Advanced Responsible Conduct of Gambling

ARCG COURSE

Participant Workbook

Advanced Responsible Conduct of Gambling
ARCG Course

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Contents

Contents

Section 1
Introduction

1

SECTION 1
Introduction

Key to pictograms

	Discussion
	Activity
	Role play
	Video
	Important note

Welcome to the Advanced Responsible Conduct of Gambling (ARCG) course. This course provides the resources and practical skills required to identify and support patrons that may be experiencing gambling harm.

The course is designed to give Responsible Gambling Officers (RGOs) and other senior roles within hotels and clubs that operate gaming machines advanced knowledge, confidence and the practical skills required to effectively interact with patrons, particularly in high-intensity situations, and the leadership skills required to competently guide and support staff in creating a safe gambling environment.

Your facilitator will guide you through the course.

ACTIVITY 1.1
Icebreaker
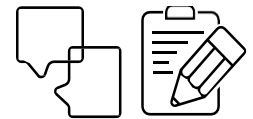
Why are you doing this course?

What do you expect to get from this course?

About this course
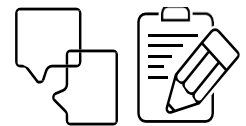
Course aims

- To build on the skills that you've already developed through your experience of working in gambling venues, to enable you to confidently and effectively support patrons who may be experiencing gambling harm

- To develop your advanced interpersonal skills to enable you to effectively anticipate, prevent and manage high-intensity situations

- To develop your understanding of the 'conflict cycle' and 'stages of change' models, so that these can guide your interactions with patrons

- To give you a proactive approach to minimising gambling harm, using step-by-step guidelines on how to manage high-intensity situations such as those involving angry, aggressive, distressed, or suicidal patrons and concerned family members

- To highlight the importance of leadership from senior staff in promoting a culture of responsible gambling and proactive harm minimisation and give you strategies to support and guide more junior staff in identifying and reporting any warning signs of gambling harm.

Who this course is designed for

This course is designed for Responsible Gambling Officers (RGOs) and other senior roles within hotels and clubs that operate gaming machines.

To create a proactive environment focused on harm minimisation and provide support for RGOs, other individuals related to venue operations will also be required to complete ARCG training, including:

- Club secretaries

- Club directors, unless they have completed ClubsNSW Responsible Gambling Board Oversight Training

- Directors of a company that owns one or more hotels, where those directors have an operational role in the hotel business

- Hotel licensees

- Hotel 'approved managers' (as defined in section 91(1A) of the *Liquor Act 2007)*

- Staff who manage Responsible Gambling Officers (if they are separate to and not undertaking RGO duties), e.g., gaming floor managers.

The course is also suitable for staff with an existing RCG endorsement on their competency card who are interested in improving their knowledge and skills in managing difficult situations involving patrons.

The Advanced Responsible Conduct of Gambling course ensures that senior management are aware of their harm minimisation obligations, can help drive venue culture, and are equipped to support RGOs in circumstances where RGOs may need to escalate serious instances of gambling harm to senior management.
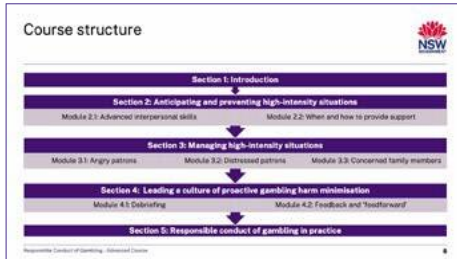
Course structure

This course is divided into five sections:

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Anticipating and preventing high-intensity situations

    Module 2.1: Advanced interpersonal skills

    Module 2.2: When and how to provide support

Section 3: Managing high-intensity situations

    Module 3.1: Angry patrons

    Module 3.2: Distressed patrons

    Module 3.3: Concerned family members

Section 4: Leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation

    Module 4.1: Debriefing

    Module 4.2: Feedback and 'feedforward'

Section 5: Responsible conduct of gambling in practice

    Applying what you have learned

Course outcomes

By the end of this course, you will have the knowledge and skills required to:

- identify, approach and assist patrons who are showing signs of being at risk of gambling harm or experiencing gambling harm
- refer patrons who are experiencing gambling harm to appropriate support services (including self-exclusion)
- understand and effectively apply key conflict resolution strategies when dealing with patrons who are showing anger or aggression
- advise and support venue staff in non-specialist roles to identify and report warning signs of gambling harm
- lead and support a culture of responsible gambling and proactive gambling harm minimisation in your venue.
- lead a culture of compliance through the implementation and maintenance of the Gambling incident register and Gaming Plan of Management.

! CONTENT WARNING

Please note: This course contains material of a sensitive nature. This includes discussions on suicide, mental health, and related topics.

We acknowledge and respect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of participants, allowing you to make informed choices about your engagement with potentially challenging content, ensuring that the training environment is supportive and safe for everyone.

Promoting the responsible conduct of gambling

The reason that all staff of gambling venues are required to actively promote a culture of responsible gambling and proactive harm minimisation is based on the concept of 'corporate social responsibility'.

Corporate social responsibility

'Corporate social responsibility' basically means that all businesses and other organisations have a responsibility for the social effects that their business activities might have, both on their own patrons and on the general public. This includes operating ethically, and not exploiting vulnerable members of the community.

In the case of the gambling industry, corporate social responsibility means that every venue is responsible for proactively minimising any harm that might be associated with its products and activities, which might adversely affect its patrons and/or the general public.

The legislation (laws) that apply to gambling venues require that they take their corporate social responsibility seriously, and there are significant legal consequences if a venue fails to do this. For example, one Sydney venue received significant penalties for failing to identify and provide support to patrons who were showing signs of experiencing gambling harm.

How corporate social responsibility benefits your venue

When a gambling venue takes its corporate responsibility seriously, by actively promoting a culture of responsible gambling and proactively minimising gambling harm, the venue:
- becomes more sustainable over the long term, because patrons are more likely to return if they are confident that the venue provides a safe gambling environment
- earns a positive reputation in the eyes of the general public for being a socially responsible business
- contributes to community acceptance of the gambling industry as a whole because it is seen to be a socially responsible industry.

Corporate social responsibility: A case study

A company that operates gambling venues was reviewing its corporate social responsibility policy.

In doing so, it recognised the fact that while its primary business responsibility to its shareholders and members was to make a profit and be competitive, it also had a social responsibility to balance this against the risk of harm its business activities could potentially cause its patrons and/or the wider community.

The challenge, therefore, was to maintain a profitable business while at the same time proactively minimising harm and contributing overall to community benefit.

To meet this challenge, the company's board of directors decided to:
- train all its venue staff to recognise and assist patrons showing warning signs of experiencing gambling harm
- encourage its senior staff to promote the responsible conduct of gambling to other staff
- support all staff in their responsible interactions with patrons
- restrict the use of promotions that encouraged patrons to continue gambling for longer periods
- establish relationships with local counselling services
- support local community charities.

The company's venues decided to:
- set targets to reduce the number of patrons experiencing gambling harm
- demonstrate to patrons and the general public that they took their social responsibility seriously, by including in their annual reports the number of entries recorded in their gambling incident registers relating to self-exclusion and staff interactions with patrons showing warning signs of experiencing gambling harm.

Your role in corporate social responsibility

As a manager or senior staff member at a gambling venue, you have a greater responsibility to assist and support patrons and other staff. Your specific responsibilities include the following.

- **promote and maintain a proactive approach to gambling harm minimisation at the venue.** This includes leading by example in proactively approaching any patron showing warning signs of experiencing gambling harm.

- **clearly and regularly communicate to junior staff that they are expected to be proactive** in their interactions with patrons showing warning signs of experiencing gambling harm, including developing rapport, approaching, assessing, assist and/or reporting any warning signs of gambling harm to senior management.

- **promote and maintain a safe and responsible gambling environment at the venue.** This includes, as far as reasonably possible, a responsibility and obligation to ensure that patrons do not experience gambling harm, using the RAAR framework as a guide to assess risk and offer assistance that meets the patron's needs.
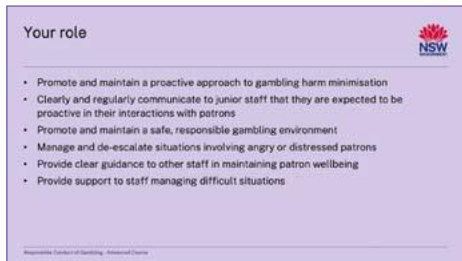
- **manage and de-escalate situations involving angry or distressed patrons.** As a senior staff member, you are expected to have the knowledge, confidence and skills to competently anticipate and manage more complex interpersonal situations with patrons. This includes interacting with patrons referred to you by other staff.

- **provide clear guidance to other staff in maintaining patron wellbeing.** You play an important role in encouraging and modelling a culture of care and respect for all patrons.

- **provide support to staff managing difficult situations.** Being in a position of leadership also involves a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of your staff, by providing them with suitable support after they have experienced a difficult situation at the venue. Junior staff must **not** be reprimanded (or 'told off') for interrupting a patron, or for 'getting it wrong', when a patron is not in fact experiencing gambling harm. Rather, this shows that the staff member is fulfilling their job role.

As a senior staff member, you have legal obligations under the NSW legislation relating to gambling to proactively minimise harm and promote a culture of compliance at your venue.

This course will provide you with the knowledge and skills you'll need to carry out all of these responsibilities, so that you can apply them at your venue and lead by example.

Section 2

Anticipating and preventing high-intensity situations

2

SECTION 2
Anticipating and preventing high-intensity situations

This section develops your interpersonal skills to allow you to better understand patrons and to competently assess and manage risk in difficult situations that could potentially escalate to high-intensity situations, in order to anticipate and prevent them.
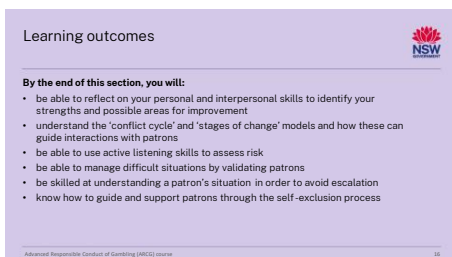
Learning outcomes

By the end of this section, you will:

- be able to reflect on your personal and interpersonal skills to identify your strengths and possible areas for improvement.

- understand the 'conflict cycle' and 'stages of change' models and how these can guide interactions with patrons

- be able to use active listening skills to assess risk

- be able to manage difficult situations by validating patrons

- be skilled at understanding a patron's situation in order to avoid escalation

- know how to guide and support patrons through the self-exclusion process
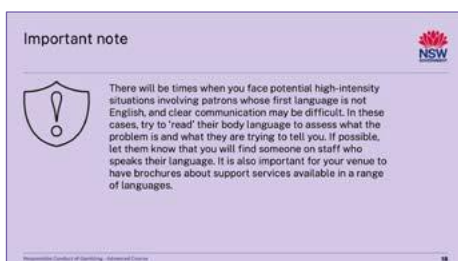
Important note

There will be times when you face potential high intensity situations involving patrons whose first language is not English, and clear communication may be difficult. In these cases, try to 'read' their body language to assess the scenario to see what they are trying to say to you. If possible, let them know that you will find someone on staff who speaks their language. It is also important for your venue to have brochures about support services available in a range of languages.

ACTIVITY 2.1 Your personal and interpersonal skills

This activity asks you to reflect on the personal and interpersonal skills you currently use in your role at a gambling venue, so that you can identify your strengths and possible areas for improvement. You won't be asked to share your responses.

As we progress through the course, keep in mind the specific skills that you might be able to develop further.

You might also wish to return to this activity in 3- or 6-months' time, to check whether you might score differently.

Continually developing your personal and interpersonal skills will allow you to do your job more competently and confidently. Other staff will be more likely to call on you to manage high-intensity situations, and you will be able to use your skills to resolve them peacefully.

I remain calm under pressure.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I am a positive role model to my staff.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I bounce back easily after stressful situations.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I listen closely to what patrons and staff tell me.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I create and promote a culture of respect and support.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I provide constructive feedback to staff.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I confidently and effectively resolve interpersonal conflicts.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

I act decisively when required.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always   Not sure

MODULE 2.1
Advanced interpersonal skills

This module allows you to reflect further on your personal and interpersonal skills and outlines the advanced skills you'll need in order to anticipate, prevent and manage high-intensity situations involving patrons who are showing disruptive behaviours. It also introduces the 'conflict cycle' model and explains how to resolve conflicts in a positive way.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:
- know how to use the skills of active listening and validation to manage high-intensity situations
- understand the stages of conflict and be more aware of the most appropriate time to intervene.

Defining high-intensity situations

In this course, when we talk about a 'high-intensity situation' we mean a situation that:
- involves a patron (or more than one patron) who is showing disruptive behaviour(s)
- might cause harm to other patrons and/or staff
- might require immediate action.

A high-intensity situation might involve a patron or family member who is:
- angry
- aggressive
- distressed
- suicidal.

Hotel and club staff working on the floor and in senior management **are responsible for assessing and managing these situations.**

This module will cover how to do this.

ACTIVITY 2.2
How you currently deal with high-intensity situations

Think about a time when there was a distressed or disruptive patron at your venue.

Question 1: What interpersonal skills did you use in that situation?

Question 2: What approach would _not_ have worked well in that situation?

Question 3: Could the high-intensity situation have been prevented? If so, how?

There are several things that can be done to help prevent a high-intensity situation from arising in the first place.

In some cases, however, a high-intensity situation will be unavoidable, and must be managed when it arises.

The rest of this course will give you the right skills to use at the right time in each case.

