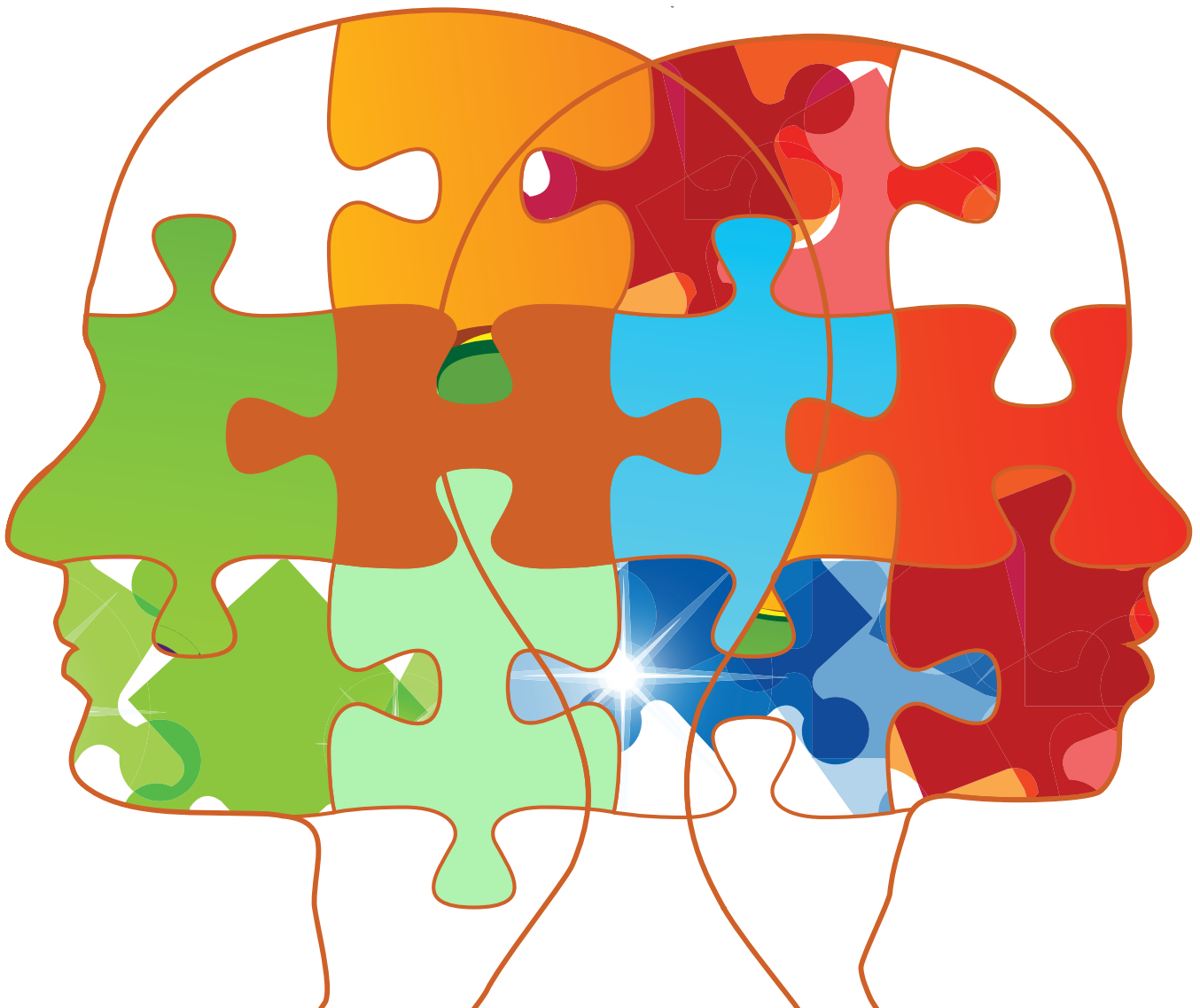


Problem Gambling

A Guide for Helping Professionals





The Gambling Impact Society NSW INC

Together we can make a difference

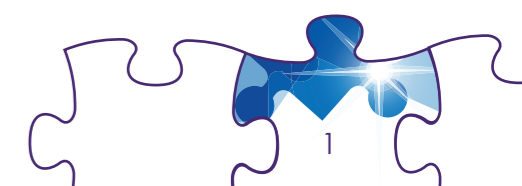
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www.gisnsw.org.au

Published May 2014
This resource has been compiled and edited by
Kate Roberts
Executive Officer
Gambling Impact Society NSW Inc

Problem Gambling

A Guide for Helping Professionals

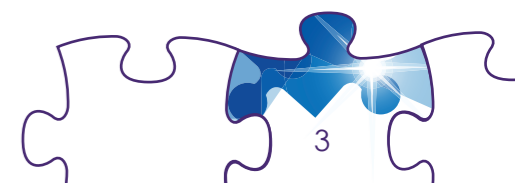




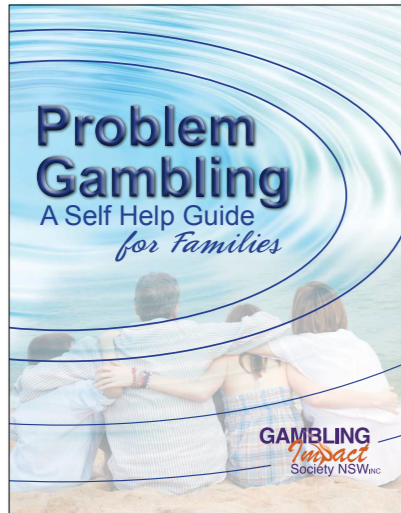
**PUTTING THE
PIECES TOGETHER**

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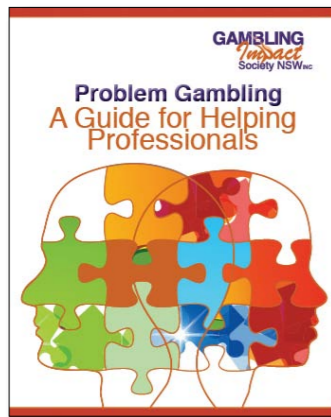
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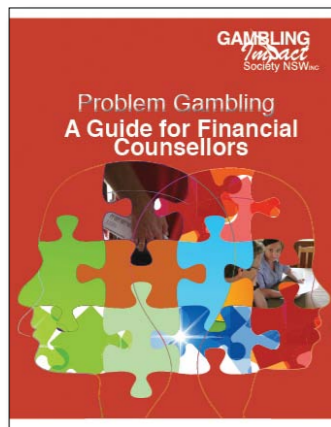
Acknowledgements



Problem Gambling: A Self Help Guide for Families



Problem Gambling:
A Guide for Helping Professionals



Problem Gambling:
A Guide for Financial Counsellors

The Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. (GIS) would like to acknowledge support from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Toronto, Ontario, Canada for making available their range of problem gambling guides as the foundation content for this GIS series. We also acknowledge support from the Victorian Department of Justice for permission to use a section of their family guide and the South Australian Government for their section on the effects on children.

We thank the Australian Government Department of Social Services, for the financial support to publish this resource.

We also thank the various members of the GIS management committee who have provided voluntary time to support the development of this book.

A special thank you goes to the many GIS members and supporters who have shared their insights into the journey of problem gambling. We have been able to incorporate some of these stories into this resource, creating a picture from the very heart of those who have directly experienced the affects of problem gambling on their lives. In many ways the most important contributors and the reason for this educational resource.

Guides in This Series

Problem Gambling: A Self Help Guide for Families

Problem Gambling:
A Guide for Helping Professionals

Problem Gambling:
A Guide for Financial Counsellors

About the Gambling Impact Society (NSW)

The Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. is a health promotion charity established in July 2000.

The Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc., (GIS, as we call ourselves), was established by a group of community members, health and welfare professionals, who came together in the Shoalhaven to address the needs of those affected by problem gambling. Many of those who formed the initial working group back in the late 1990's, and who became (and remain) founding management committee members, are people who have personally been impacted by this problem. As an organisation we bring the lived experience of problem gambling to this work. This is a "consumer" or "peer" perspective and like many self-help organisations we see our main aim to assist those who have also walked this path. In doing so we also aim to support the services who work with those affected. In addition, we provide a range of community educational opportunities to the general public so as to increase awareness about problem gambling in the community and reduce the "barriers to help" for those who are affected.

The field of problem gambling is in many ways similar to tobacco and alcohol in that it relates to the use of legal, government and community sanctioned products known to cause harm. The GIS recognises that the responsibility to address gambling harm lies not only with the individual, but with families, the community, the gambling industry, our governments and the product designers. Similar to tobacco and alcohol we accept the notion of gambling products (and electronic gaming machines "pokies" in particular) as products with the potential for "dangerous consumption".

The 2010 Productivity Commission's Report into Gambling identified the need for more information for helping professionals. This guide complements the range of educational resources produced by the GIS.

The GIS regards problem gambling as a significant, though often hidden, public health issue. We promote a whole of population based public health approach to address the multi-dimensional aspects of problem gambling. This includes prevention, protection and health promotion, along with treatment and after care.

**Together we can
make a difference**



Introduction

This guide is for people who work in the “helping professions,” including addiction specialists, General Practitioners (GPs), social and health care providers, community and welfare service providers, workers in the legal and criminal justice system, pastoral care workers and employee assistance program counsellors.

Many people who come to you may be struggling with serious financial, emotional, health and relationship problems related to problem gambling. It is also likely that they will not tell you about these problems - unless you ask.

This guide has been developed to:

- increase your knowledge of problem gambling, and your understanding of its impact on those who gamble and their families
- give you the information and tools you need to identify and support people with gambling problems
- give you strategies to explore concerns about gambling and to prompt clients to take appropriate action
- increase your knowledge of community supports and services that are available to people with gambling problems.

How you can help

- **Make it routine practice to talk about gambling with every person seeking your assistance**
- **Establish a rapport that invites disclosure and motivates change**
- **Be alert to the signs and indicators of problem gambling**
- **Make information on problem gambling available and link people to specialised services**
- **Explore clients’ concerns and provide accurate information about problem gambling counselling, emphasising the benefits of counselling**
- **Help clients develop workable budgets and manage their debts in ways that relieve financial pressure**
- **This reduces an important gambling trigger**
- **Help clients and their families protect their remaining assets from further gambling losses.**

1 | WHAT IS GAMBLING?

Historically gambling has been part of many societies over the centuries. In Australia it is often promoted as a form of recreation or entertainment. However, all gambling involves some level of risk and therefore potential harm. The advent of new technology such as computer programs, digital media and the internet has meant gambling products have become more sophisticated, often faster to play and less easily understood than more traditional forms of gambling. This can increase risks for those who gamble and increase the potential for harm. Understanding the risks associated with different types of gambling products along with knowing how they work, odds of winning versus the chances of losing and setting limits can help some people make informed choices. However many people find it hard to maintain their limits if they gamble regularly.

Gambling

A person is gambling when they risk something of value (money or belongings) on an outcome (winning or losing) which is decided mostly by chance.

