

Parents Navigating Together

WHAT TO DO *RIGHT NOW* WHEN YOU FIND OUT YOUR CHILD IS GAMBLING

If you just discovered your child is gambling—
or you think they might be—start here.
You're probably feeling a storm of emotions
right now—fear, anger, confusion, maybe that
strange numbness when reality doesn't feel
real yet. We've been exactly where you are.

Take a breath.
You're not alone,
and this is not your fault.



**Parents
Standing
Together**

Youth Gambling: Real Risk, Real Support

Here's what to focus on first:

1. Pause before you act



Your instinct is to confront them immediately. We get it—we did the same thing. But coming in hot usually backfires. Give yourself an hour, a walk, or a phone call to someone who won't judge. Let the first wave pass so you can approach from "I want to understand" instead of "I need to make this stop."

2. Protect your finances—today



We know—you came here to help your child, and we're going to get there. But this step can't wait. This isn't about mistrust. It's about removing the fuel while your child gets help.

- Lock up credit cards, checkbooks, and account info
- Freeze your credit with Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion
- Limit their access to cash and payment apps

My son taught me that panic makes it worse. Pausing helped me choose better words — and protecting our finances helped him face reality.

SUZANNE - MOM OF 27-YEAR-OLD

3. Don't bail them out



This is brutal, but important: paying off their debt or smoothing over consequences keeps the cycle going. It teaches them that gambling doesn't have real consequences—and takes away their motivation to change. Stay connected. Stay loving. But let natural consequences do their teaching.

4. Get support for yourself



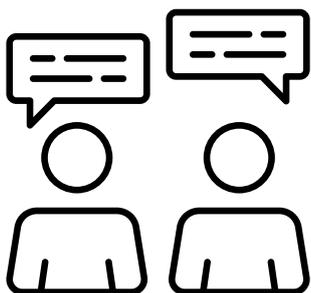
You can't do this alone—and you shouldn't have to. Connecting with other parents who've been through this means you can ask questions, learn what's worked (and what hasn't), and stop feeling like you're the only one.

- Gam-Anon – Support meetings for families ([find a meeting](#))
- Parents Standing Together – Our community of parents who get it ([join us here](#))

The normal rules of fatherhood went out the window. I needed to be educated about the disease before I could help my son.

VIC, FATHER OF 20-YEAR-OLD

5. When you're ready, have the conversation



Lead with curiosity, not confrontation. Ask "Help me understand what's been going on" instead of "What were you thinking?" For most young people, gambling isn't really about the money—it's about escaping stress or numbing hard feelings. You don't need all the answers right now. Just keep the door open.

6. Find professional help



Your child needs someone who understands gambling specifically—and you do too. A therapist can help you understand and process what is happening and learn how to support your child without losing yourself. Start here:

- [Find a certified counselor](#)
 - ICGC Certification means trained for gambling disorder
- [Psychology Today](#)
 - Search for gambling as a specialty
- Your state's gambling helpline
 - ncpgambling.org/help-by-state

Not only did our son need help, but we did too—working with a therapist helped us navigate this disease together.

JENA, MOM OF 22-YEAR-OLD

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

You don't have to figure this all out today. Take a breath. This is a lot to take in, and none of it is easy. Just take the next step—whichever one feels possible right now. We've been where you are, and we're here to help you through it.

— *Parents Standing Together*

Ready to connect?

Join our Facebook community

- Ask questions, share your story, find parents who get it
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/parentsstandingtogether>

Come to a parent support meeting

- You don't have to talk; just listen if that's easier
- Get the zoom link on Facebook or email us at hello@parentsstandingtogether.org

Explore our resources

- Guides, videos, and tools for every stage of this journey
- ParentsStandingTogether.org