The 'conflict cycle' model
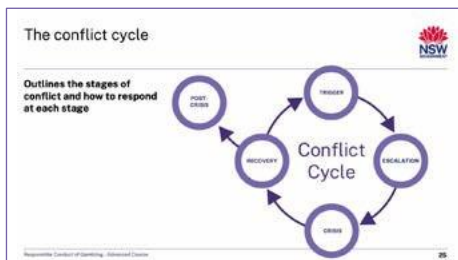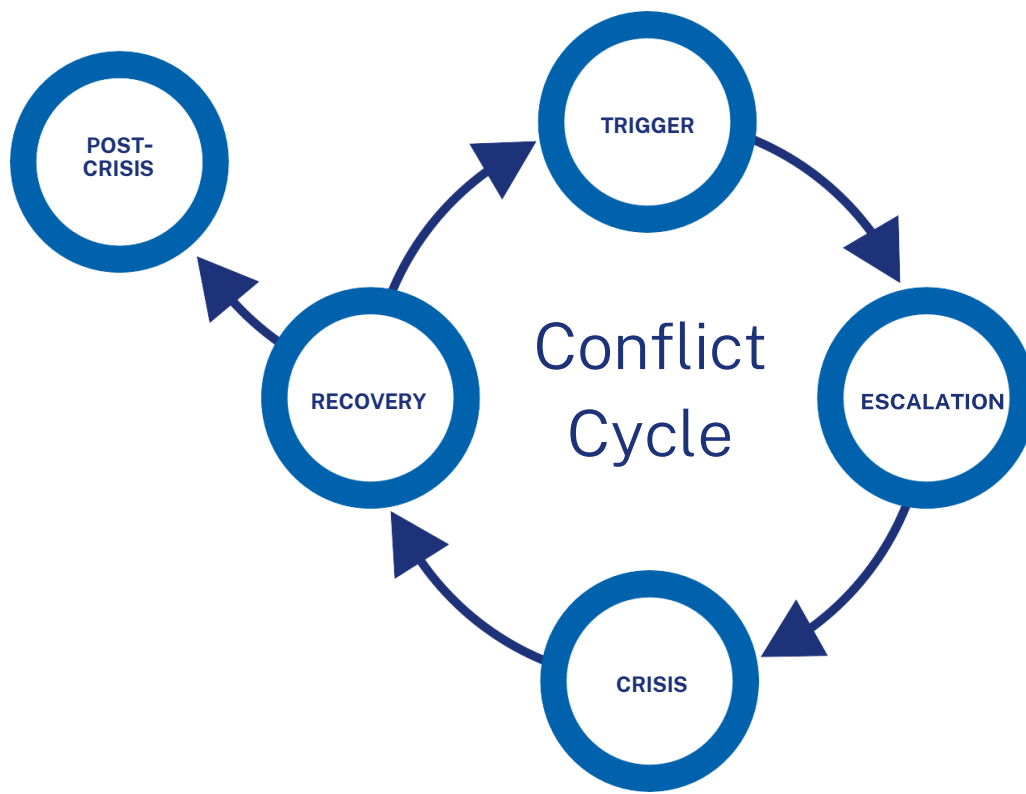
High-intensity situations start with some form of conflict.

The 'conflict cycle' model

High-intensity situations start with some form of conflict.

The 'conflict cycle' is a useful model that outlines the stages involved in the conflict process, and when and how it is most helpful to act at each stage in order to prevent the conflict from becoming a high-intensity situation.

Understanding what is happening at each stage of the conflict process can help us to resolve conflicts in a more positive and constructive way.

As the diagram shows, conflict often starts with an initial event, known as a 'trigger', that makes a person feel uneasy, and this is followed by a series of other stages as shown.

So let's take a closer look at each stage, and how it might apply to a patron at your venue.

A **trigger** can be anything that makes the patron feel frustrated (e.g. they are not winning on the machines) or threatened (e.g. another patron bumps into them), which then gives rise to feelings of agitation, emotional distress and associated physical feelings (e.g. rapid breathing, sweating).

The **escalation** stage is when these feelings lead the patron to respond to staff or other patrons with verbal abuse or physical threats. Be aware that how you approach a patron at this stage and what you say to them can potentially increase or decrease the escalation process.

The **crisis** stage is the main stage of conflict when the patron is openly aggressive and/or distressed and might present a risk of harm to themselves or others.

The **recovery** stage is when the crisis is over, and the patron has started to calm down. At this stage, the patron will be more open to discussion, but escalation and crisis can still be easily re-triggered.

The **post-crisis** stage occurs sometime after the crisis and recovery have ended, when the patron might show signs of embarrassment or regret.
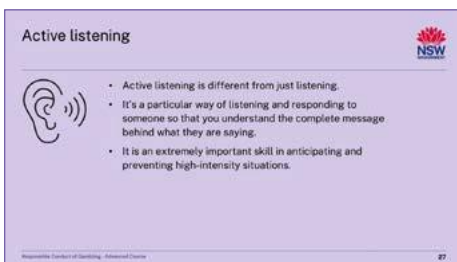
The skill of active listening

One of the skills you'll need to manage high-intensity situations is 'active listening'.

Active listening is different from just listening. It's a particular way of listening and responding to someone so that you understand the complete message behind what they are saying.

Active listening is an extremely important skill in anticipating and preventing high-intensity situations.

The importance of active listening in high-intensity situations

Active listening is important at all stages of the conflict cycle, because paying close attention to what the patron is saying and how they are saying it can help you to:

- understand the patron's situation
- assess the level of risk involved (e.g. is the patron likely to become aggressive and pose a danger to other patrons, staff and/or themselves?)
- de-escalate the situation, by showing the patron that they are being heard and understood, which can calm the patron and de-escalate the conflict.

How to practise active listening

The skill of active listening involves the following key elements. How you put these together in practice is up to you and your own personal style of communication, as well as the particular situation that arises.

Clarify your understanding of what the patron is telling you
- Summarise back to the patron, in your own words, what the patron is telling you, and then ask them whether your understanding is correct.
- Don't use judgmental language, and don't try to correct or challenge what the patron is telling you.
- For example, you might say: 'Let me check that I've understood correctly. You're saying that …'

Observe the patron's non-verbal behaviours
- Watch the patron carefully for any signs of agitation, such as a raised voice, clenched fists, going red in the face, crying or tearfulness.
- Assess these signs for risk to the patron and/or others, and for what they might mean about how the patron is feeling at that moment.
- For example, an outburst of anger or physical aggression might indicate a safety risk to others; extreme emotional distress or frustration might indicate a mental health risk; fidgeting or tapping, a raised voice or clenched fists might indicate that the patron might become physically aggressive.

Use your own body language and voice to communicate confidence and understanding
- Make sure your own facial expression is relaxed and friendly.
- Your body language should include standing confidently, in a non-threatening way, keeping a safe distance between you and the patron, and ready to step back in case of any physical aggression.
- Your tone of voice should be calm, caring, smooth and in control.

ACTIVITY 2.3
Video: Active listening in action

We're going to watch a short video now that shows active listening skills in action.

The script of the video is shown below, so you can follow along.

How does the staff member in the video practise the skill of active listening?

Video Script

Narrator: Active listening goes beyond normal listening, to ensure a clear common understanding between two or more people. It is the basis for good communication, and will help you to deal effectively with issues and find the best solution that meets the patron's needs. Let's now see how active listening skills can be used effectively to manage a difficult situation with a patron.

Cut to scene showing patron sitting at a gaming machine, talking to a staff member.

Staff member: Hey Joe, how's your night going?
Patron (Joe): Yeah, not so bad, thank you.
Staff member: Yeah, no worries. Can I get you a drink or something?
Joe: No, I'm good, thanks. I've been playing this machine for hours with no luck at all. I put so much money in and not one feature. I thought these machines pay back 90 per cent of what us players put in! You know what? I reckon you guys rigged these machines. You guys are crooks!

[Patron is bouncing his leg in agitation].

Video freezes on agitated patron.

Narrator: Let's take a second to note some important aspects of the patron's behaviour in this interaction. First, what they are saying, and their tone of voice indicates that they are most likely frustrated. You may also have noticed them bouncing their leg in a further sign of agitation. Now, let's see how the staff member reacts.

Video continues: *Staff member responds in a calm and reflective manner.*

Staff member: Joe, I can see you're angry and frustrated because the machine's not paying you out like you expected. But would it be okay if I explained to you how the machines work, and how they're controlled by the regulators?
[Staff member maintains good eye contact, is friendly, faces patron in a non-threatening way, while still keeping a safe distance.]

Joe: You know what? You're right. I apologise. I've just been having a bad day. Do you mind giving me a few minutes and then I'll have a chat with you later?
Patron calms down and looks slightly embarrassed.

Staff member: Yeah, sure.

Narrator: Notice that the staff member's body language demonstrates good active listening. Their facial expression suggests they are listening attentively to the patron's complaints, and their posture is relaxed yet confident. Active listening shows that you are taking the patron's concerns seriously, and they are more likely to respond positively.

The skill of validation

Another important skill you'll need to manage high-intensity situations is 'validation'.

Validation means acknowledging that a person's feelings, thoughts and behaviours are understandable in their circumstances.

To use an everyday example, if one of your friends is annoyed because their housemate constantly fails to clean up after themselves despite being repeatedly asked, you might provide your friend with validation by saying something like: "It makes sense that you'd be annoyed after constantly asking them and they still don't do it."

The importance of validation in high-intensity situations

Providing validation can help to de-escalate high-intensity situations, because it shows the patron that you understand why they are upset. This can help them to calm down, because they feel that they are being heard and understood.

An example might be when a patron has lost more than they can afford and is feeling angry at themselves and regretting what they have done. You might say something like, "I can understand you feeling angry. I think most people would feel disappointed with themselves for spending more than they really wanted to and would regret what they've done".

Importantly, **you don't have to agree with someone's feelings, thoughts, or behaviours in order to validate them**. You just need to acknowledge that they are understandable under the circumstances.

ACTIVITY 2.4
How you currently provide validation to patrons

Validation is a key part of developing rapport with patrons.

How do you currently provide validation to patrons when they express concerns?

How to provide validation

As with the skill of active listening, the skill of providing validation involves several key elements. How you put them together in practice is up to you and your own personal style of communication, as well as the situation that arises.

Try to understand the patron's situation
Asking them to help you understand can be validating. For example, "I can see that you're angry, and I understand that there's a good reason. Can you let me know what happened?"

Have empathy for the patron's response to the situation
Imagine yourself in the patron's situation and think about how you might feel and/or behave yourself. In many cases you would probably feel the same way.

Acknowledge that their response is understandable
Tell the patron directly that you understand their feelings and that you think most people would feel similarly in the same situation. For example, "Of course you're upset. I think most people in your situation would be upset too." If you've had a similar experience yourself, or if you feel like you would respond in a similar way, you can share this with the patron to show them that you understand.

How to avoid invalidation

'Invalidation' is the opposite of validation. It happens when you ignore or judge the other person's feelings, thoughts, or behaviours, rather than trying to understand them. This can create a barrier between you and can damage your relationship with the patron.

Sometimes we try to say the right things, but they may leave the patron feeling invalidated. Here are some examples.

Incorrectly assuming the reason for the patron's feelings or behaviour
A patron might seem to be distressed about losing money, but in fact they might be feeling angry because they believe the machines are unfairly set up to take their money.
Invalidating: "It looks like you're upset because you've lost all your money."
Validating: "It looks like you're upset. Would you like to talk about it? Let me know what's happened, and how I can help you."

Showing no empathy for the patron, and dismissing their concerns
Invalidating: "I don't know why you're so upset – it seems like you just don't know how pokies work".
Validating: "It makes sense that you'd be upset when you've lost a lot of money on the pokies. Would you like me to tell you how we could help you reduce your losses, so that you still have fun playing?"

Brushing over the patron's concerns, to make them or you feel better
Sometimes we do this because we don't like to see people unhappy, but sometimes we do it because we're uncomfortable.
Invalidating: "Come on, don't be upset. There's no point worrying about it."
Validating: "It makes sense that you'd be upset. I would be upset in that situation too."

How to avoid invalidation

'Invalidation' is when you ignore or judge the other person's feelings, thoughts or behaviours, rather than trying to understand them.

- Incorrectly assuming the reason for their feelings or behaviour
- Showing no empathy for them, and dismissing their concerns
- Brushing over their concerns, to make them or you feel better
- Judging them

Judging the patron

Invalidating: "You're being ridiculous saying the machines are rigged." "Well, you play the machines all the time –of course you're going to lose money."

Validating: "I understand how unfair it must feel." "I don't think anyone likes losing money."

Even if you disagree with the patron, you can still validate their feelings and behaviour.

Activity 2.5 Validation in action

Note how the skill of validation is used in this video.

ACTIVITY 2.5
Video: Validation in action

We're going to watch a short video now that shows validation skills in action.

The script of the video is shown below, so you can follow along if you like.

How does the staff member in the video practise the skill of validation?

Remember: The purpose of this video is to show you validation skills in action. You are not a counsellor and should refer to suitable staff with appropriate training.

If the patron is in immediate danger, call 000 for Police and Ambulance help.

1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) is a 24-hour national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Video Script

Narrator: Just to recap, validation is acknowledging a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours as understandable
given their circumstances. As a staff member, some things to consider are *[cut to scene of staff member with thought bubble showing the following text]*:

Staff member: *What emotions might the patron be experiencing right now? Have I felt something similar in the past? How might it have helped me if someone had checked in on me at the time?*

Narrator: In this instance, a patron, Maria, has shared with you that she is at the venue more than usual to avoid difficult conversations with her husband at home. You can say something like *[cut to scene of staff member talking to a who is patron sitting at the pokies looking sad]*:

Staff member: I've noticed you coming in quite a bit recently, Maria.

Patron (Maria) *[crying]***:** Yeah, I think I've just been trying to escape everything that's going on at home, so …
Staff member: Okay, well, what's going on at home?
Maria: Me and my husband are just not getting on well. Yeah, it's just really stressful right now.
Staff member: Yeah, it sounds like you don't want to be at home right now.

Maria: You're right. I'm just finding it so difficult to be at home right now, 'cause every time I just know I'm going to end up in an argument with Steve. And he just gets so angry, and I just don't know when he's going to really lose it. That's why I'm just here all the time on these bloody pokie machines. I just don't want to go home – I just don't
want to be anywhere near him.

Staff member: Yeah, no, I completely understand where you are coming from. That sounds like it must be really stressful, not knowing what's going to set Steve off and get into an argument. You know,
a lot of people, they are in your situation, and they come here and play the pokies to try to forget about things. But look, maybe we could have a chat about some other things you could do to manage the challenging time and, you know, what could you do other than coming to play pokies.

Narrator: The staff member has validated Maria by trying to understand her emotions and behaviour. They have also acknowledged that Maria's response is understandable, given her situation. The staff member expressed their understanding but offers alternative options to playing the pokies.

Activity 2.6 Practising your own active listening and validation skills

In groups of three, take turns playing a:
- patron
- staff member
- observer who provides feedback to the staff member.

Read the scenario in your Participant Workbook, and fill out the table.

ACTIVITY 2.6
Practising your own active listening and validation skills
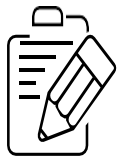
Now that you understand active listening and validation, it's time to practise these skills yourselves.

In your group of three, take turns each playing the role of a staff member, a patron, and an observer who provides feedback to the staff member.

Read the scenario below, and then fill out the table.

When you've finished, we'll discuss your answers as a whole group.

Scenario

You notice a middle-aged woman who has been playing the machines for an hour or so.

You observe that her eyes are red, and she appears to be trying to hold back tears.

You recognise her as someone who comes in regularly, but you haven't really spoken to her yet.