There are many different types of gambling activities including:

- casino games
- bingo
- Keno
- Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), known to many Australians as pokies
- lottery tickets
- scratch tickets
- betting on card games, mah-jong or dominoes
- betting on horse racing
- other sports betting
- betting on games of skill, such as golf or pool
- tombola and similar games
- internet gambling
- stock market speculation

A Snapshot of Gambling in Australia

- 70% of Australians participated in some form of gambling in the last year
- Average expenditure per person who has gambled is \$1,500 p.a.
- \$19 billion was spent nationally on gambling
- \$12 billion was spent nationally on EGMs
- Australia has 198,300 EGMs, with the highest number in NSW (97,065) and lowest in Western Australia (1,750)
- Annual revenue per EGM \$59,700 p.a.
- Average revenue per venue is \$2.1million p.a.
- Annual gaming machine losses per EGM player averaged around \$3,700 in NSW, \$3,100 in Victoria and \$1800 in Queensland
- Hotels derived 28% of their revenues from gambling, Clubs 62% and Casinos 78%
- The gambling revenue for big clubs often exceeds 80%. The biggest 12 clubs in NSW had gaming machine revenue of \$580 million in 2007
- State tax revenue from gambling was \$5 billion (or 10% of all tax revenue) with Victoria having the highest tax dependence (13%) and Western Australia the lowest (4%)
- 70-75% of surveyed adults don't use EGMs in any given year.

Productivity Commission Report 2010 (pp. 6-7) – data relates to 2008-9 unless otherwise stated.

Figure 1 A multifaceted industry

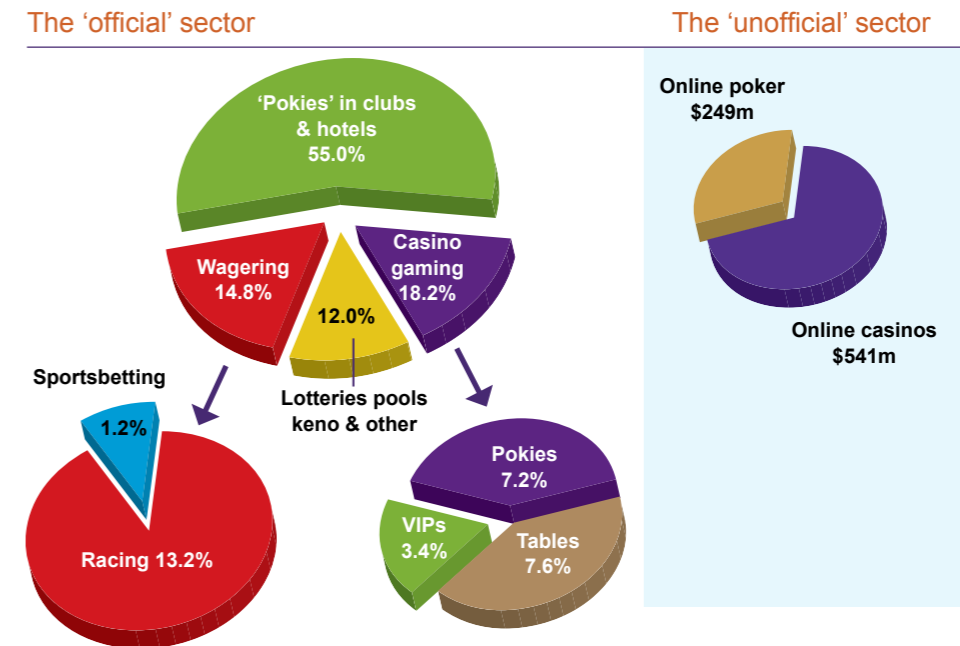


Figure 2 Share of gambling revenue by activity

| | 1986-87 | 2008-09 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|
| wagering | 36% | 15% |
| lotteries | 26% | 12% |
| cassinos | 9% | 18% |
| EGMs in pubs & clubs | 29% | 55% |

Data source: Australian Gaming Statistics: 25th Edition, Commission estimates.

Table 1 Gambling taxation revenue by state and territory, 2008-09

| State | Tax revenue | Average gambling tax revenue per adult | Tax revenue as proportion of total own-state tax revenue ^a |
|--------------------|-------------|--|---|
| | \$m | \$ | % |
| New South Wales | 1 610 | 297 | 9 |
| Victoria | 1 625 | 391 | 13 |
| Queensland | 931 | 283 | 11 |
| South Australia | 393 | 312 | 11 |
| Western Australia | 237 | 141 | 4 |
| Tasmania | 92 | 241 | 10 |
| Northern Territory | 74 | 460 | 12 |
| ACT | 52 | 191 | 5 |
| All states | 5 014 | 302 | 10 |

^a Total state tax revenue does not include local government tax revenue or goods and services tax (GST) revenue.

Sources: State and territory budget papers; ABS (Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2009, Cat. no. 3201.0)

2 | WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Problem Gambling

Problem gambling is not just about the loss of money, but how it can affect the person's whole life. Gambling is a problem when it:

- interferes with work, school or other activities
- leads to emotional or physical health problems
- causes financial problems
- harms the family or other relationships

You may have heard the following terms, which have also been used to describe problem gambling:

- gambling addiction
- compulsive gambling
- pathological gambling
- gambling disorder

A snapshot of problem gambling in Australia

- There are estimated to be 115,000 problem gamblers and 280,000 'moderate risk' gamblers
- The risks of problem gambling increase significantly with the frequency of gambling on Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs)
- The average annual loss for EGM problem gamblers is \$21,000
- For those who gamble weekly or more on gaming machines, around 15% are problem gamblers with an additional 15% at 'moderate risk'
- EGMs account for around 75 - 80% of 'problem gamblers' and are found to pose significant problems for consumers in general
- 5 -10 others are negatively impacted by problem gambling, including families, friends and employers
- 80% of those seeking treatment have problems with EGMs
- 1 in 4 people in treatment have marriage problems as a result of problem gambling
- 60% of those in counselling have been suicidal
- 400 reported suicides per annum are attributed to problem gambling (PC Report 1999)
- there are major impacts on child and family health.

Problem Gambling in Australia

The definition of what constitutes a gambling problem has been the source of much academic and community debate in Australia.

Gambling Research Australia (GRA) defines problem gambling as: "Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting time/money spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community".

Gambling and public health

In 2007 the New South Wales Population Health survey (NSW Health, 2008, P.42) found among adults who gambled in the last 12 months:

- 4.8% always or often or sometimes bet more than they could afford to lose
- 4.4% felt they might have a gambling problem
- In addition, the survey enquired as to perceptions of gambling within the family
- 10.4% of adults indicated they had experienced a problem gambler in their immediate family.

These are significant figures, yet according to Roberts (2011) by comparison to other health disorders, there are minimal health promotion, community education, early intervention or treatment services for those affected.

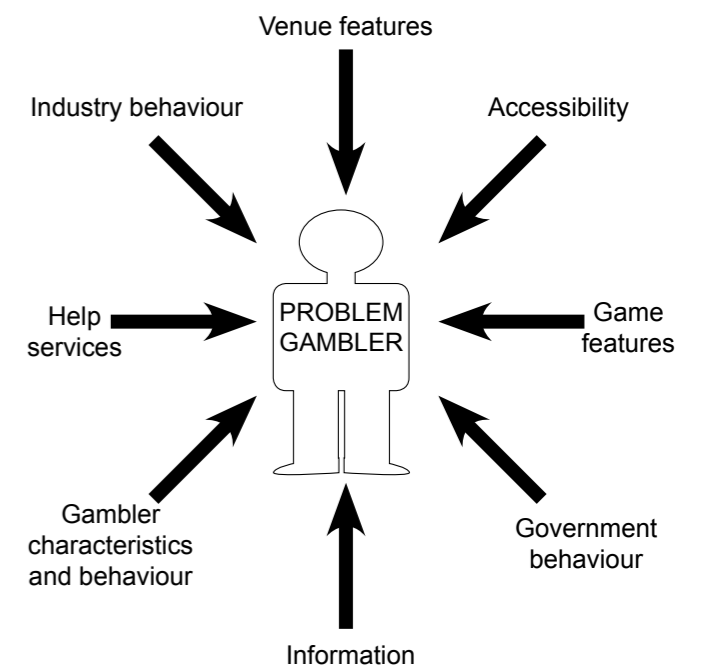
There is little doubt that the expansion of gaming machines in Australia has been linked with significant harm and as a result individuals, families and communities are suffering substantial negative consequences.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that like other public health issues there are a number of causal links at the individual, environmental and product level (Productivity Commission Reports, 1999 Vol.1, p.27, and 2010, Vol. 1, p.21).

Public health approaches including health promotion, have been widely adopted in responding to other population health issues such as drug, alcohol and tobacco use, as well as more traditionally, infectious diseases. More recently several international researchers have identified this approach as having likely benefits for gambling and its social health problems (Korn & Shaffer, 1999; Shaffer & Korn, 2002; Korn, Gibbons, & Azmeier, 2003; Messerlain et al, 2004; Roberts & Townsend, 2009).

A public health approach to problem gambling promotes a social science based understanding of the interaction of human behaviour and social determinants. This approach maintains that individual behaviours and outcomes derive from a range of social, cultural, political, institutional and environmental factors. The 1999 Productivity Commission Inquiry suggests problem gambling may be located within an epidemiological framework linking effects to causes (see figure 3).

Figure 3 Epidemiological framework for problem gambling



According to the South Australian Council and Social Service (2008):

"The key benefit of utilising a public health model is its focus on prevention and early intervention rather than simply treating people in the most severe cases and has the potential to address problem gambling at the grass roots level. (SACOSS 2008).

Problem gambling is not just an individual behavioural issue, it is a social, health, environmental, consumer protection and product safety issue.

Gambling Harm Minimisation

The recent Productivity Commission Report (2010) specifically recommends a consumer protection and public health approach to gambling and problem gambling. It recommends a series of national reforms to address both community information, support to those affected and technological changes to gaming machines (EGMs).

The report also made some specific recommendations with regard to technical changes to EGMs and ATMs in gambling venues with a view to increasing consumer protection.

For further details on these and other recommendations refer to the Productivity Commission Report 2010 (pp. 47 – 66).
<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/gambling-2009>

While different in each jurisdiction, state and territory governments have introduced and continue to develop a range of harm minimisation measures. These include pre-commitment technologies on EGMs, limits on, or banning of ATM's in gaming venues and self-exclusion programs. For an overview of harm minimisation measures in state or territory in Australia refer to *A National Snapshot of Harm Minimisation Strategies*:

www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/communities-and-vulnerable-people/publications-articles/a-national-snapshot-of-harm-minimisation-strategies.

It is commonplace to represent prevalence estimates as shares of the adult population, but these figures can be highly misleading. Currently adult prevalence rates are 0.7% and 1.7% of the adult population for problem and moderate risk gambling respectively. That looks small - and indeed some segments of the industry have suggested that consequently the social policy significance of such problems is also small. However, to put these figures in context, only around 0.15% of the population are admitted to hospital each year for traffic accidents and around 0.2% of the population are estimated to have used heroin in the preceding year. Small population prevalence rates do not mean small problems for society. (Productivity Commission Report 2010, p.11)

It is important to remember that any form of gambling can become a problem.

The risks associated with playing gaming machines are higher than other gambling forms. They account for the biggest single slice of overall gambling expenditure in Australia - 62% of the total, compared with 15% for wagering and 7% for table games. (Productivity Commission Report 2010, p.13)

Regular gaming machine players (those playing at least once a week) are estimated to spend on average around \$7000-8000 per annum, a sizeable share of household incomes, and a key source of harm to some. (Productivity Commission Report 2010, p.13)

EGMs are the dominant source of gambling revenue. This is despite the fact that most Australians do not play them at all. (Specifically, 70-75% of adults surveyed indicated that they do not use them in any given year). (Productivity Commission Report 2010, p.7)



Why do some people have gambling problems?

