gambling-related problems, especially among young people.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) is so concerned about the increase in youth gambling – primarily on the Internet – that it recently issued an advisory about it. The advisory says, “In virtually all studies of the rates of gambling problems at various ages, high school and college-aged individuals show the highest problem areas.”

The APA says the increase in problems among young people can be attributed in part to the ease with which they can gamble on the Internet. Because of the nature of the Internet, there are no enforceable restrictions on the age of participants, the times at which they can gamble or the games they can play. In addition, a young person who’s gambling online can do so uninterrupted and undetected for long periods of time. Studies show that regular or heavy users of the Internet are more likely than others to gamble online.

About 10%-15% of young people surveyed in the US and Canada reported experiencing one or more sig-

nificant problems related to gambling. And they may not even realize what they’re getting into at first, because many non-gambling gaming sites that target teens – and even children – have links to gambling sites. Some of these sites offer “free” gambling and discounts to get young people started.

If you know a young person who may need help with gambling problems, call the National Council on Problem Gambling at 1-800-522-4700 or talk to your school’s psychologist, social worker, student assistance counselor, nurse or guidance counselor for more information.

## Too Much of A Good Thing

What’s the difference between pursuing excellence and perfectionism?

Most people try to do their best at work, sports and hobbies.

“There’s nothing wrong with pursuing excellence. Having high expectations of yourself and striving to do your best are positive, healthy qualities,” write Miriam Adderholdt, PhD, and Jan Goldberg in their book, *Perfectionism: What’s Bad About Being Too Good?* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Publishing, 1999). But for perfectionists, being good is never good enough.

People committed to excellence will do their best, take satisfaction in their achievements and admit to and learn from their failures. Most important, they don’t depend on what they *do* to define who they *are*.

Perfectionists tend to think they *are* what they *do*. Winning promotions, trophies and community recognition, getting the best assignments or tables in restaurants – consistently – having the best clothes, the best body, playing sports to win and berating oneself when performance is not the best – these are the demanding goals of perfectionists.

Even when they achieve these goals, though, they feel they didn’t do as well as they could have.

This is problem enough, but perfectionists can actually make themselves ill in their unending efforts to be perfect at everything. They may constantly deprive themselves of sleep in order to work, deny themselves time to relax and play, paralyze their lives with procrastination (if they don’t attempt something, well, they can’t fail at it!) or turn to alcohol or other drugs, hoping for relief from the constant pressure they put on themselves.

Preventing perfectionism begins with the realization that it’s OK to be human, to not always be the best at every single thing. A recovering perfectionist will set less demanding goals for him/herself and make time for just goofing off, having fun, relaxing with friends and family.

Recovering perfectionists also will be kind to themselves when they fail. A pamphlet titled “Preventing Perfectionism” published by the Counseling Center at the State University of New York

at Buffalo says, “Experiencing failure – and learning to judge your own capabilities – demonstrates that you have the strength to accept life’s challenges.... See failure for what it really is: an opportunity to discover that future success lies in another strategy or direction. You will achieve your next goal if you learn from your past mistakes.”

### Tips for Avoiding Burnout

Could it be that our entire society is suffering a touch of perfectionism? Most of us can use the following reminders — and share them with young people — for a healthier life.

- 1. Learn how to say no.** Give yourself permission to stop doing something you do with the sole purpose of pleasing others.
- 2. Learn when to say yes.** Say yes to commitments that are personally rewarding and that genuinely contribute to the greater good.
- 3. Prioritize your activities.** Decide what’s important and then balance the time allotted to various activities.

# Everything Must Change

Everything changes over time, including relationships. We may not be conscious of it as we go from day to day, but when we take stock of where we are in a relationship, we often determine that it's different. It may have deepened, become more constant, more intimate, more comfortable. It also may have become strained, less frequent, more guarded. Change in relationships can be both positive and negative.

Change also can be just different. Like the way our relationship with our parents changes.

The key to feeling that relationships are the best they can be is to thoughtfully consider them now and again. Then we can recognize changes and act accordingly. This may mean learning to live with discomfort — that may be the best we can do with some relationships.

When we realize that a relationship brings us joy and comfort, it's important to let the other person involved know how valuable s/he is in our lives. Send a card or simply say, "I'm glad you're my friend/parent/teacher/coach" and then continue to enjoy the benefits of a rewarding relationship.

## Changing Relationships Worksheet

Directions: Think of some people with whom you've had a relationship. Write their names in the first column opposite the number of years you've known them. Also indicate how that person is related to you (cousin, parent, friend, etc.). In the second column, write one or two ways in which the relationship has changed over the years.

Source: Activities adapted from *Thinking, Feeling, Behaving: An Emotional Education Curriculum for Adolescents* (Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1989) by Ann Vernon.

Years in relationship	Name/relationship to you	How relationship has changed
16-17 years		
12-15 years		
8-11 years		
4-7 years		
1-3 years		
Less than 1 year		

## A Parent's Creed

1. I will keep the business and personal sides of my relationship with my child separate.
2. I will approach interactions with my child from a positive standpoint.
3. I will be flexible with my child.
4. I will avoid blaming my child.
5. I will remain as calm as possible.
6. I will listen to what my child has to say without interrupting.
7. I will remain rational and promote rationality in my child.
8. I will avoid:
  - reacting defensively.
  - giving long explanations.
  - trying to get my child to "understand."
  - convincing my child that I'm being "fair."

Adapted from "A Parent's Creed" in *Raising Children You Can Live With* (Houston Texas: Bayou Publishing) by Jamie Raser.

## What You See Is What You Get...

...and what you look for is what you see. The next time you look at someone, try to discover some of these positive personality traits and social skills:

Personality Traits	Social Skills
Creativity	Friendly
Follow through	Peacemaking
Determined	Helpful
Initiative	Fair
Sensitivity	Understanding
Patience	Courteous
Easygoing	Good listener
Gentle	Team player
Faithful	Takes turns
Neat	Fun
Generous	Good-natured
Optimistic	Encouraging



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