You approach her and explain that you are a staff manager and that you noticed that she appeared possibly upset. You tell her you are concerned about her wellbeing and ask if she is okay.

She responds by explaining that she has just lost her rent money for the second month running, and that she is concerned about her husband's reaction when he finds out, because he has a history of becoming violent when he's angry.

In this situation, how would you:

Show active listening skills?

Provide validation to the patron?

Summary of active listening and validation skills

Actively listening to patrons and validating their concerns will allow you to:
- develop better rapport with them because they will feel heard and understood
- gain relevant information from them, and assess any risk
- model best-practice staff–patron interactions to more junior staff
- provide the most helpful support and assistance possible.

Remember that we are all different, so we will all practise active listening and validation skills differently, depending on our own communication style. With experience and practice, you will develop your own style.

Also remember that although these skills will help you to understand patrons and de-escalate high-intensity situations most of the time, there will still be times when even these skills might not be effective.
We will talk more about this later.
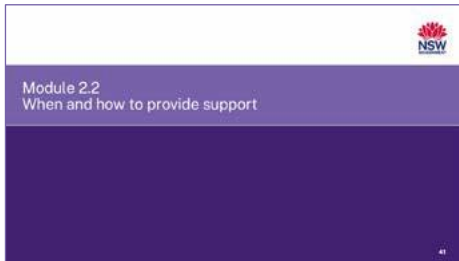
MODULE 2.2
When and how to provide support

This module introduces the 'stages of change' model, which helps to explain how patrons who are at risk of gambling harm might differ in their readiness to change their behaviour. This module also explores the self-exclusion process.
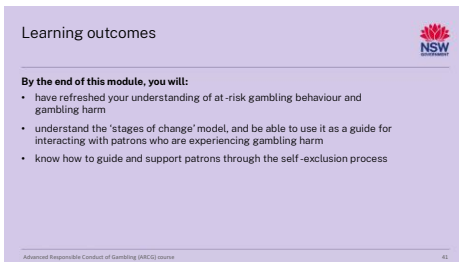
Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:
- have refreshed your understanding of the signs that someone is at risk of or is experiencing gambling harm.
- understand the 'stages of change' model, and be able to use it as a guide for interacting with patrons who are experiencing gambling harm
- know how to guide and support patrons through the self-exclusion process

Behaviour that may be linked to gambling harm

Let's start by refreshing our understanding of these two terms.

At-risk gambling behaviour

'At-risk gambling behaviour' is gambling behaviour that leads to gambling harm because it involves:
- spending more money on gambling than the person can afford based on their income and financial commitments: and/or
- spending so much time on gambling that it interferes with the person's relationships, social life and/or work responsibilities.

Gambling harm

'Gambling harm' refers to difficulties or other negative consequences that result from excessive gambling and affect the wellbeing of the person and/or their loved ones in many areas of their daily lives.

Gambling harm can affect people's physical and mental health as well as their financial wellbeing, relationships, education and employment, social and psychological wellbeing.

It's important to remember also that gambling harm doesn't just affect the person who gambles –it can also affect the people and community around them. It is estimated that for every person who are at risk of gambling harm, six people are affected by gambling harm.

The importance of timing

Have you ever received advice from someone at a time when you just weren't yet ready to listen? The advice might have been good, but the timing was wrong, so it didn't help you.

As senior staff, it's important for you to take the time to understand how a patron views their own situation at that moment, and how ready they are to accept and respond to your support.

This will help you to adjust your own responses, so that any support you offer is helpful and appropriate to the situation at hand.

The 'stages of change' model

The 'stages of change' model is a useful way of understanding how people may differ in their readiness to change at different times.

People move in and out of each of these stages over time, so understanding this model can help you to offer the right support at the right time.

As the diagram shows, there are six stages, so let's take a closer look at each stage, and how it might apply to a patron at your venue who is experiencing gambling harm as a result of their gambling behaviour.

At **pre-contemplation** stage, the patron has no intention of changing their gambling behaviour. They might even be unaware or deny that their gambling behaviour is causing them harm. At this stage, they see no point in listening to advice.

At **contemplation** stage, the patron is aware that they are at risk of gambling harm, but they are only thinking about taking action to change. At this stage they are not committed to changing their behaviour.
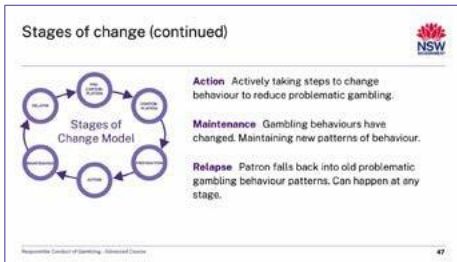
At **preparation** stage, the patron has formed an intention to take action, and acknowledges that a change in their gambling behaviour can lead to a healthier life. They begin to gather information on their options.

At **action** stage, the patron is actively taking action to change, by reducing their at-risk gambling behaviours and increasing their participation in new, healthy behaviours.

At **maintenance** stage, the patron has replaced their at-risk gambling behaviour with healthy behaviours. At this stage the patron's intention is to actively maintain their new behaviour and prevent the return of at-risk gambling behaviour patterns.

A **relapse** is when the patron falls back into old at-risk gambling behaviour patterns. This can happen at any stage.

This model can help you to offer the right support at the right time.
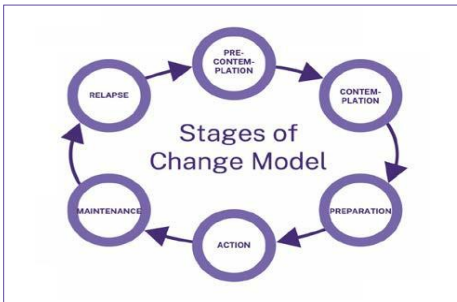
ACTIVITY 2.7
Offering the right support at the right time

When you're considering offering a patron a referral to a support service or any other kind of support, you should first consider what stage of change the patron is currently in, so that you can offer them support that is appropriate to that stage.

To practise doing this, in your group, discuss and label each of the staff responses shown in the table below, by writing down the stage of change when it would be most appropriate for a staff member to offer that response.

Stage of change	Appropriate staff response
	Offer the patron direct help, such as offering to link them with a counsellor or gambling ambassador or help them call GambleAware.
	Give the patron time to think about whether they'd like support, and perhaps suggest that a counsellor might be able to help them with making this decision. At this stage, staff should not pressure the patron, but should offer them options to consider.

Stage of change	Appropriate staff response
	Keep in mind that a return to at-risk gambling behaviours can happen at any time. Continue to maintain rapport and monitor the patron for signs of what stage of change the patron might have moved into.
	Remain positive and supportive of the patron's efforts to maintain their new healthy behaviours.
	Outline the support options available to the patron and explain in detail how to access them. Try to overcome any barriers the patron might have to accessing support (e.g. lack of understanding).
	Understand that the patron might not be open to the idea of receiving support. Just let them know that there are various options are available to them if they are interested.

Stages of change and self-exclusion

Now we're going to look at where and how self-exclusion fits in with the stages of change model.

Remember that 'self-exclusion' is a voluntary agreement in which a patron chooses to exclude (or 'ban') themselves from one or more gambling venues for a certain period. If they enter the venue during this self-exclusion period, staff must remind them of the agreement and ask them to leave.

Only voluntary self-exclusion is legislated under the *Gaming Machines Act 2001.*

ACTIVITY 2.8
Videos: Stages of change and self-exclusion

Self-exclusion is an important support that is offered to patrons at all venues. The three questions below relate to offering self-exclusion to a patron at three different stages of change. Consider each of these questions and make notes of your answers so that we can discuss them as a group, before we watch some videos that show them in action.

Question 1: If a patron is in the 'pre-contemplation' stage, how do you think they might respond if you recommend self-exclusion?

Question 2: If a patron is in the 'preparation' stage, how do you think they might respond if you recommend self-exclusion?

Question 3: If a patron is in the 'action' stage, how do you think they might respond if you recommend self-exclusion?

Video 1

Video script: Pre-contemplation stage

[Set on the gaming floor]

Staff member: Ruby, how's it going? Can I talk to you for a moment?

Patron (Ruby): Yeah.

Staff member: Look, I think you need to think about self-excluding yourself from the gaming floor or the venue for a little while.

Ruby: What? You mean banning myself? You're joking, right? Well, I think you might find it helpful to mind your own business.

Staff member: Okay.

[Text appears on the screen: 'A better approach']

Staff member: Hi Ruby, how's it going?

Ruby: Oh, all good thanks. I've been playing these a little bit too much lately, and they haven't been too kind to me.

Staff member: No, unfortunately they're not designed to make players rich. But look, we do have several tools available that many of our regular patrons use, and it just helps them manage their gaming machine spend. Look, if you're interested, I can talk you through which ones might work for you.

Ruby: That might not be a bad idea.

Staff member: Okay.

Video 2

Video script: Preparation stage

[Set in a private area of the venue, such as in the cafe or the manager's office]

Staff member: So, John, look, I think you need to exclude yourself from the venue or the gaming floor for a little while.

Patron (John): Really? I have been meaning to do something about my gambling, but self-exclusion, that sounds pretty extreme.

Staff member: Really, it's not that bad.

[Text appears on the screen: 'A better approach']

Staff member: Hey John, how's it going today? Is everything okay?

John: I've noticed my gambling is getting a little bit out of control. I'd like to get some help, but I have no idea where to start.

Staff member: Hmm, yeah. I've noticed you're playing the pokies a lot more lately, and you haven't been your usual self. Have you considered having a look at any of the resources we have available to help you manage your spending?

John: [Nods his head]

Staff member: Yeah, I know it can be a bit confusing at first, but I'm more than happy to help you work out what might be the right kind of support for you. Have you considered self-exclusion?

John: I've heard of it, but I don't know any of the details.

Staff member: Hmm, well, many people find that when they exclude themselves from the venue or the gaming floor, it's quite helpful.

If you'd like, we could talk a little bit more about how it might help you.

John: Yeah, well, thanks, that sounds like a good idea.

Staff member: Okay, great.

Video 3

Video script: Action stage

[Set in a private area of the venue, such in the cafe or the manager's office]

Staff: Look, Ruby. I think that you need to exclude yourself from the venue or gaming floor for a while.

Patron (Ruby): Yeah, maybe –but how's that going to help any more than what I've already tried?

[Text appears on the screen: 'A better approach']

Staff: So Ruby, tell me, what are you currently doing to manage your gambling?

Ruby: Well, I've been seeing a gambling counsellor every couple of weeks or so, and it's definitely helped, but I'm still gambling more than I'd like to.

Staff: Okay, well, look, I'm glad that you're talking to someone and that's helping. But have you considered our self-exclusion program? Because many people find combining counselling with self-exclusion is really, really helpful. And doing both is better than just doing one or the other.

Ruby: You know what? I actually looked up self-exclusion at one point, but it just seemed so overwhelming at the time that I didn't take it any further.

Staff: Yeah, no, look, I completely understand. But if you'd like, we can go through that process now. You can ask me any questions that you have, and it really won't take long at all.

Ruby: Okay.

Staff: Okay, great

The importance of self-exclusion

As we've seen, patrons can sometimes be unconvinced by the idea of using a self-exclusion program, reluctant to accept support with the process, or even completely closed off to any offer of support.

As a senior staff member, it is your responsibility to remain supportive and available for if the patron changes their mind in the future.

Research has found that while many patrons have been well-supported through the self-exclusion process by highly professional and compassionate staff, unfortunately other patrons have reported feeling disrespected and even treated with contempt by staff.

So, it is extremely important for you to understand the stages of change model, and keep in mind the difficulties a patron may be facing when they are trying to build up the courage to self-exclude.

Self-exclusion programs

Remember that there are many self-exclusion programs operating in NSW. You need to know which program applies to your venue and follow the procedures accordingly. Note: Only voluntary self-exclusion is legislated under the *Gaming Machines Act 2001.*

Self-exclusion program	Description
Venue-based self-exclusion	Allows patrons to register their self-exclusion with venue staff by completing paperwork at the venue. Patrons can only self-exclude from one venue at a time. Venue staff may also refer patrons to counselling services
BetSafe	Allows a patron to complete an online self-exclusion request form themselves without attending a venue (although that is also an option), after which they are sent paperwork to complete and return by mail. BetSafe can also refer a patron to counselling services.
ClubSAFE	Patrons see a gambling counsellor or an authorised venue staff member, who completes an online form to exclude the patron from up to 35 venues. A patron can choose which parts of the venue to be excluded from.
GambleAware	GambleAware counsellors can help patrons to self-exclude from any pub, club, TAB agency or casino in NSW, without the patron needing to go to the venue. Patrons can self-exclude from up to 35 venues at once.

General step-by-step guide to self-exclusion

1. Invite the patron into a private area to discuss self-exclusion
Do not discuss self-exclusion with a patron where other patrons could hear. The patron is most likely feeling anxious, distressed and/or embarrassed. It's important to make them feel as comfortable as possible. Offer them a coffee or tea, or a non-alcoholic drink.

2. Explain to the patron how self-exclusion works
Explain to the patron what options are available, such as exclusion from the whole venue or just from the gaming area, the length of the exclusion period, and how they can sign up. Outline the responsibilities of the patron and of the venue. Let them know that many people use self-exclusion and find it very helpful. You can also refer them to the useful information about self- exclusion at:
www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support/i-want-to-help-myself/take-a-break-and-ban-yourself

3. Record the patron's relevant personal and contact details, and verify their identity
The information required may vary depending on the program. Reassure the patron that the information they provide will be kept private; by outlining the program's information security measures (these will depend on the particular program). Ask the patron to show you a form of photo ID that allows you to verify their identity, and scan and upload a copy of this for their self-exclusion record. The registration procedure cannot proceed without verification of the patron's identity.

4. Offer to help the patron to connect with free and confidential GambleAware services

Explain to the patron that people often find self-exclusion most effective when it is combined with specialist support and counselling. GambleAware offers these services across NSW, and they can be accessed face to face, over the phone or online. Details are available by phoning 1800 858 858 or online at www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au

5. Maintain the patron's privacy and confidentiality

Make sure you follow all the program's information security measures.

6. Continue to support the patron

Support the patron's steps towards positive change and make yourself available for follow-up if they have questions or concerns later.

Exclusion orders

Unlike self-exclusion, which involves a patron voluntarily excluding themselves from one or more venues, an 'exclusion order' is a ban on a patron entering a venue that is introduced by the venue to protect the safety and wellbeing of the patron, their family and the community.

Exclusion of persons from licensed venues is legislated under Section 77 of the *Liquor Act 2007* only. An authorised person may refuse to admit to, or may turn out of, licensed premises any person: who is at the time intoxicated, violent, quarrelsome or disorderly. This involuntary exclusion only applies to the *Liquor Act 2007*, it does not relate to the operation of gaming machines under the Gaming Machines Act 2001.