Gambling is heavily advertised and over time has become culturally acceptable in our communities. Opportunities to gamble are everywhere.

The expansion in gambling computer technology has created many new forms of gambling and more complex gambling activities. As a result it is complicated for people to fully understand the real risks involved.

Gambling in Australia is promoted as a leisure activity and “harmless” entertainment. Some people can gamble without having problems. They see gambling as just entertainment or a way to spend time with friends. They hope to win, but don’t expect to win, and usually limit their expenditure by setting a budget for gambling and limiting their time on the activity. Most people who develop gambling problems start out this way.

People who have developed problems often identify other reasons that contributed to their gambling, including:

- hoping for a big win
- trying to win back lost money
- the excitement of taking risks
- impulsivity (acting without thinking)
- trying to feel better about themselves
- loneliness
- escaping from life’s problems
- relieving physical and emotional pain
- coping with depression and anxiety

As the majority of people are unaware of the signs of gambling becoming a problem, many people develop gambling problems without realising what is happening.

Some kinds of gambling cause more difficulty than others. In particular, electronic gaming machines (EGMs) have been associated with increased risks of gambling harm (Productivity Commission, 1999 & 2010). The 2010 Productivity Commission’s Report also states that, “the evidence from counselling agencies shows that around 80 per cent of presentations relates to problem with gaming machines” (p.5.26). It has been suggested that EGMs are particularly addictive due to their continuous play features, frequent small wins, the chance of bigger wins and what seem to be frequent near-misses. Environmental features such as low light in venues, enthusiastic noise of the machines and bright lights all add to the experience and distract from “real time”.

Recent research (Dixon et al 2010) has demonstrated that machines are designed to celebrate losses as a win e.g. celebration sounds and lights play when winning \$1 after spending \$2. This is called “losses disguised as wins”. These sorts of features along with “free spins”, linked jackpots and speed-of-play are some of the features of EGM design which encourage loss of control when gambling.

The way EGMs operate it is often “normal” to lose some level of control. Dickerson (2003) has shown that for those gambling on EGMs (once a week or more) - 44% will experience impaired control. There have been strong recommendations that EGM gamblers should be encouraged to make decisions about the amount of time and money to be risked, away from the machine.

Gambling problems occur along a continuum

Gambling problems can range from mild to severe. Whilst many Australians gamble occasionally for social reasons, those who gamble regularly (once a week or more) are at a higher risk of developing a gambling problem. Gambling regularly on EGMs (pokies) has significant risks for problem gambling.

Gambling Continuum

Figure 4 Gambling Continuum



These are not discrete categories but possible points along a range of involvement.

- **No gambling:** Some people never gamble.
- **Casual social gambling:** Most people gamble casually, buying the occasional raffle or lottery ticket or occasionally visiting a casino for entertainment.
- **Serious social gambling:** These people play regularly. It is their main form of entertainment, but it does not come before family and work.
- **Harmful involvement:** These people are experiencing difficulties in their personal, work and social relationships.
- **Pathological gambling (revised to Gambling Disorder, refer to page 20):** For a small but significant number of people, gambling seriously harms all aspects of their lives. People with gambling problems this severe are unable to control the urge to gamble, despite the harm it causes. These people are more likely to use gambling to escape from problems and to get relief from anxiety.

Gambling Continuum Source:

www.problemgambling.ca/gambling-help/gambling-information/risk-factors.aspx

Identifying a gambling problem

At an individual and family level identifying a gambling problem is often difficult. People who gamble problematically may hold deep seated feelings of shame and fear of rejection by those closest to them and society in general (Carroll et al, 2013). Problem gambling is not well understood in the community and unlike other addictions there appears to be more stigma associated with it than other forms of addiction. These factors combine to create considerable barriers to help-seeking and explain why some people tend to deny the problem until the impacts are severe.

Findings from Carroll et al (2013) *Stigma and Help-seeking for Gambling Problems* illustrate the extent to which those affected by problem gambling experience shame:

“feelings of shame were a common reason for not seeking help for gambling problems, even amongst people with gambling problems who had sought help for other potentially shameful problem such as alcohol or other drug addictions. In fact, gambling problems were viewed by many people with gambling problems and problem gambling counsellors as being more shameful than alcohol and other drug addictions” (p.7).

Additional findings indicated that these feelings are often reinforced by “gamble responsibly” messages and promotions which:

“promoted the notion that responsible gambling is within individual control while ignoring the innate risks of using gambling products” (p.8).

The report went on to state:

Gambling is widely promoted and encouraged despite being a potentially dangerous activity, and the “gamble responsibly” message may contribute to stigma because it puts the onus on individuals to control their behaviour” (p.8).

However, the development of some gambling specific support services along with increasing community awareness means that early identification is becoming more possible. It is important that helping professionals familiarise themselves with gambling disorders and understand how to help clients self-identify a problem and/or consider including questions about gambling in their routine assessments.

Problem gambling is defined as a “behavioural disorder” involving gambling activity which causes social, relationship and financial difficulties (refer to DSM-5 definition page 20). It can be hard for a person to recognise when gambling is becoming a problem in their lives. Some methods to help self-identify the problem include the Gamblers Anonymous (GA) twenty questions quiz (refer GA website) and the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). The South Oaks Gambling Screen is also often used by counsellors. These questionnaires endeavour to assess the extent of gambling activity, the affects on relationships, the nature of the activity (whether hidden or open) and the extent of borrowing and financial commitment to the activity.

For further information about problem gambling screening and assessment refer to the *Guideline for Screening and Assessment and Treatment in Problem Gambling* (Monash University, 2011).

People with moderate to severe gambling problems can experience serious social, emotional, financial and health consequences including:

- significant financial loss
- work-related difficulties including lower productivity, higher absenteeism and job loss
- higher rates of emotional or health problems including depression, anxiety and problems with alcohol or other drugs
- higher rates of suicide
- higher rates of marital and family breakdown
- engaging in illegal activities to support their gambling.

Important points to remember:

Not all people who gamble excessively are alike, nor are the problems they face.

People with gambling problems are found in all age groups, income groups, cultures and jobs.

Some people develop gambling problems suddenly, others over many years.

There are many reasons a person may develop a gambling problem. For example, some people develop problems when they try to win back money they have lost “chasing”, or because they like the excitement of gambling - to be “in the action”. Others have life stresses that make gambling a welcome relief - a way of escaping and buying time away from their concerns. People who gamble problematically often talk about being “in the zone” - a place where they experience a loss of time and their focused attention is a distraction from their worries.

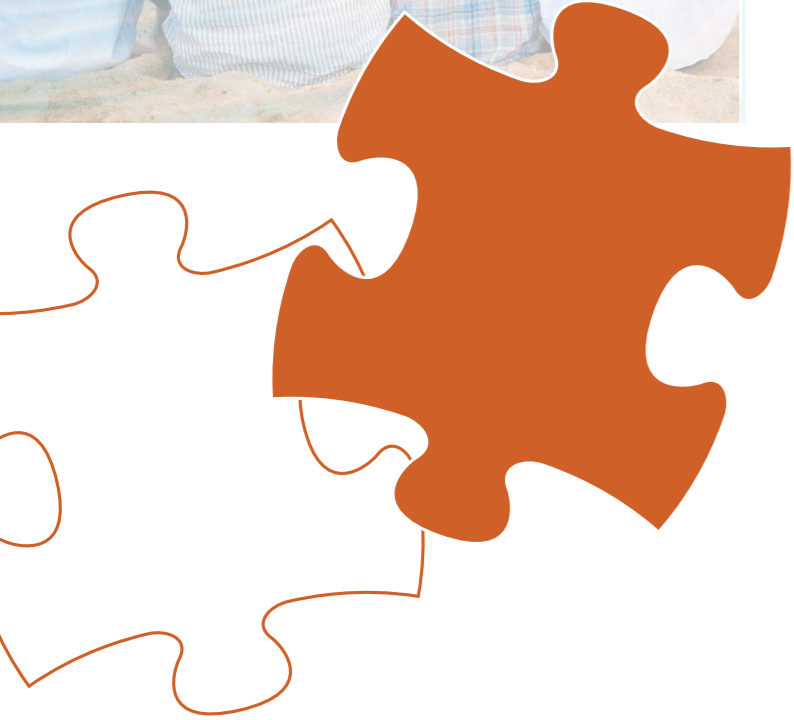
Models for Understanding



In addition to the public health model there are a number of treatment models which attempt to provide a causal explanation or theoretical understanding of why individuals develop a gambling problem. These models include:

- addiction model
- learning / behavioural model
- cognitive model
- escape model
- pathways model

The following information provides an overview of some of these models. For additional information about these models www.psych.usyd.edu.au/gambling_treatment_clinic/resources/Models_of_Problem%20Gambling.pdf



The Cycle of Problem Gambling

The cycle of problem gambling (see figure 5) identifies the pattern of activity often present in someone who may have developed a problem with gambling.

The diagram is often used to help summarise a person's own experience of gambling and can be used as a tool in a therapeutic interview, helping the individual identify behaviour and triggers to that behaviour. Family members have also found it a helpful model to help them understand the problem gambling experience.

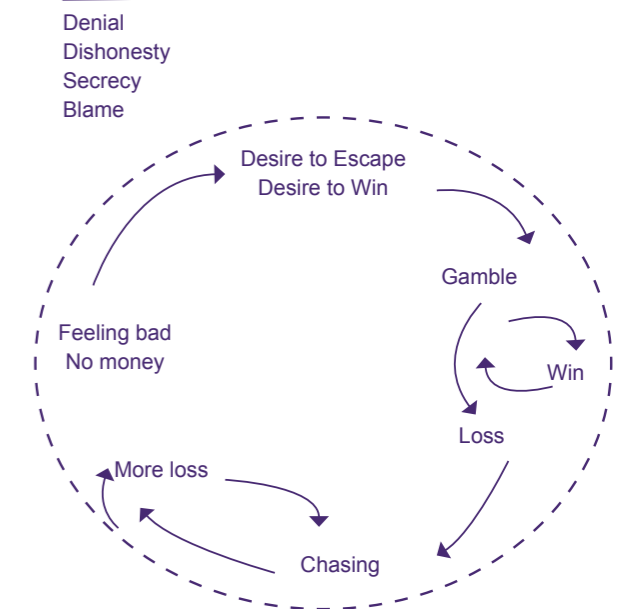
The desire to escape may be caused by stress, loneliness, boredom, depression or a range of emotionally painful states. Gambling is often an effective mood changing behaviour which can help people cope with painful feelings. However, the activity itself can go on to cause further painful feelings and this is where the cycle begins. For some, the desire to win may be the point of establishing and maintaining gambling behaviour. Winning itself is often not the main driving force. Those gambling problematically will often tell you that "being in action" is the sustaining force that keeps them gambling.

Some of the main difficulties are experienced within the destructive inner-cycle of chasing. This is where the gambler attempts to recover losses in the same way he/she created them - continuing to gamble. Such behaviour often leads to further losses because the longer one gambles the more likely one is to lose. This leads to further emotional pain and financial crisis. When people become entrenched in

this cycle they become more committed to the process and increasingly; denial, dishonesty, secrecy and blame are used to defend and maintain their gambling. Many people (with support) have found that by identifying this pattern they are able to observe their behaviour and start taking actions to break the cycle. This is not easy, and as anyone involved with this health issue will tell you, it can be very frustrating when those less informed ask "well, why can't you just stop?"

