

How to Stop Gambling by Understanding the Mind Traps of a Gambling Addict.

The following extract is taken from the incredible book,

[Gambling Addiction Explained](#)

**How to STOP Gambling
and Regain Control of your Life.**

By John Woods

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John@GamblingAddictionExplained.com or visit
www.GamblingAddictionExplained.com

Cognitive distortions.

Cognitive distortions, also known as Mind Traps, are ways in which our minds convince us of something that is true when in fact it is not. This is usually to reinforce negative thoughts, feelings, and actions by telling ourselves things that sound rational and accurate to justify them. Cognitive distortions do not just apply to problem and compulsive gamblers, they apply to most people in some form or another. Our own brains are very good at misleading us and can cause problems with anxiety, relationships, and careers, generally holding us back from achieving things in life. One example is Labelling which is when people reduce themselves or others to singular negative characteristic such as loser. Mental filtering is another when people ignore the positive things in their life and focus on the negative. Mind reading, assuming you know what other people are thinking about you or a situation and that it is negative without ever simply asking.

Some of the typical irrational beliefs or cognitive distortions that problem or compulsive gamblers specifically experience, including myself in the past, are as follows:

The Illusion of Control, when you believe you have some control over the events you are gambling upon. That you have some incredible system which is going to surely make you a fortune. I spent hours and hours going through years of horse racing stats and data searching for a fool proof system to make me money. And eventually I found a few instances where certain sets of data and conditions provided a profitable series of previous winners. But it was not really a system, it was just reading the data in a way that was favourable, it had no bearing on future races. But at the time I thought this meant I was in control and my new system would without doubt make me money which of course it did not. I also had an illusion of being in control when it came to Poker by thinking I was a good player who calculated the odds and made the right plays and could beat those who did not. But the truth was I could not maintain the discipline to play as I should and would end up gambling, playing more hands and for bigger stakes than I should have. I also overestimated my level of skill which is a common affect associated with the illusion of control.

Like the Illusion of Control another dangerous cognitive distortion called **Confirmation Bias**. This is when we draw conclusions which suit our needs and fit with our narrative from random events or outcomes and see evidence which is not there.

Superstition is another form of cognitive distortion. Regarding certain situations or items to be either lucky or unlucky, having a lucky machine or game, wearing a lucky hat, having a lucky day or lucky place to go to gamble. The gambler believes that by following certain rituals, wearing certain items, or gambling on certain machines they can control the wins and losses.

Predictive Control is the perception of predicting the outcome of the game. Making assumptions that certain previous results must mean we can calculate a future gambling outcome. For example how many times I played on a fruit machine under the conviction that it had to pay out soon. Or the typical gamblers fallacy such as watching a roulette wheel stop on black several times in succession and being sure it meant the odds of it being red next were huge and betting accordingly. And I have done this playing roulette, I have watched the ball

land on black 15 times before I ran out of money and I only started betting on the 12th spin. That one cost me £1500 even though I only bet on the last 4 spins of that sequence. I started with £100 placed on red to win £100 but then when it lost I foolishly assumed red had to come in soon so bet enough on the next spin to win back what I lost plus the original £100 I was trying to win. So the sequence went:

Spin 12: £100 on red, total wagered £100

Spin 13: £200 on red, total wagered £300

Spin 14: £400 on red, total wagered £700

Spin 15: £800 on red, surely it must come in now, it just must, oh crap, total wagered £1500 and I am skint again.

The crazy the thing is I only started off wanting to win a quick £100 but within 4 spins my bet quickly escalated and I was up to a bet of £800 on the fourth bet. If I had another £1500 available at that moment you can bet, pardon the pun, it was all going on red for the next bet. The insanity of the gambling brain. Of course the previous result has no logical bearing on where the roulette ball would land next. But my gambling brain told me 14 times landing on black the 15th absolutely had to be red. At the time I obviously blamed the online casino software, shouting at my computer that it was rigged and they had cheated me. But it happens more than you would imagine, in fact there was a case of 26 blacks on a run recorded at Casino de Monte-Carlo in August of 1913 when gamblers lost millions as the run lengthened expecting a red.