Only voluntary self-exclusion is legislated under the *Gaming Machines Act 2001.*

Responsible Gambling Officer (RGO)

As part of a suite of gaming reforms to identify and support patrons at risk of gambling harm, the NSW Government has committed to the introduction of Responsible Gambling Officers (RGOs) into hotels and clubs with more than 20 gaming machines.

Venues that meet these requirements must have always at least one RGO on duty when gaming machines are in operation, and venues with significantly more gaming machines will be required to staff more Responsible Gambling Officers.

The purpose of the RGO role is to promote proactive gambling harm minimisation. Hotel and club staff working on the floor and in senior management have a shared responsibility to proactively engage with patrons and monitor for potential gambling harm.

Responsible Gambling Officer (RGO)

The purpose of the **Responsible Gambling Officers (RGO)** is to promote proactive gambling harm minimisation. Hotel and club staff working on the floor and in senior management have a shared responsibility to proactively engage with patrons and monitor them for potential gambling harm.

An RGO will be expected to have a higher level of responsibility than other gaming staff on the floor and must complete the Advanced Conduct of Responsible Gambling course (ARCG).

RGO duties include:

- identifying patrons who are at risk of gambling harm or displaying behaviour that suggests they are experiencing gambling harm

- proactively checking-in and engaging with patrons where the RGO suspects they might be experiencing gambling harm

- being available if staff members need assistance regarding patrons they suspect might be experiencing gambling harm. For example, they may suggest the patron takes a break from the gaming machine, or that they should go home if they have been there for a long period of time

- escalating serious instances of gambling harm to senior management to intervene (e.g., aggressive behaviour etc)

- facilitating the provision of gambling help information

- facilitating any requests for self-exclusion

- recording instances of potential gambling harm in a gambling incident register

- reviewing the gambling incident register on a regular basis and discussing any actions required with venue management

- working with staff and management to ensure the venue fulfils its harm minimisation obligations, and

- promoting harm minimisation measures and procedures within the venue and with other staff.

Responsible Gambling Officers will also be protected from adverse action by their employer for carrying out their role and will have a right to notify L&GNSW in instances where they reasonably believe there is a breach of harm minimisation requirements or are being obstructed from performing their role.

It will be prohibited for an employer to take adverse action against an RGO for carrying out their duties, for example, suggesting a patron takes a break.

To find out more about the Responsible Gambling Officer role, including venue requirements based on gaming machine entitlement numbers, visit the L&GNSW website.

Section 3
Managing high-intensity situations

3
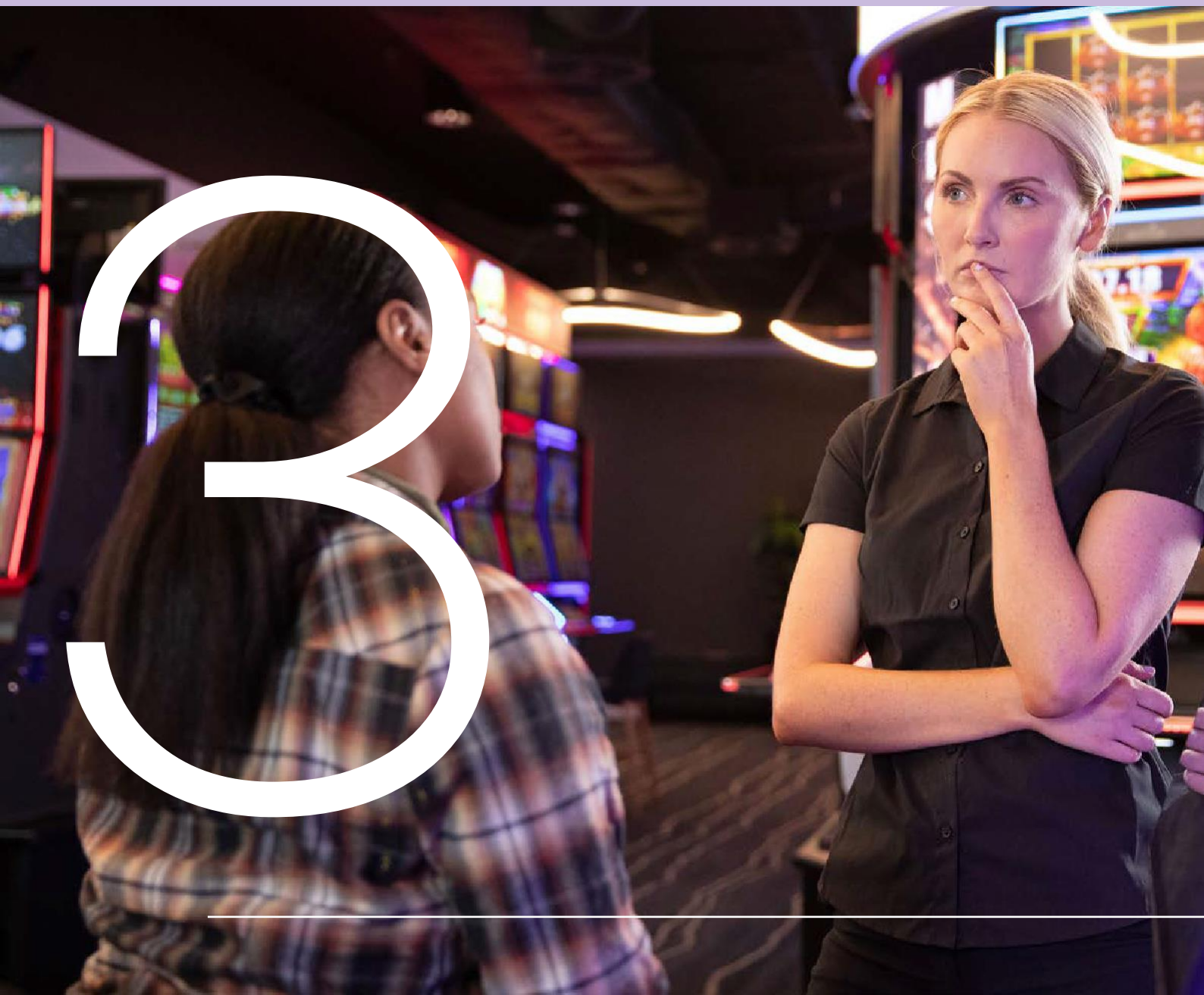
SECTION 3
Managing high-intensity situations
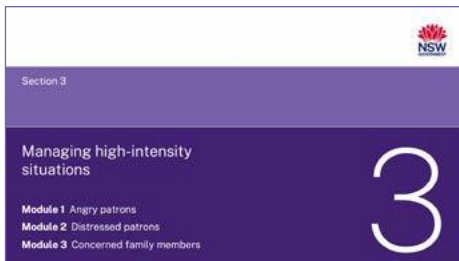
This section explains how to apply the '**RAAR**' (**R**apport, **A**pproach and assess, **A**ssist, **R**eport) framework in high-intensity situations that involve angry, distressed and/or suicidal patrons or concerned family members, in order to de-escalate the situation and work towards the best possible outcome for everyone involved.
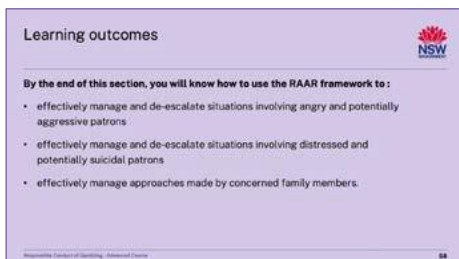
Learning outcomes

By the end of this section, you will know how to use the RAAR framework to:
- effectively manage and de-escalate situations involving angry and potentially aggressive patrons
- effectively manage and de-escalate situations involving distressed and potentially suicidal patrons
- effectively manage approaches made by concerned family members.
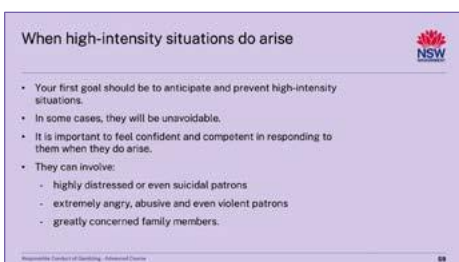
When high-intensity situations do arise

While your first goal should always be to anticipate and prevent high-intensity situations, in some cases they will be unavoidable, so it is important that you feel confident and competent in responding to them when they do arise.

High-intensity situations can involve extremely angry, aggressive, abusive and even violent patrons; highly distressed or even suicidal patrons; and/or greatly concerned family members.

The three modules in this section outline how to manage in each of these cases.
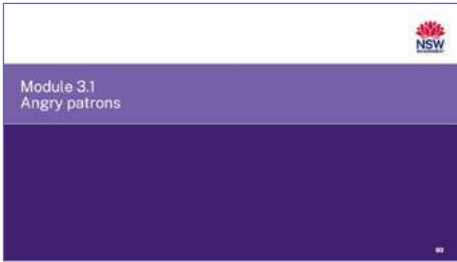
MODULE 3.1
Angry patrons

This module explains how to apply the RAAR framework to manage high-intensity situations involving angry and potentially aggressive patrons.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:
- understand that the safety of staff and patrons is of the highest importance.
- know how to successfully manage and de-escalate situations involving angry and potentially aggressive patrons

The importance of safety

The safety of staff and patrons must **always** be your most important consideration.

If a patron is angry and/or aggressive, start by making sure other patrons and staff are safe, by taking the angry patron to a quiet area or asking other patrons and staff to move away. If the angry patron poses an immediate risk to other people, call security. If the risk is very serious, call the police.

If safety is not an immediate concern, introduce yourself to the patron and explain that you're there to help. Then follow the steps we'll discuss shortly.

ACTIVITY 3.1
Understanding aggression

Unfortunately, angry patrons are fairly common in clubs and hotels, and sometimes angry patrons can become aggressive. Sometimes this aggression may seem to be targeted at staff members, at other patrons, or even at venue property.

Aggression can arise for several reasons and is often fueled by alcohol. Consider the following question, and then share your thoughts with the class.

Why might a patron become aggressive at a venue?

The two main reasons that a person who is angry might also become aggressive

The reasons that a person might become aggressive are complex, but they can often be grouped into two main categories.

People generally become aggressive out of:

- **fear**, such as when feeling threatened that they will lose something valuable; relevant examples include gambling losses causing financial stress, family conflict, threat of divorce, or lack of job security
- **frustration**, such as feeling unable to make progress or to achieve something they want to achieve; relevant examples include trying to win money to pay debts but continuing to lose and falling behind financially.

It is important for staff members to remain objective when trying to understand a patron's situation.

Aggressive behaviour often relates to circumstances that have nothing to do with the staff member, and it often has a rational explanation, even if it does not seem that way at the time.

Applying the RAAR framework to angry patrons

Rapport

Remember that the first step in the '**RAAR**' (**R**apport; **A**pproach and assess; **A**ssist; and **R**eport) framework is rapport.

A patron who is angry is more likely to respond well if you have already developed rapport and a positive relationship with them.

Having existing rapport with the patron may also help you to understand what has triggered their angry or aggressive behaviour, and how to approach them and de-escalate the situation.

ACTIVITY 3.2
Interacting with angry patrons

Can you think of a real-life example where you or other staff needed to deal with an angry or aggressive patron? How did you or the other staff approach the patron?

ACTIVITY 3.2
Interacting with angry Patrons

Was the interaction successful? Why, or why not?

Approaching and assessing

The next step in the RAAR framework is to approach and assess.

Use active listening and validation to understand what has contributed to the patron's feelings/behaviour.

Keep the discussion focused on the immediate situation –what has upset them just now –and avoid discussing issues that are not directly related. If the focus becomes too broad, this can intensify the person's emotions and upset them even more, making the situation more difficult to manage. You might say, for example, "I'd like to help, but I'll need to know exactly what's wrong. Could you please explain to me what has just happened to upset you?"

Be careful not to escalate the situation. Make sure your voice and body language show empathy and concern; speak in a calm but confident voice; keep your facial expression calm and concerned; maintain respectful eye contact (but not so intensely that it might seem challenging or aggressive); keep your own emotions calm; and don't take the situation personally – even anger directed at you is generally not personal, even if it sometimes sounds like it.
Explain to the patron why aggressive behaviour is unacceptable at the venue, so that they clearly understand what is and is not acceptable behaviour.

Explain that everyone at the venue is expected to behave in a way that does not disturb or offend other patrons or staff. You might say, for example,
"I understand that you're angry, but shouting at the staff is not okay. When you're here at the club/hotel, it's important to be respectful of other peopl

Assisting

The next step in the RAAR framework is to assist the patron.

First, allow them some time to calm down from the strong emotions and physical arousal involved in being angry and/or aggressive (such as increased heart rate, sweating and so on). These can last for quite a while, so that even when it might seem like the situation is over, the patron might still be feeling emotionally sensitive. Remember the conflict cycle that we discussed in Module 2.1. Don't be tempted to rush in and talk about their options until you are confident that the immediate crisis has ended, and the patron has calmed down enough to be open to discussing potential support.

Understanding the patron's concerns will now allow you to offer the most appropriate assistance, whether that be having a friendly conversation where the patron can decompress; directing them to a gambling support service or to a website where they can get more information about available gambling support services; or talking them through the process of self-exclusion. You might say, for example, "Now that you're feeling a bit more settled, would you like me to tell you about some of the ways we can improve things for you?"

If the patron has made any valid complaints, tell them that you will follow up on these and let them know of the outcome.

If the patron is still causing a disturbance, explain that their available options are to:
· work with you to resolve the issue
· leave the venue voluntarily
· have staff call security or police to remove them.

Reporting and monitoring

Gambling incident register

Always report any incident with an angry or aggressive patron in your venue's gambling incident register. All venues with gaming machines are required to keep a record of all gambling incidents in a register.

The purpose of a gambling incident register is harm minimisation. Maintaining a register to record incidents of gambling harm and other gambling incidents will help RGOs and senior management to better understand issues affecting their patrons and proactively offer assistance.

All staff will be responsible for recording incidents in the register, and this is a key duty for RGOs. Across all venues with gaming machines, the hotel licensee or club secretary will be responsible for maintaining the register.

The types of incidents that will need to be recorded in your venues gambling incident register includes:

- any incident where the patron displays or engages in at-risk gambling behaviour
- a request for the venue to intervene, made by the patron themselves or a family member of a patron (however no personal details of family members are allowed to be recorded)
- any breach or attempted breach of a self-exclusion arrangement
- any offence, alleged offence or incident involving a minor
- what action has been taken in response to an incident.