Most importantly, each gambling problem is specific to an individual and their family, what may work for one person may not work for another. Counselling, gambling programs and self-help groups have all been shown to help but - **people need options and programs tailored to their needs.**

Figure 5: The Cycle of Problem Gambling



Adapted from Mitchell Brown (former counsellor at Wesley Gambling Counselling Service, Sydney)

Pathological Gambling revised as a Behavioural Addiction

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association provides a common language and standard criteria for the classification of mental disorders. Its latest revision (DSM-5) published in May 2013 includes “gambling disorder” as the sole condition in a new category on behavioural addictions. The previous DSM-IV listed “pathological gambling” as an “Impulse-Control disorder”.

This new term “gambling disorder” and its location in the new manual reflect research findings that gambling disorder is similar to substance-related disorders in clinical expression, brain origin, co-morbidity, physiology, and treatment.

As stated in the American Psychiatric Association’s fact sheet:

Recognition of these commonalities will help people with gambling disorder get the treatment and services they need, and others may better understand the challenges that individuals face in overcoming this disorder.

For further information about these models refer to this weblink. www.dsm5.org/Documents/Substance%20Use%20Disorder%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria: Gambling Disorder

A. Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behaviour leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

1. Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement
2. Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
3. Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
4. Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble)
5. Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed)
6. After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing” one’s losses)
7. Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling
8. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling
9. Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria: Cont..

B. The gambling behaviour is not better explained by a manic episode.

Specify if:

Episodic: Meeting diagnostic criteria at more than one time point, with symptoms subsiding between periods of gambling disorder for at least several months.

Persistent: Experiencing continuous symptoms, to meet diagnostic criteria for multiple years.

Specify if:

In early remission: After full criteria for gambling disorder were previously met, none of the criteria for gambling disorder have been met for at least 3 months but for less than 12 months.

In sustained remission: After full criteria for gambling disorder were previously met, none of the criteria for gambling disorder have been met during a period of 12 months or longer.

Specify current severity:

Mild: 4–5 criteria met.

Moderate: 6–7 criteria met.

Severe: 8–9 criteria met.

From the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* (section 312.31).

www.problemgambling.ca/EN/ResourcesForProfessionals/Pages/DSM5CriteriaGamblingDisorder.aspx

Changes from DSM-IV to DSM-5:

1. Change the name from Pathological Gambling to Gambling Disorder
2. Reclassifies the disorder from Impulse-Control Disorders Not Elsewhere Classified to Substance-Related Disorders which have been renamed Addiction and Related Disorders
3. Eliminates the criterion, “has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling”
4. Lower threshold for diagnosis from five to four criteria
5. Specifies a time period; symptoms must be present during a 12 month time period

For further information on these changes refer to this weblink. www.ncrg.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/white_papers/ncrg_wpdsm5_may2013.pdf

Pathways into Problem Gambling

The Pathways Model was developed by Professor Alex Blaszczynski, University of Sydney, to describe an integrated approach to understanding the entry ways into problem gambling (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002).

The model was developed on the assumption that pathological gamblers could be subtyped according to their underlying motivation for gambling. Counsellors have found this model to be helpful to inform their responses to the various subgroups of gamblers.

This approach takes into account the fact that not everyone who develops a gambling problem exhibits DSM criteria, nor do they necessarily have an underlying or contributing pathology. According to this Pathways Model people with gambling problems fall into three main groupings:

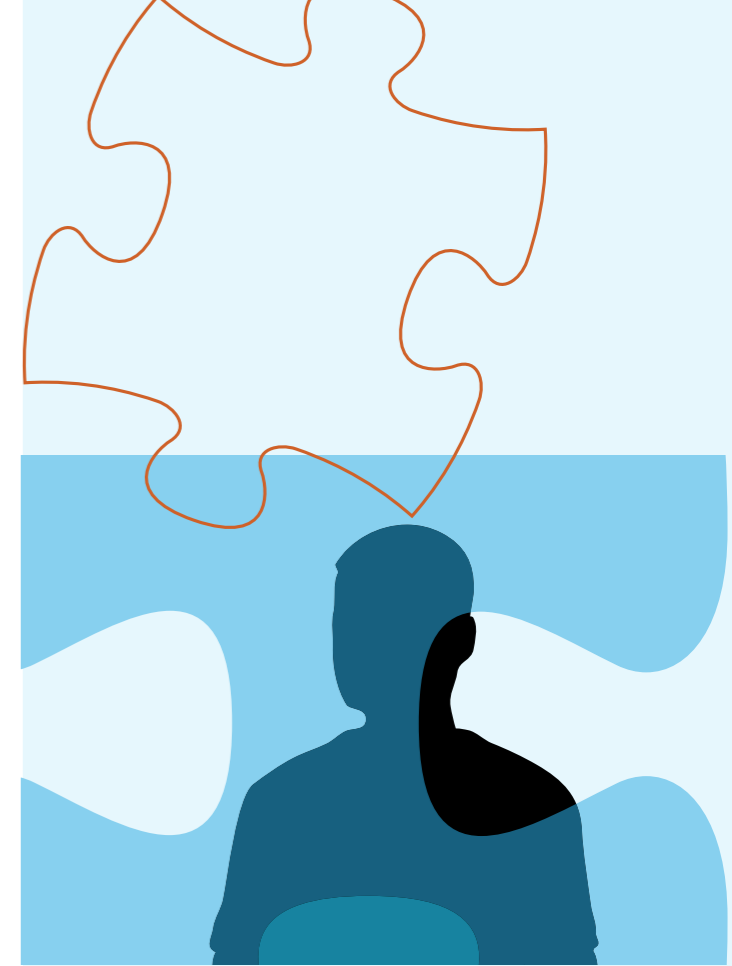
1. **“Behaviourally conditioned”** gamblers are people whose entry into problem gambling is linked to environment and learning. It may have stemmed from an early win or cognitive distortions about true odds and probabilities. The gambler does not necessarily have pre-existing psychological problems.
2. **“Emotionally vulnerable”** gamblers are people whose entry into problem gambling results from their difficulty in managing stress or crisis in their lives. They use gambling as an emotional mask and a way of avoiding underlying issues and current stresses.
3. **“Biologically based”** gamblers are people who have impulse disorders, such as ADHD, and are the most challenging in terms of treatment success. Gambling can also trigger other binge behaviours and, according to Blaszczynski, these people should receive counselling to deal with impulse control and should also explore antidepressant and other medication options with a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Individual Risk factors

There are risk factors that can contribute to the development of gambling problems or make it more difficult to stop. People are more at risk if they:

- have an early big win (leading to false expectations of future wins)
- have easy access to their preferred form of gambling
- hold mistaken beliefs about the odds of winning
- do not take steps to monitor gambling wins and losses
- have had a recent loss or change, such as divorce, job loss, retirement or death of a loved one
- often feel bored or lonely, or have a history of risk-taking or impulsive behaviour
- have financial problems
- have few interests or hobbies, or feel their lives lack direction
- have a history of mental health problems, particularly depression and anxiety
- have been abused or traumatised
- have a parent who also has (or has had) problems with gambling
- have (or have had) problems with alcohol or other drugs, gambling or overspending
- tie their self-esteem to gambling wins or losses.

The more factors that apply, the more likely a person is to develop a gambling problem.



Most importantly, each gambling problem is specific to an individual and their family, what may work for one person may not work for another. Counselling, gambling programs and self-help groups have all been shown to help but - **people need options and programs tailored to their needs.**

Risk Groups

Research into gambling problems suggests that some groups may be more at risk of developing problems or may experience greater harm because of their gambling behaviour.

Identifying that a young person has been gambling could also flag that there may be other serious problems in their life.

(Phillips, 2013-Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, p.2)

Children and Youth

For some young people starting to gamble at pubs and clubs is perceived as a “right of passage “ into adulthood. But as seen in the study below, many have commenced gambling activities well before the legal age for gambling in venues.

Findings from the first national study of gambling among young people in Australia (Purdie et al 2011) reveal:

- The majority (77%) of 10–24 year olds have participated in some kind of gambling activity at least once in the past year. There were some differences according to age, with 76% of 10–14 year olds, 64% of 15–17 year olds, and 85% of 18–24 year olds having gambled at least once in the previous year.
- Of those who said they had gambled at least once in the previous year, 56% were classified as social gamblers, 16% as at-risk gamblers and 5% as problem gamblers. Males were more likely to be at-risk or problem gamblers than females, with 5.7% of males being problem gamblers compared to 3.2% of females, and 19.1% of males classified as at-risk gamblers compared to 13.9% of females.
- Overall, 64% of young people indicated that they had used poker machines, 62% played casino games other than cards and 59% played card games in a casino. Importantly, not all of these people were over 18 years old – 5% of 10–14 year olds reported that they had played card games in a casino and 7.6% other games in a casino.
- The study found that positive attitudes to gambling and low self-esteem were identified as two factors associated with problem gambling.

www.acer.edu.au/enews/2011/12/study-finds-gambling-prevalent-among-young-australians

Children with parents who are problem gamblers are up to 10 times more likely to develop gambling problems themselves than children with non gambling parents (The Problem Gambling Treatment and Research Centre, Monash University, *Children at risk of developing problem gambling*, May 2010).

The changes in the gambling environment have greatly increased young people’s exposure to gambling promotion and opportunities for gambling. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation -*Youth and Gambling* discussion paper (Phillips, 2013, pp. 2-3) suggests:

- The majority of young Australians gamble at some point before they come of age. In any year between 60 and 80% of teenagers will have gambled in some way
- Young people usually do not gamble frequently but a significant percentage, between 5 and 10% likely do
- Most gambling by young people is on more benign (though still illegal) types of gambling, such as scratchies, lotto or friendly card games. However, around one in five are participating in gambling such as sports betting, racing or even pokies
- Parents and peer networks are important factors in whether young people play, what they play, how they play and how often they play
- Young people are more likely to gamble in a harmful manner, surveys indicate between 2.4 and 5% have a problem. This is a much higher rate than adults
- Gambling by young people appears to have strong links to other risk-taking and harmful behaviours and attitudes
- Because gambling is illegal young people may have even more trouble seeking help
- There has been a radical change in the gambling environment that has impacted on messages and experiences of gambling being placed before young people.

- The new environment can invite dangerous behaviour now and in the future, in terms of both opportunities for harm and in misconceptions about how gambling works
- Parents, educators and regulators need help to come to grips with the new environment.

For more information on Youth Gambling refer to kidbet.com.au/research-resources.

Some studies have found young people at particularly high risk of problem gambling. The 2006 NSW prevalence survey found young men 18-24 as the highest risk group (ACNielson 2007).

Gambling problems in young people can lead to a multitude of harms including deep depression, missing school or dropping out, undermined friendships, family disruption and criminal behaviour.

Gambling issues for young people are also often associated with other problems. These include drug and alcohol use, unsafe sex, eating disorders and violent behaviour. Identifying that a young person has been gambling could also flag that there may be other serious problems in their life.

The main message is that a young person’s engagement with gambling should not be treated with complacency. (*Gambling and young people: impacts, challenges and responses*. Discussion paper, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, October 2013).