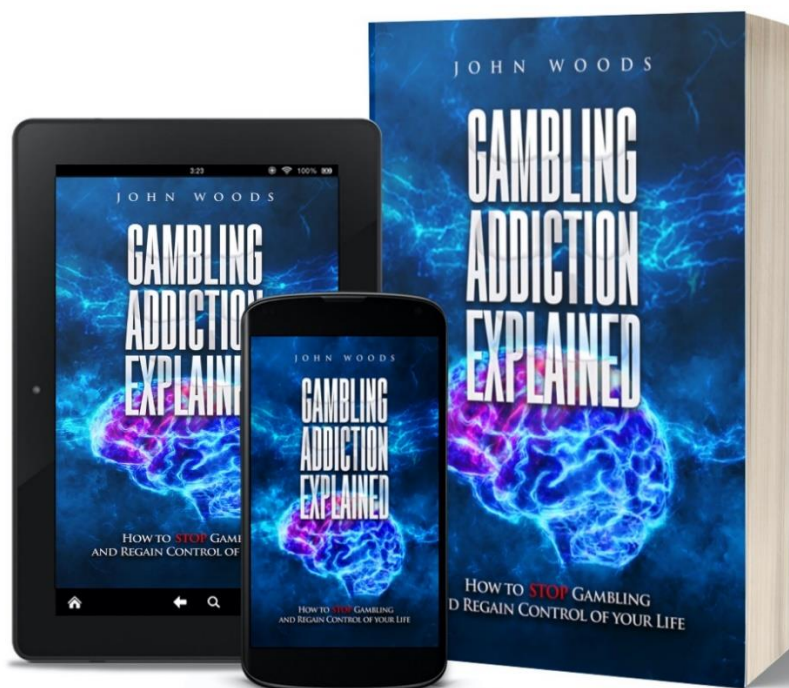
Another one is **Selective Recall** or **Selective Memory** of winnings. We all remember the big wins and even the nearly big wins that spur us on to continue gambling. We do not recall in detail the slow monotonous drain on our souls and funds with loss after loss after loss. The gambling establishments make sure they use this one against us extremely effectively. It is no surprise when you think about it that when playing a slot machine, whether online or in a casino, that as each pound, dollar or euro is spent it just slips by uneventfully. But when you get a win, especially a big win or get onto the bonus feature game, that is a different story. It is all loud music, flashing lights, bells, and whistles then, anyone nearby knows you have won. So the win gets imprinted on your memory and even though you will probably walk away with nothing at the end of the day, when you look back on it sometime later the one thing that stands out is that win. When you think about it logically it makes no sense for the gambling establishment to celebrate you winning. Why should they celebrate giving you money? They do it to keep you playing knowing they will take it back and more besides.

Interpretative Bias is the misguided notion that we can be successful if we continue to gamble and we attribute all past losses and failings to external factors beyond our control. In this way we see it that it is not our fault we have not won big yet but if we persevere we are bound too.

There are many other Cognitive Distortions but the most damaging and misguided of them all is the **Inability to Stop** distortion. We believe we cannot stop gambling and are unable to resist the urge to gamble. Well I can tell you that is not true and that you absolutely can stop

gambling and resist those urges, and not only that but the more you do the weaker those urges get.

Once you identify these Cognitive Distortions for what they are you can challenge them and change the way you think. I have personally come to understand that it is my own negative thoughts and how I choose to react to things that causes most of my own problems. In the same way other people are being negatively affected by their own thoughts causing them their own problems. For this reason I try not to take it personally if someone behaves in a negative way towards me as it is likely more a reflection on them than me.



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Gambling addiction ruins the lives of millions of people worldwide.

After 30 years of gambling addiction, John Woods placed his last bet on January 5th, 2017. Here, he tells the brutally honest story of a lifetime of gambling, and the pain and misery it caused, not just to John, but to those closest to him.

Most importantly, he shares all he has discovered since stopping gambling and beginning recovery:

- What is gambling addiction and how to overcome it
- Why people become addicted to gambling
- Gambling harm
- Gambling and Children
- Initial steps to stop gambling immediately
- What measures to put in place to prevent gambling
- Therapies for gambling
- How to become the best version of yourself
- Overcoming potential setbacks

It is estimated that for every problem gambler, there are a further six to ten people directly affected and experiencing gambling-related harm. Gambling-related harm can include: financial hardship, crime, mental health problems, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, self-harm, and suicide.

Gambling Addiction Explained is not only for people wanting to stop gambling, but equally for all those affected by gambling-related harm.

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