Hotel licensees and club secretaries will be required to review the gambling incident register on at least a monthly basis and consider whether there is harm minimisation action that can be taken in relation to trends in recorded incidents.

Continue to monitor the patron when they next come to the venue and report any further relevant warning signs or incidents.

Interactions with angry or aggressive patrons can be a highly stressful experience for everyone involved. It may also impact the wellbeing of staff. It's important for you to debrief (covered in Section 4) with all staff involved to help them process the interaction and feel supported.

To find out more about gambling incident registers, visit the L&GNSW website

ACTIVITY 3.3
Scenario: An angry and potentially aggressive patron

In your group, read the following scenario and then complete the table below.

Scenario

You walk past the gaming floor, where you recognise a patron in her mid-fifties called Paula, talking loudly to the person playing the machine next to her. Paula is known to the venue, as she has become violent in the past and has only recently returned from an extended period of exclusion.

You pause to listen to what is being said and, as you watch, Paula raises her voice to a shout and starts making threatening hand gestures at the other patron.

You piece together that Paula is angry because the other patron has won the linked jackpot after only playing the machine for a minute, while Paula had been sitting on the machine next to it for hours in the hope of winning that jackpot.

Paula seems to believe that the jackpot is rightfully hers. You decide that you need to quickly intervene before things get physical.

How would you …

Determine whether it is safe to approach the patron?	
Name the behaviour that the patron is showing, and explain why it is unacceptable?	
Explain to the patron their available choices?	
Use active listening to understand the patron's concerns?	
Validate the patron's feelings?	
Offer the patron help, and describe the available options?	

MODULE 3.2
Distressed patrons

This module explains how to apply the RAAR framework to manage high-intensity situations involving distressed and potentially suicidal patrons.
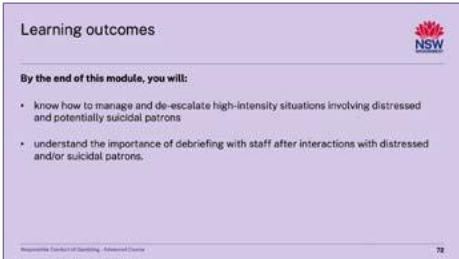
Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:

- know how to manage and de-escalate high-intensity situations involving distressed and potentially suicidal patrons
- understand the importance of debriefing with staff after interactions with distressed and/or suicidal patrons.
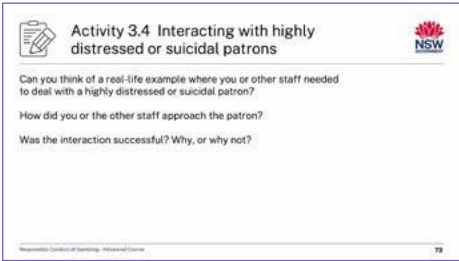
ACTIVITY 3.4
Interacting with highly distressed or suicidal patrons

Can you think of a real-life example where you or other staff needed to deal with a highly distressed or suicidal patron? How did you or the other staff approach the patron?

Was the interaction successful? Why, or why not?

Applying the RAAR framework to distressed patrons

Rapport

It can be difficult to notice when a patron is feeling distressed or suicidal, because they might be embarrassed and try to hide their feelings.

This is why having existing rapport is so important because this will often make it easier for you to notice if a patron is acting different from usual.

Approaching and assessing

Approaching a patron who is showing signs of distress or who is suicidal can be difficult and emotional for staff members.
Your aim should be to make the patron feel comfortable enough to talk to you, so that you can then offer assistance.

Start by showing concern for the patron. Anyone who is feeling distressed or suicidal is probably also feeling very vulnerable. Keep an open mind and use non-judgmental language. You might say, for example, "How are you going? It looks like you're a bit upset; would it be okay if we talk for a moment? You look like you might be feeling a bit distressed, and I'm concerned for your wellbeing."

Ask the patron if they would like to talk with you in a quieter or more private space, such as the cafe or a manager's office. Be mindful of your own safety, though, and always leave the door open. You might say, for example, "Would you like to come with me to somewhere a bit quieter, so we can talk? You might feel more comfortable talking there."

Use active listening and validation of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This will make them feel heard and valued, and more likely to be open to accepting support.

Assisting

Ask if there is anything you can do to help and describe the available support options. You might say, for example, "I'd like to help you if I can. Can you tell me what would be helpful to you?"

Explain that you are willing to help as much as possible. You might say, for example, "I might be limited in what I can do, but I would like to have a chat about how I might be able to help in some way, at least."

Assisting suicidal patrons
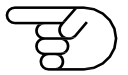
Having to interact with a suicidal patron at a venue is not common, but occasionally this situation does arise.

Knowing how to respond, and how to ask the patron about their suicidal feelings, can be very difficult for staff.

A patron who is feeling suicidal might not feel comfortable telling you this, so often the only way you know is if they say something that raises concern, such as: "Things are just so bad that there's no point in going on. It's all hopeless –I can't see any solution or any way out."

If you become aware that a patron is feeling suicidal, stay with them and reassure them. You might say, for example, "I care about your wellbeing. I'm going to stay with you until we can get some help. Please don't leave until we can protect you as much as possible."

Call 000 and request an ambulance. Tell the patron that you're going to do this and stay with them while you do it. You might say, for example, "I'm going to call 000. Help is coming, so please stay here with me until it comes."

Remember that you must never physically restrain a patron.

Reporting and monitoring

You must report any incident with a highly distressed or suicidal patron in your venue's gambling incident register.

The types of incidents that will need to be recorded are:

- Any incident where gaming patron displays or engages in behaviour that suggests they are at risk of, or they are experiencing gambling harm,

- a request for the venue to intervene, made by the patron themselves or a family member of a patron (however no personal details of family members are allowed to be recorded)

- Any breach or attempted breach of a self-exclusion arrangement

- Any offence, alleged offence or incident involving a minor

- What action has been taken in response to an incident.

You must also continue to monitor the patron when they next come to the venue and report any further relevant warning signs or incidents.

Interactions with distressed or suicidal patrons can be a highly stressful experience for everyone involved. It may also impact the wellbeing of staff. It's important for you to debrief (covered in Section 4) all staff involved to help them process the interaction and feel supported.

ACTIVITY 3.5
Scenario: A distressed and suicidal patron

In your group, read both parts of the following scenario and then complete both tables below.

Scenario part 1

You enter the gaming floor for a second time one night and realise that a patron called Steve that you saw there three hours earlier is still at the same machine. He looks tired and disheveled, and like he has been drinking. As you approach him, you notice that he is quietly crying, and shaking very slightly.

How would you

… show concern?

… move somewhere more private to talk with the patron?

… actively listen to the patron?

… validate the patron's feelings?

… offer the patron help, and describe the available support?

… provide support suitable to the patron's situation?

… debrief and support all staff members who were involved?

Scenario part 2

You've now had quite a long talk with Steve (the distressed patron) in the privacy of your office. He has told you that he has been feeling extremely low since his divorce and losing custody of his children. In fact, he's told you that is strongly considering taking his own life when he gets home, because he doesn't see much point in being around anymore without his family.

He's also said that playing the pokies over the past month or so has given him some distraction from these thoughts, but that it never lasts for very long.

How would you

... stay with the patron and reassure him?

... call 000 for an ambulance?

... debrief and support all staff members who were involved?

Module 3.3
Concerned family members
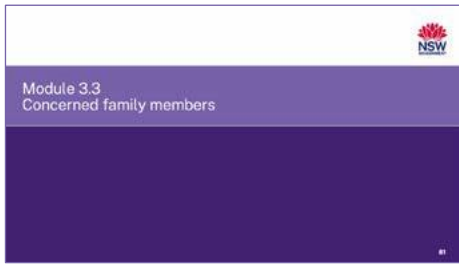
MODULE 3.3
Concerned family members

This module explains how to apply the RAAR framework to manage high-intensity situations involving concerned family members.
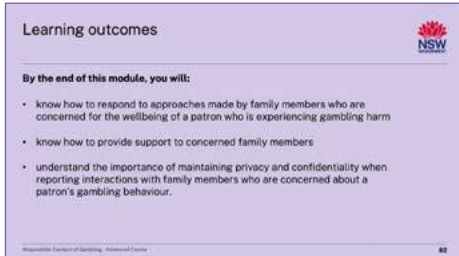
Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:

- know how to respond to approaches made by family members who are concerned for the wellbeing of a patron who is experiencing gambling harm
- know how to provide support to concerned family members
- understand the importance of maintaining privacy and confidentiality when reporting interactions with family members who are concerned about a patron's gambling behaviour.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:
- know how to respond to approaches made by family members who are concerned for the wellbeing of a patron who is experiencing gambling harm
- know how to provide support to concerned family members
- understand the importance of maintaining privacy and confidentiality when reporting interactions with family members who are concerned about a patron's gambling behaviour.

Interacting with concerned family members

- A family member of a patron might approach you with concern that the patron is having problems with gambling, and that the family is having trouble persuading them to reduce their gambling.
- Other staff members might also refer concerned family members to you.

Interacting with concerned family members

There might be times when a family member of a patron (such as the patron's spouse, partner, parent or other relative) comes to your venue and approaches you to express their concern that the patron is gambling for too long, and that they are having difficulty in persuading them to reduce their gambling.

Other staff at your venue might also refer these situations to you, so it is important that know how to respond appropriately.

Activity 3.6 Interacting with a concerned family member

Can you think of a real-life example where you or other staff were approached by a patron's concerned family member?

How did you or the other staff respond to the family member?

Was the interaction successful? Why, or why not?
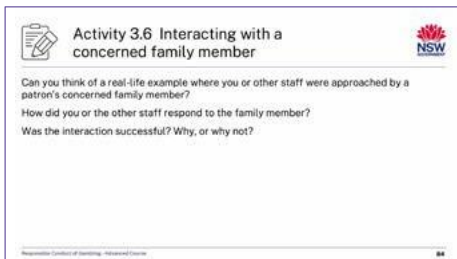
ACTIVITY 3.6
Interacting with concerned family members

Can you think of a real-life example where you or other staff were approached by a patron's concerned family member? What did you or the other staff do in response?

Was the interaction successful? Why, or why not?
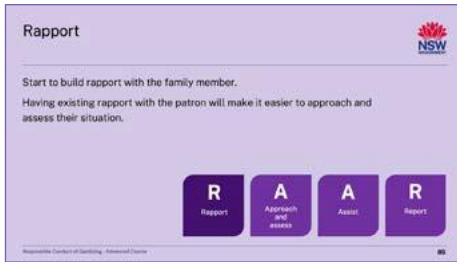
Applying the RAAR framework to concerned family members

Rapport

As you may not know the family member, it is important to start building rapport with them now.

Having an existing rapport with the patron will make it easier to approach and assess their situation if their family member has concerns about it.

Approaching and assessing

Invite the family member to talk with you in a more private space, where your conversation will not be heard by other patrons or staff.

Use active listening and validation to understand the family member's concerns. You might say, for example, "I can see that the situation is really concerning you, and I can understand that. So that I can offer the right kind of help, can you tell me more about the concerns that have brought you here today?"

Make sure you write down the following information, so that you fully understand the situation and can offer the right support and also report the conversation appropriately afterwards.
- date and time of your conversation with the family member
- the patron's name: "What is the name of the person you are concerned about?"
- the family member's name, and their relationship to the patron
- (e.g. spouse, partner, parent, other relative): "And may I ask your name? And how do you know [name of patron]?"
- the family member's contact details: "Can I please have your best contact number, so that I can follow up with you and keep you updated on the issue?"
- the type and extent of the patron's gambling: "And what exactly does [name of patron] gamble on at the venue?" "How many days a week do they gamble here? And for how long, roughly, each time?" "And how much money would you say they spend gambling per week?" "How long has this been going on for?"
- the gambling harm experienced by the patron and/or their family member(s): "Can you tell me a little bit about how [name of patron]'s gambling has been affecting you?"

An important thing for you to keep in mind as you listen to the family member's concerns is that, while in most cases the concerns raised by a family member are valid, in some cases they may in fact be 'vexatious', which means that the family member has made them up just to cause trouble for the patron, for some reason of their own.

Assisting

Once the family member has explained their concerns to you, and you have checked with them that you've understood them correctly, reassure the family member that the venue takes their concerns seriously, and that you will follow up on the matter immediately and provide whatever support you can.

Outline to them your venue's process for investigating and evaluating their concern, and the possible outcomes. These will differ between venues, so check with management first to make sure you are familiar with the process at your venue.

Explain to the family member your responsibilities regarding the privacy and confidentiality of both the family member and the patron. Explain that you are limited in what information you can share about the patron, including any personal information and any information about their behaviour at the venue. Also explain that you will respect the family member's privacy and confidentiality. They might even tell you that they wish to remain anonymous, for example to avoid the patron being angry with them for discussing the issue with you. In some cases, there might also be a risk of domestic violence, so make sure you take your privacy and confidentiality responsibilities seriously.

Research has shown that family members of people who are at risk of gambling harm can themselves experience significant emotional distress that affects their quality of life. Therefore, it is important for you to check in with the family member about their own wellbeing. Explain to them that it's important for them to have help themselves, and that counselling can be a very helpful way of processing the difficult experiences and feelings that often come with having a family member who is at risk of gambling harm.

Explain that GambleAware provides support to family members and close friends of people who gamble, as well as to people who gamble themselves. If appropriate, support the family member to connect with GambleAware and/or with other free counselling, legal and/or financial support services. Some of these are listed in the box below, and you'll find more listed in Appendix 4 at the back of this Participant Workbook.

Support for family members

GambleAware provides information, resources, and support for family members of people who are experiencing gambling harm including free therapeutic and financial counselling: www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au

Relationships Australia offers counselling and other support with issues including relationships, family conflict and domestic violence: www.relationshipsnsw.org.au

Legal Aid can help with legal issues: www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

For more information about available support services, see Appendix 4 at the back of this Participant Workbook.

Reporting and monitoring

You must report the details of any interaction with a concerned family member in your venue's gambling incident register.

Make sure you record:

- Requests for the venue to intervene with a patron, made by a family member of a patron (however no personal details of family members are allowed to be recorded)
- What action has been taken in response to the interaction with a concerned family member.

Check the gambling incident register for any previous reports about the patron showing warning signs that they are experiencing gambling harm. If there have been previous reports about the patron showing warning signs, this might provide evidence to confirm the family member's concerns, and support venue staff and management in any decisions made with regards to a patron's wellbeing.

If there have not been any previous reports about the patron in the gambling incident register, monitor the patron whenever they are at the venue, and report any relevant warning signs or incidents.

Interactions with concerned family members can be just as stressful as interactions with angry or distressed patrons and can impact the wellbeing of staff. It's important for you to debrief (covered in Section 4) with all staff involved to help them process the interaction and feel supported.