Older adults

Older people are generally less represented in studies of problem gambling. For example Davidson and Rodgers (2011) state:

Not all previous studies have found a progressive decline over older adult ages but several have concurred that problem gambling is less prevalent in the elderly (as is often the case for gambling participation rates). (Davidson & Rodgers, 2011, P.16)

However it is also suggested that our knowledge of this age group is limited:

Although gambling frequencies and problems are more prevalent in the younger age group, gambling in the mature-age group has been on the rise. Although the image of mature gamblers playing pokies at a local club is ubiquitous in our mind, research literature on older gamblers in Australia is scarce. (Ohtsuka & Karolglidis 2001, p.2)

The steady increase in gambling opportunities and accessibility has made some gambling products particularly popular with some older people:

...there are indications older women's vulnerability to gambling problems is a large and growing problem. Indeed, for the older women whose experience informed this research, "playing the pokies" was the only form of gambling that created problems. (Kimberley, 2005, p.3)

The gambling industry has recognised older adults as an important market and has introduced special promotions, cheap transportation and low priced lunches to encourage older people to visit local gambling venues. Older people enjoy gambling and report feeling safe in the brightly lit and well supervised settings.

Statistically, older adults are less likely to gamble and are at lower risk of developing gambling problems. When gambling is a problem however, the consequences are often more severe because older people are often on fixed incomes, with less disposable income and are less able to replace lost savings. Older people who have recently lost a loved one, have health problems or who lack a strong social network or alternative work or leisure activities may be more at risk of experiencing problems if they choose to gamble.



Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

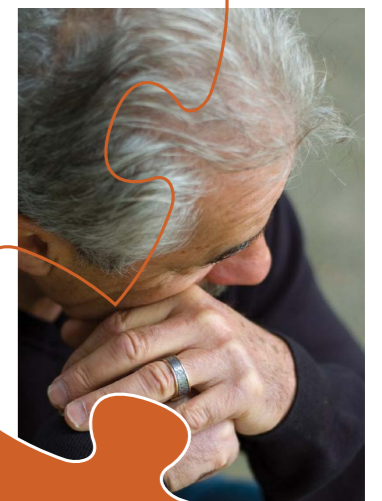
CALD communities may be at higher risk of problem gambling for the following reasons:

- stresses resulting from pre-migration, migration and settlement experiences
- social and financial stressors resulting from migration and settlement
- unemployment or under-employment
- past experiences of torture, trauma and grief
- low English proficiency
- lack of alternative recreation opportunities
- reduced access to information about gambling, problem gambling and available services
- shame and stigma associated with problem gambling
- unfamiliarity with the concept of western counselling
- concerns about confidentiality of services and interpreters.

Cultural factors shape beliefs about money and gambling; these beliefs need to be asked about, understood and factored into your relationship with the person seeking your help.

For further information refer to the Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health. www.ceh.org.au/downloads/mghp_resources/cald_prob_gamb_lit_review.pdf

The Multicultural Problem Gambling Service (MPGS) of NSW assists people with gambling problems and their families from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (in NSW). The service provides quality and accessible counselling, treatment and support. Confidential assistance is available to gamblers and their families in more than 40 languages at locations across NSW. This includes free telephone counselling, information advice and referral, one to one counselling in a preferred language, support groups and outreach clinics. MPGS is a joint initiative of the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW and Sydney West Area Health Service. Financial assistance for this service is provided by the NSW Government from the Responsible Gambling Fund. Contact 1800 856 800 or 02 9912 3850 (information and intake). For similar specialist services in your State/Territory refer to the Gambling Help websites listed on page 84 and page 85.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Some research has suggested that people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities tend to experience higher levels of problem gambling than other Australians. (NSW Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing, 2013). Surveys in Queensland and New South Wales, for example, have found that problem gambling among Aboriginal Australians is as much as 15 times greater than for the general Australian population. www.olgr.nsw.gov.au/gaming_rgf_aboriginal_communities.asp

The Aboriginal and Medical Health Research Council report - *Pressing Problems* (2007) found that gambling problems may coincide with drug and alcohol problems. The study also found that stress, anxiety, trauma, grief, depression and feelings of not belonging to the community make gambling problems more common for Aboriginal people than the non-Indigenous community.

Feelings of shame and concerns about confidentiality were also found to be significant barriers to Aboriginal people seeking help for problem gambling, especially with gamblers who have difficulties in limiting their money and time spent gambling. Consequently not many Aboriginal people seek help from gambling treatment services. A gap in the provision of Aboriginal specific services for gambling was also highlighted. For more information, this report and helpful resources refer to: www.olgr.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/Pressing_Problems_%20Part_1_of_2.pdf and www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/gambling-and-aboriginal-people



The NSW Aboriginal Gambling Help program provides culturally aware information, advice and support for Aboriginal people. Contact Waruwi Gambling Help 1800 752 948

There are a number of Aboriginal gambling specific support services in Australia. For more information about your nearest service contact Gambling Help 1800 858 858. For specialist services in your State/Territory refer to the Gambling Help websites listed on page 84 and page 85.

Low income households

Low income households are most affected by problem gambling. As stated by the Australian Council on Social Service to the Productivity Commission's review of Gambling in 2009:

Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) are often concentrated in disadvantaged areas where the communities are least able to afford the social and economic costs of problem gambling. For low income households the impacts on family relationships and wellbeing is magnified. Services often find problem gambling to be a major factor in the incidence of domestic violence in disadvantaged households where the added strain of gambling losses can rapidly deteriorate relationships and lead to increases in physical abuse. (National, State and Territory Councils of Social Service (COSS) Submission to the Productivity Commission Review into Gambling in Australia April 2009).

Women

The last 15 years has seen a growth in women represented in problem gambling from approximately 10% to 46%. This growth is attributed to the changing social norms whereby women access clubs and pubs more frequently than in the past and the increased rates of women in the workforce with more disposable income. Women demonstrate preferences for club gambling where there may be child care facilities etc, and a perception of it being a safe place to go and acceptable for women socially.

Historically the prevailing view was that gambling was predominantly a male activity. However, the increased expansion of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in Australia since the 1990's has led to an increasing feminisation of gambling with some studies indicating a significantly altered picture. For example:

The 2005 South Australian gambling prevalence survey (South Australian Department for Families and Communities, 2005) found that women comprised 49% of those who had gambled in the previous 12 months and 37% of moderate risk or problem gamblers (Dowling, 2009).

Gender differences in gambling has been under researched generally. However in 2011 Responsible Gambling Advocacy Centre (Victoria) – published a *Women and Difference* Discussion Paper. Their key findings were:

- The research has been inadvertently neglectful of women, which in turn means, the types of risk they are prone to have been insufficiently highlighted. Part of the reason for this has been because men make up a greater number of problem gamblers. However, it has also been because too few questions have been

- asked from a gender perspective
- What literature there is indicates women gamblers and women problem gamblers usually have different gambling motivations and behaviours compared to men
- Women are more likely to gamble in ways that are comparatively isolated, that require low or no levels of social interaction and are likely to be motivated to gamble as an escape from problems
- There are some forms of gambling where women may be at higher risk than men, most specifically EGMs
- The amount of women who are gambling appears to be growing, though less so where EGMs are not present
- Ease of access to EGMs, as well as EGMs themselves, appear as a major factor in producing problem gambling in women
- There is possibly a higher likelihood of co-morbidities in women who are at risk compared to men
- A preference for forms of gambling that are isolating, may exacerbate problems of social isolation that are themselves creating gambling problems
- How women experience problem gambling and how they are best treated appears to differ from men
- Women are more likely to become problem gamblers later in life than men
- Women in treatment are likely to take longer to recover from problem gambling than men
- Analysis of women's motivations and behaviours for gambling suggests online gaming has the potential to significantly increase risks for women.

www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Women%20and%20Gambling%20Discussion%20Paper%20November%202011.pdf

3 | IMPACT OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

Impacts on individuals

People with gambling disorders are at risk of a range of social and health problems. The risks are not only financial. People with gambling problems are at high risk of homelessness, mental health disorders, relationship break downs and substance abuse (drug, alcohol and smoking). They are six times more likely to be divorced than non-problem gamblers, four times more likely to have problems with alcohol and four times as likely to smoke daily than non-problem gamblers (Thomas & Jackson 2008).

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that those going through life transitions such as, death of a loved one, relationships stress, workplace stress and chronic pain may also be at higher risk. As previously described some people use gambling as a way to escape from physical and/or emotional pain. It is therefore important to be alert to your client's way of coping with these related social/health problems and sensitive to the possibility of gambling problems as part of the picture.

Unfortunately less than 10% of people with gambling problems seek professional help directly for gambling. Some reasons are that people may be in personal denial of the problem, but around a quarter say they don't look for help because of shame and embarrassment. Many will seek support for related issues such as financial or health concerns without disclosing excessive gambling as the underlying problem. However, the stress of keeping the behaviour secret can lead to exacerbations of problems. Many people who have found support say that the sense of relief in breaking their silence overcame their fear of self-disclosure.

All helping professionals are therefore advised to increase their knowledge about problem gambling and create a sense of safety for people to raise this issue. Screening for this disorder as part of regular client social/health assessments is actively encouraged (see suggested screening tools in this guide and refer to GIS Help Sheets Screening for non gambling specific services at gisnsw.org.au).

Dealing with Gambling Ambivalence

Many people who gamble excessively have mixed feelings about gambling. They know they are causing problems for the people they love. They may become anxious and unhappy, and often hate themselves. But the urge to gamble seems too great to resist. They feel they can't give up on all the time, money and emotion they have put into gambling. They can't accept that they will never win back what they have lost. Some people still believe their system will pay off, their luck will change or they are due to win. Others believe that continuing to gamble is the only way out of a situation they are ashamed about.

Other people promise to quit, but can't. They fear their loved ones will find them out. This drives them deeper into hiding and further into debt. They keep hoping a big win will end their problems. Once in a while they may win, which keeps their hope alive until the losses mount up again. If they quit now, they will feel like a loser. They will have to face all the problems gambling has caused.

Rewards and risks of gambling

Many people feel ambivalent about their gambling. They may not want to give up gambling. At the same time, they may see it is causing others harm. Mixed feelings like these can be very confusing. Counselling and support can help people get clarity and set goals for action. Weighing up the risks and rewards can help in this process.

Some common statements about gambling rewards are ...

I gamble because:

- I love the thrill of playing
- I know a big payout could solve all my problems
- Gambling is my only shot at becoming a millionaire
- I feel important when I win
- I love being able to treat my family and friends
- I have a sure system. It's just a matter of time before I win again
- When I am on, I can make money fast and easily
- Gambling lets me forget my problems and pain for a while
- Gambling is the one thing in my life that is just for me
- When I gamble, I'm in control
- Gambling gets me out of the house. I feel safe and welcome
- All my friends gamble.

Some common statements about gambling risks are ...

I'm thinking about getting help because:

- My partner is threatening to leave me if I don't stop
- We fight all the time about my gambling
- I'm tired of sneaking around, lying and hiding my losses
- My reputation has been hurt
- Creditors are hassling me. I'm looking at bankruptcy
- Gambling is all I ever think about. It has taken over my life
- I've stopped caring about things that should be important to me
- I've borrowed money from so many people. I feel ashamed to face them.
- I'm afraid I'll lose my job because I'm always so distracted
- My health is suffering
- I don't even enjoy gambling most of the time
- I feel like such a loser
- Sometimes I hate myself so much I want to end it all.

For further information refer to this weblink www.problemgambling.ca/en/aboutgamblingandproblemgambling/pages/theeffectsofgambling.aspx

Normalising thoughts and feelings

Accepting these conflicting thoughts and feelings and supporting clients to explore them is part of the change process. Early interventions with those who may be developing a gambling problem can lessen the negative impacts, and prevent ongoing harms. Interventions with those who are already struggling with a gambling addiction can be extremely positive. Recovery is possible and contrary to popular myth, clients don't have to reach "rock bottom" in order to embrace change.

Impact on families

Just as there are differing levels of gambling problems, families are also affected in various ways and to differing degrees. Because gambling can be hidden for a long time, many families are shocked when the full impact of the gambling loss is discovered. While some families are able to recover, not all are able to survive gambling problems. Rates of separation and divorce are significantly higher than in the general population.

Considerable research provides evidence of the negative impacts on family members. The most common family problems arising as a result of problem gambling include:

- Arguments
- Anger and violence
- Lies and deception
- Neglect of family
- Negatively affected relationships
- Poor communication
- Confusion of family roles and responsibilities
- Development of problem gambling or other addictions within the family

For many families, perhaps the biggest loss is the quality of time together, which can never be recovered. People with gambling problems are six times more likely than non gamblers to get divorced. They are four times more likely to suffer from alcohol abuse. www.problemgambling.gov.au/impact

Partners in particular are often struggling with their own health issues as the result of the impacts of their partner's gambling behaviour. Research into spouses (Lorenz & Shuttleworth, 1983; Lorenz & Yaffee, 1998) found people considered themselves:

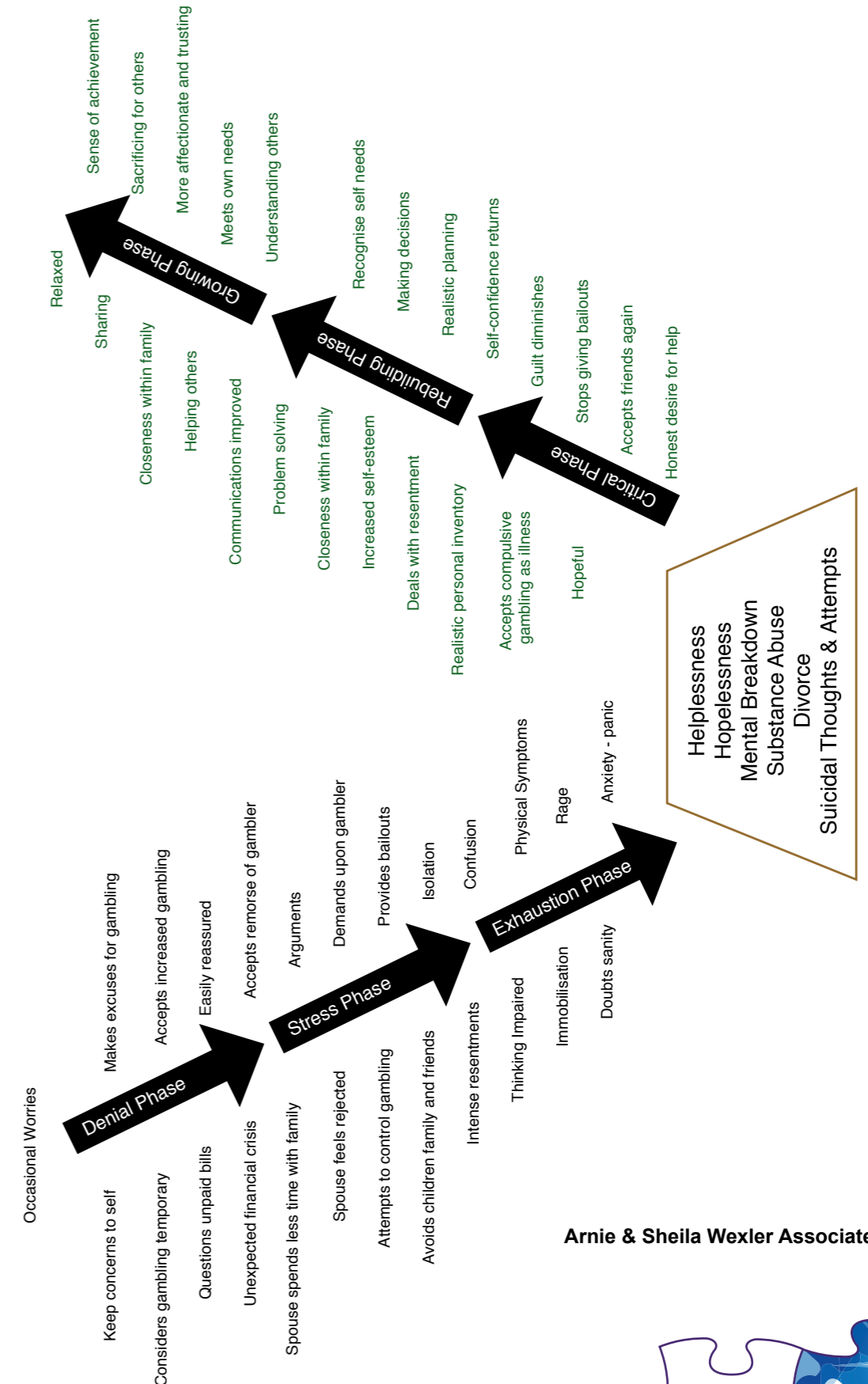
- 84% emotionally ill
- 47% depressed
- 14% suicidal
- 27% confused
- 44% isolated/lonely
- 30% feeling guilty
- 74% feeling angry/resentment
- 5% experiencing helplessness / hopelessness
- 13% ineffective parents

According to Roberts (2103) many family members take on new roles and responsibilities to cope with the impacts of problem gambling on their family, these include:

- Becoming the first line of support on financial matters
 - Providing emotional support to those affected including the person who gambles and immediate and extended family
 - Becoming the primary source of information for others on the impact of problem gambling on the family
 - Becoming the primary researchers about the disorder and seek assistance earlier than the person who is gambling
 - Searching for additional financial resources (work/benefits) in order to maintain household and family
 - Taking on the long term financial management of the household
- Roberts (2103).

The person who gambles may demand money from extended family members, in particular, older family members. He or she may also abuse power of attorney, misappropriate funds, steal possessions or force changes to the will in order to gain access to money or to pay off debts.

A chart on the effects of problem gambling on the partner



Arnie & Sheila Wexler Associates 1998

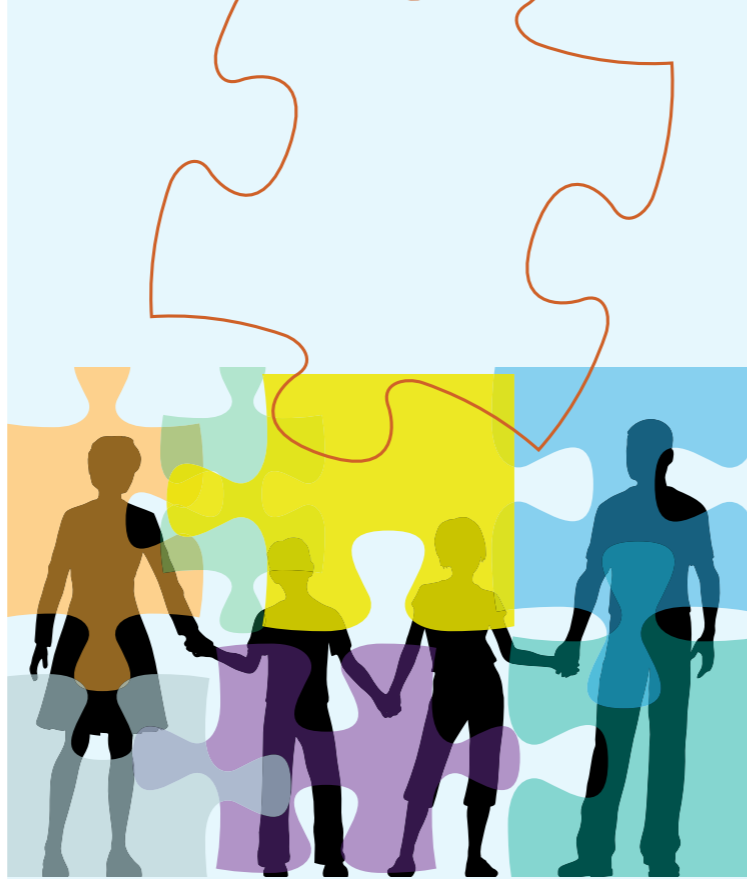
What do family members need?

Family members are often looking for support on how to cope as well as how to assist their family member. However, despite specialist gambling counselling services being available to them via the network of gambling help services, many family members do not seek support for themselves.

Feedback from family members has indicated they are looking for:

- Respect
- Recognition
- Valued as a team member in the journey of recovery
- Their own needs assessed
- Timely information
- Knowledge about the disorder
- Ideas on how to protect and care for themselves and other family members in the journey
- Practical ideas on how to care for the person they love whilst respecting their autonomy and independence
- Support with relationship impacts and skills to deal with the impacts on others
- Financial and legal support
- Assistance to plan for the future
- To be heard and listened to
- To be included.

(Roberts, 2013)



People who have a problem with their gambling lose an average of \$21,000 a year. That's a third of the average annual salary. Hard earned money that would otherwise be used to pay bills, pay off the mortgage or take holidays with the kids.

But it's not just about the money. It's the harm to themselves and their family. Problem gamblers can suffer mental and physical health problems, find it difficult to hold down a job, and struggle to maintain relationships.
www.problemgambling.gov.au/impact

A Five Step Model to Support Family Members

Research in the field of other addictions in the UK (Alcohol, Drugs and the Family Research Group) has developed a useful model for responding to family members in their "own right". The approach is based on the Stress - Strain - Coping - Support Model and helps those working with families to develop skills in responding to problem gambling. The Five Step Model (see table below) is a valuable approach for working with families affected by addiction:

Table 2: Five steps to support family members affected by addiction problems.

| Step 1: | Step 2: | Step 3: | Step 4: | Step 5: |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Listen, reassure and explore concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow family member to describe situation • Identify relevant stresses • Identify need for further information • Communicate realistic optimism • Identify need for future contacts | Provide relevant, specific and targeted information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge and understanding • Reduce stress arising from lack of knowledge or misconceptions | Explore coping responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify current coping responses • Explore advantages and disadvantages of current coping responses • Explore alternative coping responses • Explore advantages and disadvantages of alternative ways of coping | Discuss social support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a social network diagram • Aim to improve communication within the family and coherent approach • Explore potential new sources of support | Discuss and explore further needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a need for further help? • Discuss possible options with family member • Facilitate contact between the family member and other sources of specialist help |



(The 5-Step Method: Principles and practice, Copello, A., Templeton L., Orford J., & Velleman, 2010).

The Gambling Impact Society has adapted this model as a problem gambling resource for counsellors, health and community/welfare workers in Australia. This includes a service provider training DVD, workshops for staff and self-help resources for clients. An additional GIS Self-Help Guide for family members is already published and available. For more information on these resources and training, contact the GIS at info@gisnsw.org.au or refer to www.gisnsw.org.au.

Financial Crisis

The most common negative impact is serious financial loss. Problems may first appear as a sudden money crisis. Savings, property or belongings may be lost. Excessive spending on gambling often means that bills are not paid, utilities are cut off and money for necessities like groceries is in short supply. Hiding debt, stealing money and having secret gambling funds are not uncommon. The person who is gambling may not want his or her family to know the full scope of what is going on financially.