ACTIVITY 3.7
Scenario: A concerned family member

In your group, read the following scenario and then complete the table below.

One morning while you are at work you receive a call from the reception desk. The receptionist on duty tells you that there is a woman there asking to see you, and that she seems very anxious and distressed. You ask the receptionist for more details, and they tell you that the woman has mentioned that her husband's gambling at the venue is totally out of control and is sending their family broke, and that she wants to have him banned from the venue immediately. You head to the reception desk to speak with the woman.

Activity 3.7 Scenario – Responding to a concerned family member

In groups of three, read the scenario and complete the table in your Participant Workbook.

Then we'll discuss some of your answers.

How would you?

... show concern to the family member?

... move somewhere private to talk with the family member?

... actively listen to the family member?

... validate the family member's feelings?

... provide suitable support to the family member?

... debrief and support all staff members who were involved?

Section 4

Leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation

4

SECTION 4
Leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation

This section focuses on your responsibility as a hotel or club staff member working on the floor and in senior management at a venue to develop a safe and responsible gambling environment and to lead and support a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation. It also explains how debriefing, feedback and 'feedforward' can improve staff performance and support staff wellbeing.
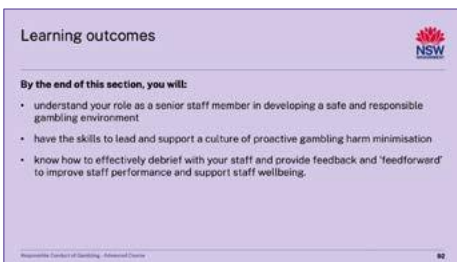
Learning outcomes

By the end of this section, you will:
- understand your role in developing a safe and responsible gambling environment
- have the skills to lead and support a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation
- know how to effectively debrief with your staff and provide feedback and 'feedforward' to improve staff performance and support their wellbeing.
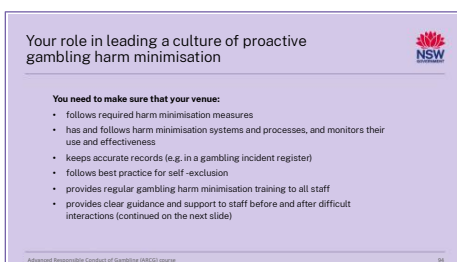
Your role in leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation

You have a responsibility to lead and support a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation.

Remember that being 'proactive' means taking action to create a particular situation, rather than just waiting for things to happen and then responding afterwards. You are responsible for creating a culture where action is taken to minimise gambling harm, rather than just responding to issues when they arise.

You do this by:
- making sure your venue is following all harm minimisation measures required by law (such as showing the required signage, following the shut-down times, and not offering inducements to patrons)
- making sure your venue has harm minimisation systems and processes in place, and that these are followed by all staff and management at the venue

- monitoring the appropriate use and effectiveness of your venue's harm minimisation systems and processes
- keeping accurate records of all gambling-related incidents (such as in your venue's gambling incident register)
- following the best-practice procedures for self-exclusion
- making sure your venue provides regular gambling harm minimisation training to all staff, as well as to all new staff when they join your venue
- providing clear guidance and support to staff before and after any difficult interactions with patrons
- encouraging staff to look out for and respond appropriately to any warning signs of gambling harm
- modelling appropriate proactive interactions with patrons, including establishing rapport, approaching in a friendly manner to check on wellbeing, providing appropriate support, and reporting and monitoring of warning signs
- providing guidance and support to new and junior staff on how to effectively identify and respond to patrons showing warning signs, including what to do if a patron is very angry or distressed
- making it clear to all staff that patron wellbeing is of the highest importance, and reminding staff to always follow up on patrons' concerns, requests and needs
- acknowledging and giving recognition to staff who show strong commitment to gambling harm minimisation, such as by mentioning them positively in staff newsletters or at staff meetings
- giving feedback to new or junior staff on any actions they have taken and the outcomes of a reported incident.

Gaming Plan of Management

A Gaming Plan of Management (GPOM) is a framework for patrons and venue staff to understand a venue's responsible conduct of gambling obligations. It provides guidance to staff on how to meet these obligations and how to respond to gaming-related situations.

All hotels and clubs with Gaming Machine Entitlements (GMEs) are required to create and maintain a GPOM, and all staff involved with the conduct of gaming at a venue must be trained in the GPOM and their RCG responsibilities.

The minimum requirements for the GPOM are outlined in amendments to the Gaming Machines Regulation 2019.

The GPOM must outline how the licensee will implement and manage the following legislative requirements:
- Venue gambling signage and information
- Player assistance, including information about self-exclusion and counselling
- Prevention of minors using gaming machines
- How prizes will be paid and how cheques will be cashed
- Player reward/account schemes including provision of activity statements
- RCG certification and refresher training for venue staff
- Responsible Gambling Officers (RGOs)

- Gambling incident registers
- A premises plan including the location of the gaming room gaming machines and cash dispensing facilities (ATM and CRT)

The GPOM must:

- include the date, clear headings, page numbers and paragraphs numbers

    include the contact details of local Licensing Police

- include responsibilities and procedures for maintaining and updating the GPOM
- always available at the venue
- be easily accessible and provided to staff
- be immediately produced for inspection upon request by NSW Police or L&GNSW inspectors
- be reviewed and updated annually and when changes are required to reflect emerging risks and legislative changes

As a senior staff member focused on leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation, it is important that you proactively lead a culture of complying with the GPOM.

To find out more about the Gaming Plan of Management, visit the L&GNSW website.

ACTIVITY 4.1
Good leadership at a venue

Think of a manager or supervisor you have had at a venue who was a good leader.

Question 1: What leadership qualities did they show?

Question 2: How did they create a responsible and safe gambling environment for patrons and staff?

Activity 4.2
Supporting your staff

Question 1: Do you think your staff currently feel supported to discuss how they feel after a difficult situation at work? Why, or why not?

Question 2: How can you make your staff feel more supported in this way?

Things to remember

As a hotel or club staff member working on the floor and in senior management in a venue, your role includes guiding and supporting other staff to build respectful relationships with patrons and to look out for their wellbeing.

You are also responsible for managing difficult situations between patrons and staff, and making sure that issues are resolved peacefully.

Debriefing, feedback and 'feedforward' are three important strategies that you can use to develop a culture of support and improvement at your venue, in which staff develop their skills to manage difficult situations more effectively. We will discuss these strategies in the following two modules.

MODULE 4.1
Debriefing

This module explains why debriefing is an important strategy in supporting the wellbeing of staff who have been involved in a high intensity situation and looks at how to do it effectively with your staff.
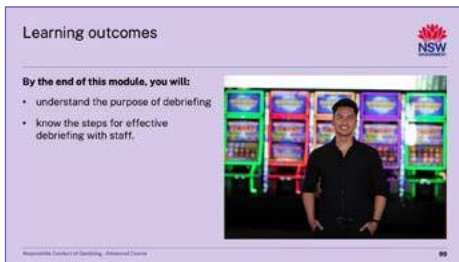
Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:
· understand the purpose of debriefing
· know the steps for effective debriefing with staff.
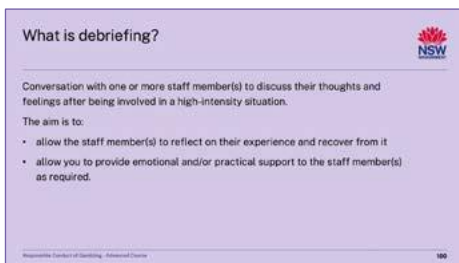
What is debriefing?

'Debriefing' means having a conversation with one or more staff member(s) after they have responded to or observed a high-intensity situation, to give them an opportunity to discuss the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours they experienced during the situation.

The purpose of debriefing is:
· to give the staff member(s) an opportunity to reflect on and process their experience, which might have been quite distressing for them, and recover and move on from it in a healthy way
· to give you an opportunity to provide emotional and/or practical support to the staff member(s) as required.

Remember that high-intensity situations are stressful for everyone involved, and can negatively affect the wellbeing of staff. Debriefing is a way to help staff process how they are thinking and feeling about the situation, to provide support, and to build good team communication.
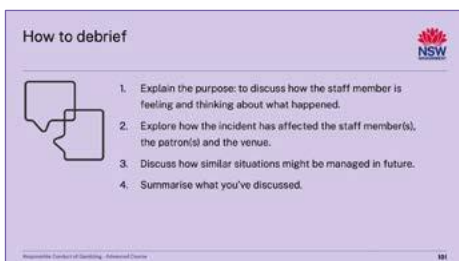
How to debrief effectively

Debriefing effectively involves four steps.

1. Explain to the staff member(s) that the purpose of debriefing is to discuss how they are feeling and thinking about what happened, and ask them to share this with you
· Use open, non-judgmental questions to understand what might have caused the incident, and actively listen to what the staff member(s) tells you.
· Allow the staff member(s) to share their reasons for responding the way they did during the incident.

2. Explore how the incident has affected the staff member(s), the patron(s) and the venue

- Understand that each staff member's experience might be different, including how they felt at the time, how they acted, what they did or didn't do, and how they feel about it now.
- Show your concern for their wellbeing and validate their thoughts and feelings about the experience.
- Understand that it might have been a difficult situation at the time, and it might be difficult now for staff to discuss.

3. Discuss how similar situations might be managed in future

- Explore any systems or procedures that could be put in place or improved to help staff better manage such a situation in future.
- Explore any supports or resources that could be put in place to help manage the physical and/or emotional effects on staff from future incidents.

4. Summarise

- At the end of the debriefing session, summarise the key points that have been discussed.
- Reassure the staff member(s) that you want to support them and make sure they feel safe at work.
- Confirm that they have strategies or resources in place to use if they are ever in a similar situation again.
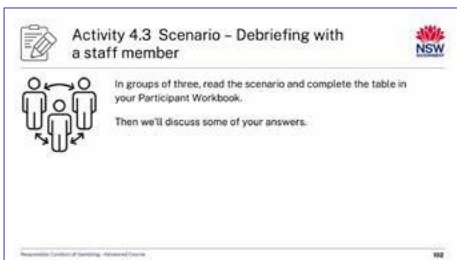

Activity 4.3 Scenario – Debriefing with a staff member

In groups of three, read the scenario and complete the table in your Participant Workbook.

Then we'll discuss some of your answers.

ACTIVITY 4.3
Scenario: Debriefing with a staff member

In your group, read the following scenario and then complete the table below.

Scenario

Matteo, a new staff member, is called to do drink service at one of the gaming machines. The patron he is serving becomes very annoyed, saying that he had to wait too long before anyone came to serve him. The patron also says that the other staff are avoiding him. Matteo apologises to the patron that he had to wait and goes to the bar to get the patron's drink. It is very busy at the bar, and it takes longer than usual to get the drink, but Matteo returns to the patron with the drink as quickly as possible.

The patron looks angry, and shouts at Matteo, "I've had to wait so bloody long for my drink that I've run out of money for the machine! This is what you can do with your drink," and he throws the drink towards Matteo and storms out. Matteo comes to your office, very distressed.

Activity 4.3 Scenario – Debriefing with a staff member

In groups of three, read the scenario and complete the table in your Participant Workbook.

Then we'll discuss some of your answers.

Scenario: Debriefing with a staff member

How would you debrief with Matteo?

1. Explain the purpose of briefing

2. Explore how the incident has affected the staff member(s), the patron(s) and the venue

3. Discuss how similar situations might be managed in future

4. Summarise

MODULE 4.2
Feedback and 'feedforward'

This module explains the role of feedback in acknowledging staff members' existing strengths and areas for improvement. It also introduces 'feedforward', which allows staff to be proactive and well prepared for high- intensity situations when they arise.
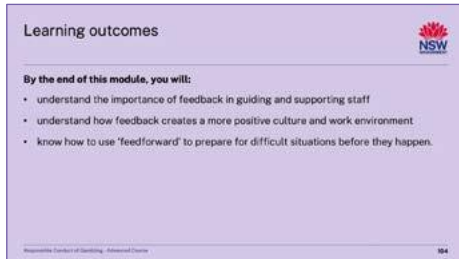
Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:
- understand the importance of feedback in guiding and supporting staff
- understand how feedback creates a more positive culture and work environment
- know how to use 'feedforward' to prepare for difficult situations before they happen.
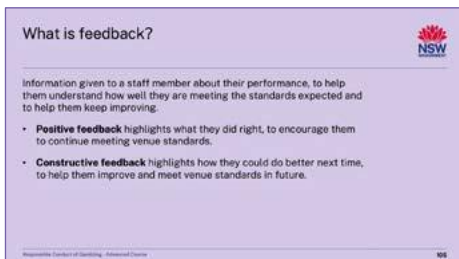
What is feedback?

Feedback is information given to a staff member about their behaviour or their performance or their response to a particular situation to help them understand how well they are meeting the standards expected of venue staff and to help them to keep improving.

Feedback can be either positive or constructive.
- **Positive feedback** highlights what the staff member did right, to encourage them to continue meeting venue standards.
- **Constructive feedback** highlights how the staff member could do better next time, to help them improve and meet venue standards in future
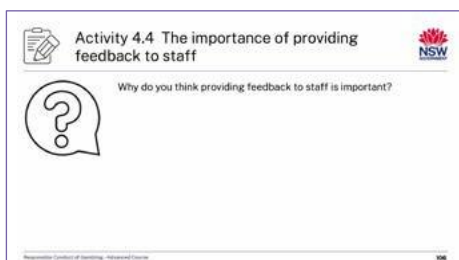
ACTIVITY 4.4
The importance of providing feedback to staff

Why do you think providing feedback to staff is important?

The importance of providing feedback to staff

Providing feedback to staff is a very important part of being a manager or senior staff member, because it:

- allows staff to learn, change and improve
- provides clear expectations of staff roles and responsibilities
- encourages staff to follow all venue protocols and codes of practice
- reinforces good staff behaviour
- provides an opportunity to show appreciation for staff performance
- supports staff and builds team communication
- increases staff confidence in their work
- improves staff job satisfaction
- helps to create a positive venue culture and a positive work environment.

How to provide feedback effectively

The way feedback is provided to staff is important, as this can affect staff wellbeing and workplace culture.

Feedback should be provided as soon after the incident as possible, when staff still remember what they said and did during the incident and can learn from the feedback given. However, sometimes it is better to wait for the people involved to 'cool off' and allow them time to think about what they want to say, so that the feedback is given calmly and not emotionally.

Always provide feedback in an appropriate, private setting, such as your office, or somewhere else where other staff and patrons can't hear. This is particularly important when giving difficult constructive feedback which might upset a staff member.