Emotional Difficulties and Isolation

Intense emotions within families are common and may make problem solving difficult. Families may feel helpless and unable to see solutions to their problems. The person who gambles may even deny that there is a problem.

Isolation is another problem:

- Many partners do not want to be emotionally or physically close with the person they no longer trust
- Many families and people who gamble avoid those who normally give them love and support because they feel ashamed
- Friendships may end because of unpaid debts, causing family conflict

Burnout

Many families under stress have trouble coping. One family member may try to keep things under control by taking on more tasks. This can lead to emotional and mental fatigue. Family members can become so focussed on the person who gambles that they forget to take care of themselves or have fun.

Health Problems

The stress of gambling may cause health problems, both for the person who gambles and the family. Common problems include anxiety, depression and stress-related disorders such as difficulty sleeping, ulcers, irritable bowel, eating disorders, headaches, muscle aches and pains. Compared to the general population, people who gamble and their spouses are more likely to have problems with alcohol or other drugs. They are also three times more likely to attempt suicide.

Co-morbidities

People who have gambling disorders are also often affected by other health issues which require treatment. In 2007, the Victorian Government funded Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre investigated the risk and protective factors associated with problem gambling. The survey found:

- problem gamblers are likely to suffer from three or more other health-related issues (typically mental health, drug and alcohol, and family violence issues)
- 35.7% of problem gamblers had a 'severe mental disorder' as defined by scores on the Kessler K10
- the rate of 'likely hazardous alcohol use' for those in the problem gambling group (as measured by the WHO AUDIT) was 50%
- the risk of depression in the problem gambling group was 71.4%
- the rate of daily smoking in the problem gambling group was 57.1%

Depression and problem gambling are highly correlated and there are significant risks of suicide. A Study of Gambling in Victoria *Problem Gambling from a Public Health Perspective* (2009) found that more than 27% of problem gamblers and 6% of moderate risk gamblers admitted to considering taking their own lives.

Depression and Anxiety

Both people with gambling problems and their families are at risk for anxiety and depression. Watch out for the signs and symptoms of depression and take steps to link the client to treatment.

Symptoms of depression include:

- loss of interest in usual activities
- feeling depressed, lethargic and more irritable
- changes in sleep (e.g. problems falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping too much)
- changes in appetite, weight loss or weight gain
- feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and despair
- difficulty thinking, remembering and slowed thoughts
- guilty ruminations and obsessing over real or perceived problems
- loss of interest in sex
- physical fatigue, or agitation and restlessness
- thoughts of suicide

Risk of Suicide

People who gamble excessively and their families have higher rates of suicide. The risk of suicide increases for people who also have mental health problems or problems with alcohol or other drugs. People who have threatened suicide or have a history of self-harm are also more at risk. (*Problem gambling, mental health and suicide: A literature review, 2009*) www.albertahealthservices.ca/Researchers/if-res-problem-gambling-mental-health-suicide.pdf

A 2010 study at The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne found that one in five suicidal presentations to the Emergency Department were problem gambling related. A previous study at the Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre study demonstrated that up to 80% of problem gamblers experience ideas of suicide at some time, with up to 23% of problem gamblers having attempted suicide.

Clients may have thoughts of suicide if they:

- talk about suicide and say they have a plan
- show changes in behaviour, appearance or mood
- seem depressed, sad or withdrawn
- give away prized personal objects
- prepare for death by making a will or telling final wishes.

Steps to take:

- Stay calm and listen carefully to better understand what is happening
- Let them talk about their feelings. Accept what they are saying without passing judgment or trying to solve their problem
- Ask clients specifically if they are feeling suicidal and have a plan
- Take all suicide threats seriously
- Encourage clients to remove any available means of self-harm (e.g., firearms, medications)
- Direct clients to the nearest emergency department for assessment, or encourage them to get professional help from a crisis centre, counsellor or doctor
- Do not promise to keep the person's suicidal thoughts confidential.

Mental Health Crisis Line

available 24 hours
1800 011 511

Further information on crisis support and suicide prevention refer to
www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/Facts---Information/Facts-and-Information

Physical and Emotional Abuse

Violence is more common when families are in crisis. Gambling problems can lead to emotional and physical abuse of a partner, elder parent or child. Children may be hurt by the person who gambles or by the partner who releases his or her pent-up anger and frustration. If you suspect neglect, or emotional or physical abuse, you may be obligated to report your suspicions to the appropriate authority. For further information refer to the relevant child protection agency in your area.

Financial Abuse

Those affected by another's gambling may also be at risk of financial abuse. Helping family members/friends to put in place safe guards and boundaries can protect personal and family assets. Helping those affected to access appropriate financial and legal advice is important.

Most States and Territories provide specialist gambling financial counsellors and legal advice services. Call the Gambling Helpline on 1800 858 858 to find services in your area. For further information refer to page 57 for financial counselling.

Impact on Children

When a parent or caregiver has a gambling problem, children can feel forgotten, neglected, depressed and angry. They may believe they caused the problem and that if they are "good," the problem will stop. Some take on parenting roles, to compensate for the missing parent.

Children are usually aware when their parents are going through stress and worries. Children can also feel the effects that problem gambling has on their parents' lives and relationships. Children respond differently to these problems depending on their individual nature and age.

Children may believe they must take sides between their parents. They may stop trusting a parent who makes promises he or she doesn't keep. Some children may try to draw attention away from the parent with the gambling problem by misbehaving.

There is some evidence to suggest that children of parent(s) who have a problem with gambling are at a greater risk of using alcohol, drugs or gambling at an earlier age than other children. They are also at risk of other health and social issues:

- Children of compulsive gamblers are often prone to suffer abuse, as well as neglect, as a result of parental problem or pathological gambling (National Opinion Research Center, 1999)
- Research consistently shows higher rates of pathological gambling in teens whose parents gamble excessively (Gupta & Derevensky, 1997; Jacobs, 2000; Wallisch & Liu, 1996)
- Children of problem gamblers have been shown to have higher levels of use for tobacco, alcohol, drug use, and overeating than do their classroom peers (Gupta & Derevensky, 1997)
- Child endangerment and child abuse may increase

- The National Research Council (NRC, 1999) reported on studies indicating that 10 to 17 percent of children of compulsive gamblers had been abused.

Sourced www.1877mylimit.org/impacts.asp

Some of the more immediate effects on children can include:

- being anxious, depressed, angry
- refusing to go to school
- poor school performance
- withdrawal from friends or activities
- worrying about parents' worries
- changes in their physical health
- changes in sleeping patterns
- changes in their usual behaviour

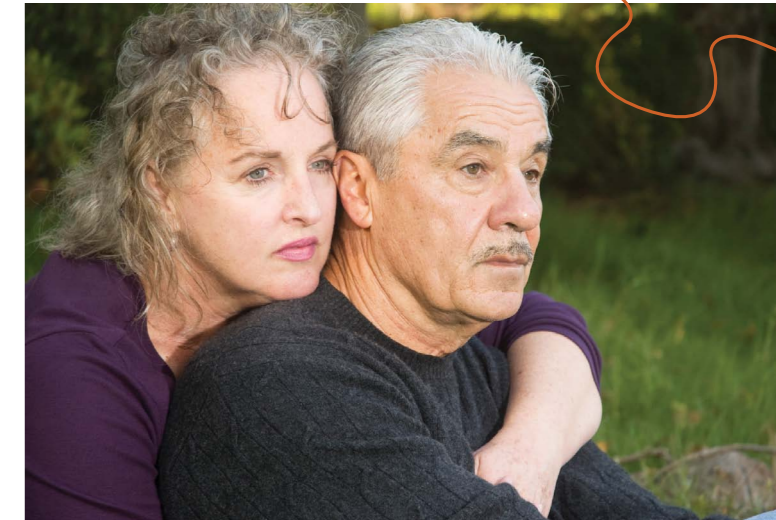
Children can also have a strong sense of loss. This loss may be for a parent who is away gambling for long periods, the loss of security, the loss of trust and of feeling connected and close to a parent when the parent is preoccupied with gambling or trying to hide it. They may feel the loss of family togetherness they once had.

Children also have feelings of loss that come with financial hardship. They know there is less money for household items like food, clothing, family outings, activities and school excursions.

Children may need help to understand that the problems in the family are not their fault and to return to the normal tasks of childhood.

If you are supporting an adult client affected by problem gambling who has children, it may be a good idea to consider counselling support for the children as well. Some counsellors are specifically trained in family therapy, if this is not your field, consider a specialist referral or accessing children's counselling services for your client.

Parents who change their problem gambling behaviour provide their children with a real example of overcoming a difficult situation with effort and commitment.



Impact on the Community

So extensive are the impacts that the social cost of problem gambling to the community is estimated to be at least \$4.7 billion each year. (Productivity Commission Report, 2010)

Risk of Crime

The 2000 report into gambling and crime – *Want to Bet?* (Australasian Policing Research) found a high correlation between gambling and crime. It re-iterates earlier findings when it states:

Prevalence rates differ across studies depending on the population (i.e., prison inmates, counselling attendees, general population) and methodology used (i.e., self report versus official recorded statistics) but generally between 21% to 85% of gamblers are reported to have committed an offence and up to 13% of gamblers receive a gaol sentence for gambling related offences (Blaszczynski, 1994, p.11).

A more recent (2011) NSW Government analysis of gambling counselling data found that 20% of problem gamblers in that state say they have committed offences related to their addiction. In South Western Sydney that statistic jumps to 35% (ABC 7.30 Report 28/9/2011).

The 2011 Report to the Tasmanian Government Department of Treasury and Finance – *Responding to gambling related crime* found that when people affected by problem gambling engage in fraud or other crimes to fund their gambling addiction or resultant debts, they generally do not intend to commit a crime. Cognitive distortions lead them to rationalise their behaviour as simply “borrowing” the money with an intention to pay it back. In addition a common cognitive distortion present in those with gambling problems is the belief that they are “due for a win”. The “borrowing” is therefore rationalised as a temporary measure.