Constructive feedback should never be critical or judgmental. Its purpose is to show staff that they are being supported and that they are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and keep improving.
Providing feedback effectively involves the following six steps.

1. Explain the purpose of the feedback

Explain to the staff member what you will be giving them feedback about, and why it is important. This will help to keep your feedback focused on the relevant issue(s).

For positive feedback, you might say:
- "I'd like to talk to you about the good work you're doing at our venue."
- "I want my staff to know that their good work is valued."

For constructive feedback, you might say:
- "I'd like to talk to you about an interaction you had with a patron recently."
- "I'd like to talk to you about a complaint I've received from a patron."

2. Be clear and specific about the behaviour you have observed

Use positive feedback to acknowledge that a staff member has acted or responded in ways that meet the expected standards of the venue:
- "I think you're doing really well at ..."
- "I wanted to let you know that I really value ..."

Use constructive feedback to clearly identify any gaps between the staff member's actions and the expected standards of the venue:
- "I've noticed that you ..."
- "The expectation at this venue is that ..."

When providing constructive feedback, show concern so that the staff member understands that you care for the wellbeing of everyone involved:
- "I feel sorry that you've been involved in this incident ..."
- "I know it can be upsetting to have to have a conversation about this, but it's important to talk through how we respond to ..."

Keep the focus on the staff member's observed behaviour, not on their personality or character:
- "I noticed that you walked away from that patron quite abruptly."

3. Explain the effects and the consequences of the staff member's behaviour

For positive feedback:
- "Your actions are really contributing to a safe and responsible gambling environment."

For constructive feedback:
- "When that patron was explaining that they were annoyed about their losses and you just walked away, it made them feel upset."

4. Give the staff member an opportunity to respond

If they don't respond voluntarily, ask an open question that encourages a response, such as:
"What happened?", "What are your thoughts about this?"
Invite them to explain their behaviour and share the reasons for their actions if they want to.

5. For constructive feedback, explain clearly how the staff member can improve

Provide practical examples of the unwanted behaviour and how it could be improved:
- "I saw you doing ... Let's think about some other ways we can handle a difficult interaction like that."
- "Instead of walking away from the patron, you could try asking them if they would like to speak to the manager on duty."

Focus more on behaviours that are wanted than on behaviours that are not wanted.

6. Summarise

For constructive feedback, highlight the main things the staff member could do differently.

· "We've talked about … and we've also talked about how you could handle that kind of situation differently …"

Try to end on a positive note, so that the staff member feels confident about their ability to improve their behaviour.

· "Thanks for being so honest about what happened. Remember that you can always ask me for help if you're unsure of how to handle something."

ACTIVITY 4.5
Scenario: Providing feedback to a staff member

One of your staff members, Julian, has developed rapport and a good relationship with a patron, Rose, over the years. Often when Julian isn't working, Rose will ask the other staff how he's doing.

Over the past few weeks, Julian has made a few casual comments to other staff about how Rose doesn't quite seem herself, and he seems to avoid her during his shifts.

You decide to ask Julian if everything is okay with Rose, and he reveals that the last time he spoke with her, she actually started crying, and Julian was unsure what to say to help her. Now he finds it easier to just avoid her.

How would you give feedback to Julian?

1. Explain the purpose of the feedback

2. Be clear and specific about the behaviour you've observed

Activity 4.5 Providing feedback to
a staff member

In groups of three, read the scenario and complete the table in
your Participant Workbook.

Then we'll discuss some of your answers.

Responsible Conduct of Gambling - Advanced Course   115

Scenario: Providing feedback to a staff member

One of your staff members, Julian, has developed rapport and a good relationship with a patron, Rose, over the years. Often when Julian isn't working, Rose will ask the other staff how he's doing.

Over the past few weeks, Julian has made a few casual comments to other staff about how Rose doesn't quite seem herself, and he seems to avoid her during his shifts.

You decide to ask Julian if everything is okay with Rose, and he reveals that the last time he spoke with her, she actually started crying, and Julian was unsure what to say to help her. Now he finds it easier to just avoid her.

How would you give feedback to Julian?

3. Explain the effects and consequences of the staff member's behaviour

4. Give the staff member an opportunity to respond

5. For constructive feedback, explain clearly how the staff member can improve

6. Summarise

What is 'feedforward'?

'Feedforward' is like feedback, but it is proactive, so it is provided before an expected or potential event.

Feedforward is information given to a staff member that clearly outlines their role, responsibilities and expected behaviours before a potential incident. It allows staff to plan how to manage difficult situations before they happen.

Like feedback, the purpose of feedforward is to help staff understand how to meet the standards expected of them, and to help them to keep improving.

Feedforward can be provided as a regular part of staff meetings and briefings. It supports staff and builds team communication.

The importance of providing feedforward to staff

Providing feedforward to staff is a very important part of creating a safe and responsible gambling environment, because it makes clear to staff in advance that noticing any warning signs of gambling harm and responding proactively is an important part of their job.

Reminder: Warning signs of at-risk gambling behaviour

Remember that a 'warning sign of at-risk gambling behaviour' is any behaviour that suggests that someone might be experiencing some level of gambling harm.

There are three main categories of warning signs, which reflect how likely it is that the person might be experiencing gambling harm:

- **General** warning signs should raise some concern that the person might possibly be experiencing gambling harm.
- **Probable** warning signs should raise more concern because they suggest that the person is more likely to be experiencing gambling harm.
- **Strong** warning signs should raise even more concern because they suggest that the person is very likely to be experiencing gambling harm.

To remind yourself of the list of warning signs and how to respond to them, see Appendix 3 at the back of this Participant Workbook.

Make sure you regularly remind your staff of the warning signs and the appropriate way to respond to them. Providing feedforward is an effective way to do this.

How to provide feedforward to support junior staff

You should regularly provide feedforward to support junior staff to effectively identify and report warning signs. You can do this through:

- handovers that include mentioning any concerns about patrons currently at the venue
- regular in-house training (as well as inductions for new staff) about warning signs, how to notice them, how to respond to them, and how to use the venue's gambling incident register
- staff meetings that include reviewing recent reports in the gambling incident register, providing updates on any actions taken in relation to patrons showing warning signs, and checking staff knowledge of warning signs and how to respond to them
- communicating the same information to casual staff who may not attend staff meetings
- displaying information about warning signs in staff rooms
- making sure your venue's gambling incident register is easy for staff to find and use
- regularly approaching staff during their shifts to ask for updates about any identified warning signs.

Section 5

Responsible conduct of gambling in practice

SECTION 5
Responsible conduct of gambling in practice

This is the final section of the course. It gives us an opportunity to look back at the main points that we've covered today and allows you to apply what you've learned by role-playing some scenarios. It also gives you an opportunity to ask any questions you might have.
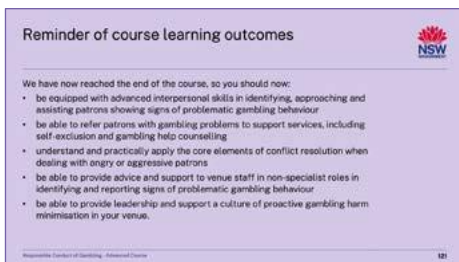
Reminder of course learning outcomes

We have now reached the end of the course, so you should now:

- be equipped with advanced interpersonal skills in identifying, approaching, and assisting patrons showing signs that they are at risk of gambling harm or experiencing gambling harm
- be able to refer patrons with at-risk of gambling harm to support services, including self-exclusion and gambling help counselling
- understand and practically apply the core elements of conflict resolution when dealing with angry or aggressive patrons
- be able to provide advice and support to venue staff in non-specialist roles in identifying and reporting signs of gambling harm
- be able to provide leadership and support a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation in your venue.

Reminder of what we've covered today

Section 1: Introduction

Overview of your role in the venue:

- Promote and maintain a responsible and safe gambling environment
- Manage and de-escalate situations involving angry or distressed patrons
- Provide clear guidance to staff in maintaining patron wellbeing
- Provide support to staff managing difficult situations

Section 2: Anticipating and preventing high-intensity situations

- The 'conflict cycle' and 'stages of change' models, and how these can guide interactions with patrons
- Active listening to understand and assess risk
- Validation to show patrons understanding and empathy
- Self-exclusion

Section 3: Managing high-intensity situations

Using the RAAR framework:

- Know how to successfully manage and de-escalate situations involving angry and potentially aggressive patrons
- Know how to manage and de-escalate situations involving distressed and potentially suicidal patrons
- Know how to how to manage approaches made by family members

Section 4: Leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation

- How to show leadership by promoting proactive gambling harm minimisation
- Debriefing with one or more staff members to review their performance responding to a high-intensity situation
- Feedback as an opportunity for senior staff to provide information to staff members about their response to a situation and how they are doing in relation to expectations
- Feedforward that clearly outlines the roles, responsibilities, expectations, and boundaries of staff (what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour), given before a potential incident

ACTIVITY 5.1
Role play: Putting it all together

The purpose of this final activity is to allow you to practise putting together all the practical skills you've learned today.

In groups of three, you'll be doing a role-play activity.

Taking turns, each member of your group should choose a different scenario from the ones provided below (Scenario A, B, C or D) and play the role of the senior staff member, while the other two members of your group play the patron and an observer.

When it's your turn to play the senior staff member, see Appendix 1 at the back of this Participant Workbook for all the key steps we've outlined today to follow when interacting with an angry or distressed patron or a concerned family member, and when debriefing or providing feedback or feedforward to staff.

Activity 5.1 Role play – Putting it all
together

In groups of three, you'll do a role-play activity.
- Taking turns, each member should choose a different scenario (Scenario A, B, C or D) and play the role of senior staff member, while the other two members play the patron and an observer.
- When playing the staff member, see Appendix 1 at the back of your Participant Workbook for all the key steps we've outlined today.
- As observer, give feedback to the person playing the senior staff member.
- The purpose is to practise the skills you've learned today.

Role play: Putting it all together

As an observer, give feedback to the person playing the senior staff member. What did you notice about their interaction? What went well? How could they improve?

Remember that the purpose of this exercise is to practise the skills you have learned today in this course.

Scenario A

Rebecca is a regular patron at your venue. You have observed her several times being abusive to other patrons after she has drunk several cocktails. You have also seen her become verbally abusive and aggressive and try to hit staff when she has been asked to lower her voice or stop her unacceptable behaviour.

Today, you notice that she is loudly telling another patron to 'butt out' and mind his own business. The other patron is playing on Rebecca's favourite machine, and Rebecca starts kicking the machine and acting increasingly agitated.

How do you respond?

Name of participant playing senior staff member

Name of participant playing patron

Name of participant playing observer

Feedback from participant playing observer

Scenario B

John, a patron in his fifties, has been playing the machines for three hours without a break. You have seen him at the ATM three times during this period. As you walk past him, you notice that he is staring into space, not really paying attention to his play.

There are tears in his eyes, and he looks distressed. You ask him if everything is okay, and he responds slowly, saying that he doesn't think he can go on. He tells you that he has been fired from his job and has just lost all his termination pay on the machine.

How do you respond?

Name of participant playing senior staff member

Name of participant playing patron

Name of participant playing observer

Feedback from participant playing observer

Scenario C

Bill is a regular and well-liked patron at your venue. One day Bill's wife, Jill, approaches you at work and asks for your help. Jill tells you that Bill has been unwell recently, and that during this time he has been coming to the venue more often and losing a lot of money.

You have also noticed that Bill has recently been attending the venue more often, just as Jill says. Jill says that Bill's medication is causing him to lose his self-control, and so she wants you to exclude him from the venue for his own wellbeing.

How do you respond?

Name of participant playing senior staff member

Name of participant playing patron

Name of participant playing observer

Feedback from participant playing observer

Scenario D

You notice an unfamiliar visitor to the venue sitting quietly at the end of a bank of machines. He has been playing for around two hours, and he has had two schooners of beer that you are aware of.

As you walk past, you notice him muttering under his breath that the machine is not paying out. Although you can't hear exactly what he is saying, you can make out a few swear words, and you notice that he is becoming agitated and beginning to hit the machine buttons quite hard.

How do you respond?

Name of participant playing senior staff member

Name of participant playing patron

Name of participant playing observer

Feedback from participant playing observer

Applying what you've learned

This course has been very practical. You've had opportunities to develop your interpersonal and leadership skills to proactively handle a range of difficult situations effectively.

We hope this course inspires you in your leadership role at your venue, so that you continue to develop and support a safe and responsible gambling environment and a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation.

Glossary

Glossary
terms used in this training

active listening

a particular way of listening and responding to someone so that you understand the complete message behind what they are saying

conflict cycle

a model that outlines the stages involved in the conflict process, and when and how best to respond at each stage

corporate social responsibility

the responsibility of business or other organisation for the social effects that their business activities might have, both on their own patrons and on the public; includes operating ethically, and not exploiting vulnerable members of the community

debrief

to have a conversation with one or more staff member(s) after they have responded to or observed a high- intensity situation, to give them an opportunity to discuss the thoughts, feelings and behaviours they experienced during the situation

exclusion order

an order introduced by a venue to refuse to admit, or remove from a licensed premises, any person who is intoxicated, violent, quarrelsome, or disorderly under part 5, section 77 of the *Liquor Act 2007*. Unlike self-exclusion, an exclusion order is not voluntary on the part of the patron.

As this applies only to the *Liquor Act 2007*, it does not relate to the operation of gaming machines under the *Gaming Machines Act 2001*.

feedback

information given to a staff member about their behaviour or their performance or their response to a particular situation, to help them understand how well they are meeting the standards expected of venue staff

feedforward

like feedback, but given proactively before an expected or potential event; information given to

a staff member that clearly outlines their role, responsibilities and expected behaviours, allowing them to plan how to manage difficult situations before they happen

gambling harm

difficulties or other negative consequences that result from excessive gambling and affect the wellbeing of the person and/or their loved ones

gambling incident register

a register to record incidents of gambling harm and other gambling incidents that will help RGOs and senior management to better understand issues affecting their patrons and proactively offer assistance.

gaming plan of management

a framework for venue staff to understand a venue's responsible conduct of gambling obligations. It provides guidance to staff on how to meet these obligations and how to respond to gaming-related situations.

high-intensity situation

a situation that involves showing disruptive behaviour(s), that might cause harm to other patrons and/or staff, and/or that might require immediate action

invalidation

when you ignore or judge another person's feelings, thoughts or behaviours, rather than trying to understand them

proactive

taking action to create a particular situation, rather than just waiting for things to happen and then responding afterwards

at-risk gambling behaviour

gambling behaviour that leads to gambling harm because it involves spending more money and/or time than the person can afford

responsible gambling officer

The purpose of the RGO role is to promote proactive gambling harm minimisation. Hotel and club staff working on the floor and in senior management have a shared responsibility to proactively engage with patrons and monitor for potential gambling harm

self-exclusion

a voluntary agreement in which a patron chooses to exclude (or 'ban') themselves from one or more gambling venues for a certain period; if they enter the venue during this self-exclusion period, staff must remind them of the agreement and ask them to leave

validation

acknowledgement that a person's feelings, thoughts and behaviours are understandable in their circumstances

warning sign of at-risk gambling behaviour

any behaviour that suggests that someone might be experiencing some level of gambling harm

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of skills covered in this course

Interacting with angry and/or aggressive patrons

Safety	• Safety is always the most important consideration • Make sure others are safe, by moving the patron to a quieter area or by asking other patrons to move away. • If there is an immediate risk to staff or other patrons, call security. If the risk is very serious, call the police. • If safety is not an immediate concern, introduce yourself and say you're there to help.
Rapport	• An angry patron is more likely to respond well to you if you already have existing rapport. • Having existing rapport might also help you to understand what has triggered their behaviour and how best to approach and de-escalate the situation.
Approach and assess	• Use active listening and validation to understand what contributed to the patron's behaviour and show empathy. • Keep the discussion focused on the issue at hand. • Stick to the facts, to avoid escalating the situation. • Explain clearly why the identified behaviour is unacceptable.
Assist	• Allow the patron time to calm down. • Offer the patron help and explain the available support. • Tell the patron that you will follow up on any valid complaints and let them know the outcome, if possible.
	• If the patron is being aggressive, explain that their choices are to: • resolve the issue in cooperation with you • leave the venue voluntarily • have security or police come and remove them from the venue.
Report and monitor	• Report the incident in your venue's gambling incident register. • Debrief with staff involved in the incident. • Monitor the patron in future and report any further incidents or warning signs.

Interact with distressed and/or suicidal patrons

Rapport	• It can be difficult to know when a patron is feeling distressed or suicidal. • Having existing rapport can make it easier to notice if a patron is ever acting different from normal.
Approach and assess	• Show concern for the patron. • Ask them if they would like to talk with you in a quieter space (e.g., the cafe, your office). • Use active listening and validation to understand their concerns and show empathy.
Assist	• Ask the patron if there is anything you can do to help and explain the available supports. • Explain that although you may be limited in what you can do, you are willing to help as much as possible.
	If the patron is feeling suicidal: • stay with them, and reassure them that you are there to make sure they are okay • call 000 and ask for an ambulance to come to the venue • remember that you must never physically stop a patron from leaving the venue.

Report and monitor	• Report the incident in your venue's gambling incident register. • Debrief with all staff involved in incident. • Monitor the patron in future and report any further incidents or warning signs.

Interacting with concerned family members

Rapport	• Having existing rapport with a patron will make it easier to approach and assess their situation if a family member approaches you with concerns about the patron's behaviour. • If you don't already know the family member, it is also important to start developing rapport with them.
Approach and assess	• Invite the family member to talk with you in a quieter space (e.g., the cafe, your office). • Use active listening and validation to understand the family member's concerns and show empathy. • Explain your responsibilities regarding the privacy and confidentiality of both the patron and the family member.
Assist	• Reassure the family member that you will take their concerns seriously and will provide whatever support you can. • Explain the process your venue will follow, and the possible outcomes. • Check their wellbeing and offer to help them connect with relevant support services.

Report	• Report the incident in your venue's gambling incident register.
	• Check the register for any previous reports about that patron.
	  – If there are no previous reports, monitor the patron in future and report any warning signs, as these may support the family member's concerns.
	  – If there are no previous reports, and staff do not notice any warning signs in the patron's behaviour, ask the family member for permission to discuss their concerns directly with the patron.

Leading a culture of proactive gambling harm minimisation

Debriefing	Debriefing means having a conversation with staff after a high-intensity situation, to give them an opportunity to discuss their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The purpose is: • to give staff an opportunity to reflect on, process and recover from the experience • to give you an opportunity to provide support to staff as required. **How to debrief effectively** 1. Explain that the purpose of debriefing is to discuss how they are feeling and thinking about what happened, and ask them to share this with you 2. Explore how the incident has affected them, the patron(s) and the venue 3. Discuss how similar situations might be managed in future 4. Summarise

Feedback	Feedback is information given to staff about their behaviour, performance or response to a particular situation, to help them improve. Feedback can be either positive or constructive. • Positive feedback highlights what the staff member did right. • Constructive feedback highlights how the staff member could do better next time. **How to provide feedback effectively** 1. Explain the purpose of the feedback 2. Be clear and specific about the behaviour you have observed 3. Explain the effects of the behaviour 4. Allow the staff member to respond 5. For constructive feedback, explain clearly how they can improve 6. Summarise
'Feedforward'	'Feedforward' is information given to staff *before* an expected or potential event, that clearly outlines their role, responsibilities and expected behaviours, allowing them to plan how to manage difficult situations before they happen. Providing feedforward includes regularly reminding staff how to notice and respond appropriately to the warning signs of at-risk gambling behaviour, which is behaviour that suggests that someone might be experiencing gambling harm. Appendix 3 explains the warning signs and how to respond to them. **How to provide feedforward effectively** As a senior staff member, you should regularly provide feedforward through: • handovers • in-house training and inductions for new staff • staff meetings • providing the same information to casual staff • displaying information in staff rooms • making sure your gambling incident register is easy to find and use • approaching staff during shifts to ask for updates.

Appendix 2: Proactive gambling harm minimisation measures required by law in New South Wales

Measure	Description
Restricting access to minors (people aged under 18)	• People under the age of 18 years are not allowed in gaming areas, except to pass through with a responsible adult. • The venue is responsible for any operation of gaming machines by minors. • Signage banning minors must be shown at each entrance to a gaming area. • If you think someone might be under the age of 18: – ask them to provide valid photo ID and – ask them to provide their full name and residential address.
Restricting inducements to patrons	• Staff must not offer or provide any free or discounted alcoholic drinks to people to play gaming machines. • Staff must not offer or provide any free pokies credits to people to play gaming machines.
Restricting availability of cash to patrons	• Staff may cash a maximum of one cheque per patron per day, for a maximum of $400. • Staff must not cash a cheque for a patron who has previously tried to cash a 'bad' cheque at the venue, until the patron has paid the amount owing. • A venue must not have a cash dispensing (ATM/EFTPOS) machine or facility that can provide cash from a credit card account. • Staff may only pay out winnings of up to $5,000 in cash. • Any winnings over $5,000 must be paid by cheque or bank transfer. Staff must encourage patrons to take the entire amount in cheque or bank transfer.
Displaying responsible gambling signage	• Responsible gambling posters and brochures must be made available to patrons in all gambling areas. • Contact cards with details of relevant support services must be placed in clear card holders at the end of each row of gaming machines. • Responsible gambling stickers must be shown on every gaming machine and on every ATM/EFTPOS machine.
Minimum 6-hour shutdown	• The venue must shut down its gaming machines between 4 am and 10 am each day.
Gaming Machine location	• Gaming machines must not be able to be seen or heard from outside the venue.
ATM/EFTPOS machine location	• ATMs and EFTPOS machines must be in a separate area from the gaming machines. • Cash dispensing facilities must be located outside of a 5-metre radius of any entrance to, or exit from, a gaming area in the hotel or club (effective from 1 January 2025)
Promotional prizes	• Any promotional prizes or rewards related to playing the gaming machines must not be offered in cash and must not be worth more than $1,000. (Note: This does not refer to winnings from the pokies.)
Advertising	• Advertising of gaming machines is only allowed in trade publications and for commercial activities that are not on public display or available to the public. • Advertising for gaming machines may only be provided to patrons who have consented to receive this material. • Advertising for gaming machines must not be sent to self-excluded patrons. • Advertising of inducements to gamble is not allowed. • Advertising of gaming machines is not allowed outside or inside of venues.

Appendix 3: Warning signs of at-risk gambling behaviour and how to act on them

GENERAL WARNING SIGNS		WHAT TO DO
Length of play · Starts gambling when the venue is opening, or only stops when the venue is closing Gambles most days *Behaviour during play* · Gambles on more than one machine at once · Rushes from one machine to another · Significant increase in spending pattern · Complains to staff about losing, or blames venue or machines for losing · Rituals or superstitious behaviours (rubbing or talking to machine)	*Money* · Asks to change large notes before gambling	On their own, these may be early warning signs. A patron showing several of these signs could be at risk of gambling harm. · Monitor the patron's behaviour. · If you notice a patron who is showing two or more of these signs, record what you have noticed and tell your manager.
PROBABLE WARNING SIGNS		**WHAT TO DO**
Length of play · Finds it difficult to stop gambling at closing time *Behaviour during play* · Often gambles for long periods (three or more hours) without a proper break · Plays very fast · Gambles intently without reacting to what's going on around them	*Money* · Gets cash out more than once through ATM or EFTPOS · Avoids cashier, and only uses cash facilities · Puts large wins back into the machine · EFTPOS repeatedly declined *Social behaviours* · Becomes angry or stands over others if someone takes their favourite machine/ spot	A patron showing any of these signs is much more likely to be at risk of gambling harm. · Monitor the patron's behaviour. · Record what you have noticed and tell your manager, who will speak with the patron. · If a patron shows **two or more** of these warning signs, follow the steps for **strong** warning signs (below).
STRONG WARNING SIGNS		**WHAT TO DO**
Length of play · Gambles from opening to closing *Behaviour during play* · Shows obvious signs of distress or anger (crying, holding head in hands, shaking, outburst towards staff or machine)	*Money* · Tries to borrow money from other patrons or staff *Social behaviours* · Tells staff that gambling is causing them challenges. · Significant decline in personal grooming and/or appearance over several days · Friends or family raise concerns · Tries to hide their presence at the venue (doesn't answer mobile phone, asks staff not to let others know they are there)	A patron showing **any** of these warning signs is probably at risk of gambling harm. · Monitor the patron's behaviour · Record what you have noticed, and tell your manager, who will speak with the patron, refer them to support and counselling services, offer them the opportunity to self-exclude.

Gambling support services

SUPPORT	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
Counselling	Counselling provides practical knowledge and skills to help people stop gambling and effectively manage any consequences. Free gambling, financial, relationship and legal counselling is available to people experiencing challenges with gambling and their families.	**Face-to-face counselling** **GambleAware: Support Near Me** www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support/i-need-to-talk-to-someone/is-there-support-near-me or phone 1800 858 858 **Financial Counsellors Association of NSW: Find a Counsellor** https://fcan.org.au/ or phone 1800 007 007 **Relationships Australia, NSW: Counselling Services** www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/support-services-category/counselling-services or phone 1300 364 277 **Telephone counselling** **GambleAware: Talk to Someone** www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support/i-need-to-talk-to-someone or phone 1800 858 858 **Financial Counsellors Association of NSW: Find a Counsellor** https://fcan.org.au/ or phone 1800 007 007 **Relationships Australia, NSW: Counselling Services** www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/support-services-category/counselling-services or phone 1300 364 277 **Online counselling** **GambleAware: Chat Online** www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support/i-need-to-talk-to-someone/can-i-chat-online **Financial Counsellors Association of NSW: Find a Counsellor** https://fcan.org.au/ **Relationships Australia, NSW: Online Counselling** www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/support-services/online-counselling
Mental health crisis counselling	Several organisations offer immediate support for people experiencing significant psychological distress or suicidal feelings.	**Lifeline** www.lifeline.org.au or phone 13 11 14 **Beyond Blue** www.beyondblue.org.au or phone 1300 224 636 **NSW Mental Health Line** www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/Mental-Health-Line.aspx or phone 1800 011 511 **Suicide Call Back Service** www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au or phone 1300 659 467
Self-exclusion	Self-exclusion is a voluntary agreement where a person who is experiencing challenges with gambling excludes (bans) themselves from one or more gambling venues for a period of 6 months or longer. There are many benefits to self-excluding, including reduced gambling and improved finances, relationships and quality of life. Self-exclusion works best when it is combined with face-to-face counselling (see above).	**GambleAware: Self-Exclusion** If Your Gambling Is Out Of Control Just Take A Break (nsw.gov.au) **ClubSAFE** https://clubsnsw.com.au or phone 1800 997 766 **GameCare** https://ahansw.com.au or phone 1800 997 766 **BetSafe** www.betsafe.com.au or phone 98740744 **Venue-based programs** www.liquorandgaming.nsw.gov.au/working-in-the-industry/licensees-and-approved-managers/gaming-self-exclusion www.liquorandgaming.nsw.gov.au/documents/fm/Model_Deed_Self-Exclusion_Form.pdf www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support/i-want-to-help-myself/take-a-break-and-ban-yourself

Online tools	A range of free-to-use online tools and phone apps are available to help people who are experiencing challenges with gambling, including self-help programs, online counselling, budgeting tools, chat forums, etc.	**NSW GambleAware: I Want to Help Myself** www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support/i-want-to-help-myself **Gambling Help Online** www.gamblinghelponline.org.au **100 Day Challenge** www.100dc.com.au **Gordon Moody Gambling Therapy (UK)** https://gordonmoody.org.uk/gambling-therapy **Center for Addiction and Mental Health: Gambling Help (Canada)** www.problemgambling.ca/gambling-help/HomePage.aspx
Social support	Support and understanding from family and friends goes a long way. Some people find it helpful to turn over financial control to a trusted person. There are also support groups (e.g. Gamblers Anonymous).	**GambleAware: Supporting Family & Friends** www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/supporting-someone/supporting-family-and-friends/prepare-yourself **Gamblers Anonymous** https://gaaustralia.org.au or phone 9726 6625 **Gambling Help Online: Peer Support** www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/take-a-step-forward/peer-to-peer-support
Product information	Learning about how gambling works (e.g. the 'house edge') can help patrons to think more realistically when making gambling decisions.	**GambleAware: Learn About Gambling** www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/learn-about-gambling **Gambling Help Online: What is Gambling?** www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/understanding-gambling/what-is-gambling **Online videos: How Poker Machines Work:** Get The Hard Facts On How Poker Machines Really Work (nsw.gov.au)
Spend limits	Before gambling, many patrons find it useful to set a limit on how much money they want to spend in that session. Venues that offer player accounts must allow spend limits to be set.	
Activity statements	Activity statements give patrons an accurate summary of the amount of money they've spent gambling over a particular period. This can be useful because many gamblers underestimate their losses. Venues that offer player accounts must provide patrons with activity statements on request.	
Breaks in play	A brief break in play removes patrons from the 'heat of the moment' and gives them time and space to think more calmly and rationally about their gambling decisions. Some player account systems include a break in play feature. More likely, staff will need to suggest this strategy to patrons.	