In addition the report outlines four causal pathways in which offending and problem gambling may be related (see figure 6). These are stated as follows:

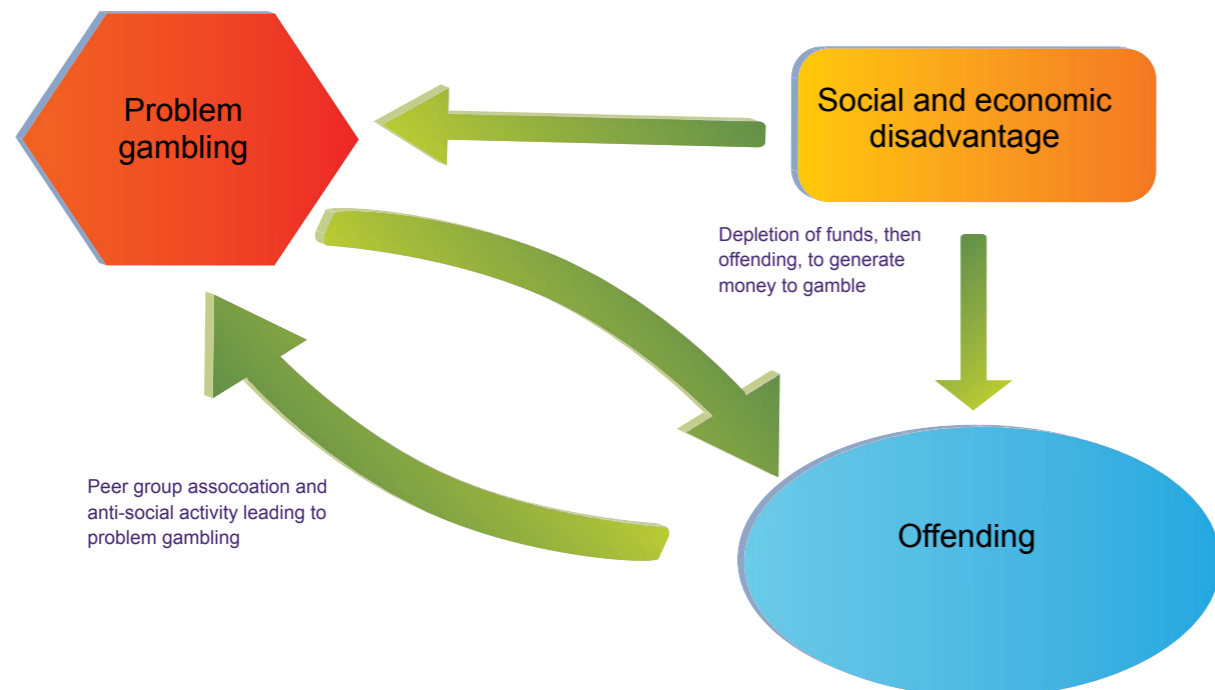
- Problem gambling may lead to offending via a causal pathway which likely includes depletion of finances and the need to commit offences in order to continue funding the habit/or compensate for loss of funds
 - Offending might lead to problem gambling via a causal chain involving associations with particular peer groups and engagement in activities, which enhance the likelihood of becoming involved in excessive gambling
 - A third factor may be common to both phenomena. Problem gambling is known to be associated with social and economic disadvantage, and these factors are known to be associated with higher rates of involvement in a range of anti-social and criminal activities. However this association does not imply a necessary causal connection
 - In an individual case there may be no specific causal relationships between the two problematic behaviours.
- (Allen Consultive Group et al, 2011.p4)

In general gambling is not regarded as a mitigating factor for sentencing in the courts and Australian case law is unclear on this issue. The Tasmanian report found that courts are often provided with poor advice on the severity and consequences of problem gambling and there is little or no assessment of defendants. Unlike other precedents in the field of drug and alcohol there are no mechanisms for some form of rehabilitative sentencing.

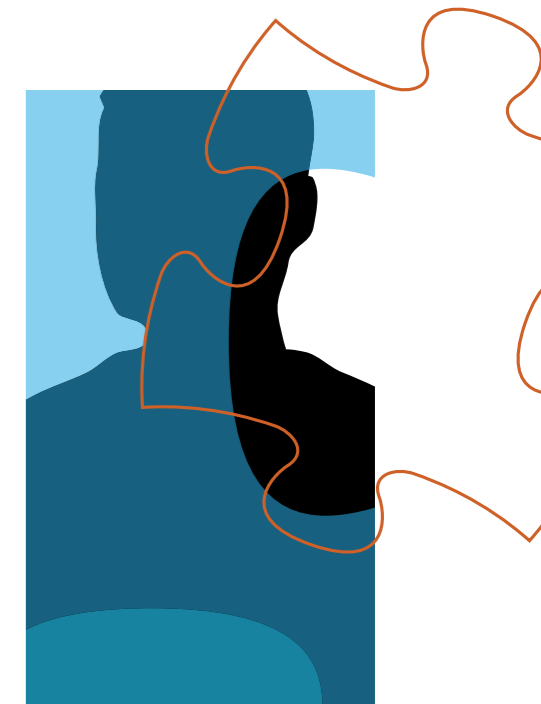
Legal Advice

In NSW a free state-wide problem gambling legal advice service is provided by Wesley Mission, Sydney, to advise on gambling related criminal matters. It is an effective service for professionals to gain advice as to how to support their clients, advice on compiling pre-sentencing court reports and where to seek specialist legal advice for clients. You can contact them on 02 9263 5577.

Fig 6: Causal Relationships between Gambling and Crime



Allen Consulting Group and the University of Melbourne, 2011



4 | TALKING ABOUT GAMBLING

Helping professionals can make a difference

As a helping professional, you probably provide services to people with gambling problems. People with gambling problems often access services for health, social, emotional, marital or financial concerns well before seeking counselling for a gambling problem.

You are in a position to identify people who may be experiencing problems with gambling, to support their efforts to change and to connect them to problem gambling treatment services and resources.

How you can help

- **Make it routine practice to talk about gambling with every person seeking your assistance**
- **Establish a rapport that invites disclosure and motivates change**
- **Be alert to the signs and indicators of problem gambling**
- **Make information on problem gambling available and link people to specialised services**
- **Explore clients' concerns and provide accurate information about problem gambling counselling, emphasising the benefits of counselling**
- **Help clients develop workable budgets and manage their debts in ways that relieve financial pressure. This reduces an important gambling trigger**
- **Help clients and their families protect their remaining assets from further gambling losses.**

Signs of Gambling Problems

Gambling problems share many similarities with other addictive disorders. However, there are no visible signs or physical changes that will indicate a gambling problem.

Here are common signs of problem gambling that helping professionals may identify in clients. While you may see individual symptoms in clients who do not have gambling problems, when a client exhibits a large number of signs - and an overall pattern of problems - the possibility that gambling is a problem should be explored further.

Behavioural signs

The client:

- stops doing things he or she previously enjoyed
- misses family events
- changes patterns of sleep, eating or sex
- ignores self-care, work, school or family tasks
- has conflicts over money with other people
- uses alcohol or other drugs more often
- leaves children alone, seems less concerned about who looks after them, neglects their basic care
- thinks and talks about gambling all the time
- is less willing to spend money on things other than gambling
- cheats or steals to get the money to gamble or pay debts
- has legal problems related to gambling
- is often late for work or school
- organises staff pools / syndicates
- is gone for long, unexplained periods of time
- neglects personal responsibilities.

Health signs

The client complains of stress-related health problems, such as:

- headaches
- stomach and bowel problems
- difficulty sleeping
- overeating, or loss of appetite.

Emotional signs

The client:

- withdraws from family and friends
- seems far away, anxious or has difficulty paying attention
- has mood swings and sudden outbursts of anger
- complains of boredom or restlessness
- seems depressed or suicidal.

Financial signs

The client:

- frequently borrows money or asks for salary advances
- takes a second job without a change in finances
- cashes in savings accounts, superannuation or insurance plans
- alternates between being broke and flashing money
- family members complain that valuables and appliances are disappearing,
- or money is missing from a bank account or wallet.

People who gamble excessively will sometimes seek help for the financial, employment, relationship or health problems caused by their gambling without addressing the root cause of their problems. When the gambling behaviour is not addressed, these other problems often continue or worsen.

Asking about Gambling

Establish a rapport that invites disclosure and motivates change. Shame, embarrassment or fear of disclosure may keep people who gamble from revealing the true nature of their problems. The challenge is to provide a safe and supportive environment that will facilitate disclosure in a manner that will allow you to address concerns and link people to appropriate help.

It is rarely helpful to ask directly “Are you having a problem with gambling?” Some clients may not have insight into how their problems are associated with gambling. For other clients, this blunt approach may lead to a defensive response and leave the client unwilling to explore the issue further.

There are however, a number of ways you can ask gambling questions as a routine part of your assessment process.

- Ask about recreational activities: “What do you do for fun? Do you go to the movies, night clubs, or the racetracks?” “Do you ever go to casinos or other gambling venues?” When asking questions, assume that your client participates in some type of gambling: “How often do you buy lottery tickets? play the pokies? engage in sports betting? or internet gambling? Avoid moral judgments
- “How much time and money do you spend on these activities?” You may find it difficult to ask clients about how they spend their money if this is not what you usually do. Many Australians believe that it is rude to ask other people about money. You can assure your clients that problems with gambling are common and so you ask all people seeking your assistance about it
- If you identify gambling as a concern, ask about debts to employers, family, friends, co-workers, casinos, bookies or loan sharks. Ask if the clients superannuation or savings have been cashed in to cover gambling losses. This will let you know whether the client should consider financial counselling
- Consider using the brief gambling screens provided in this guide
- If you suspect that a client is having problems with gambling, keep relevant print information on gambling counselling in the client’s file and offer information at opportune times.

Problem Gambling Is a Family Problem

Consider including the client’s partner or family in the discussions, or arrange to meet with the family separately. Often family members are more willing to discuss the impact of gambling than the person who gambles. Your assessment of a client’s gambling problem may be based on what a family member tells you.

Many partners are unaware that gambling is a problem until there is a crisis. Clients may not want their partners to know everything that is going on. Try to balance the idea that secrecy enables gambling with the need to build trust and your responsibility to respect confidential information.

Emotions can run high

Discussing the family’s situation can be an agonising experience for the person who gambles and his or her partner. This may be the first time the client has acknowledged the full extent of his or her gambling losses. For his or her partner, there will likely be a resulting loss of trust and high levels of anger and frustration. This can be a challenge for the helping professional.

Take the time to provide information, support and encouragement so that both parties can feel more comfortable seeking counselling. This step can be taken with or without the person who gambles. When a family member seeks help, this often instills hope and clears a path for the person who gambles to take action. Children may also need help understanding that the problems in the family are not their fault. They may need to be encouraged to let go of that sense of responsibility.

Protect the family finances

Families may be willing to help by paying off the gambling debts. This approach is risky. With the money pressure off, the client may return to gambling knowing that if they get into trouble someone will bail them out. Helping professionals may encourage families to take steps to protect their assets from further loss with the help of a financial counsellor. The family may also need legal advice to help sort out which debts belong to the family (e.g. co-signed loans) and which belong to the person who gambles. Information on provincial legal services is included in the resource list.

Engaging the Client to Seek Help

When the client’s life has become unmanageable, it may be appropriate for the helping professional to become more active in finding solutions to the client’s problem. The challenge is to balance counsellor assistance with building client control and accountability.

Problem gambling experts have identified a number of counselling principles and best practices that are particularly effective in dealing with gambling problems and can complement your work as a helping professional.

Motivating client change

Helping to build motivation to change is an important aspect of counselling. People who gamble struggle with conflicting motivations. They may want to stop gambling, but may not want to give up the hope of the big win. They may still see gambling as a solution to their problems or fear the emptiness of life without it.

Motivational interviewing helps clients to recognise their problems with gambling - and do something about them. Through gentle exploration and presentation of facts, counsellors guide clients to their own conclusions. Motivational principles include express empathy, help the client see the consequences of gambling, avoid arguments, roll with resistance and support self-efficacy.

Express Empathy

A respectful and compassionate approach helps to facilitate openness. "You must be feeling overwhelmed with all the challenges you are facing. How have you managed for so long?"

Through the interview process, acknowledge the challenges clients are facing and the efforts they have made to resolve their problems. Accept ambivalence towards change as normal.

Help the Client See the Consequences of Gambling

Create a discrepancy between continued gambling and achieving important goals identified by the client, such as getting out of debt or improving family relations and health:

"I don't understand. You've said you want to work on things at home, but you tell me you go out gambling every night."

Use a non-judgmental tone when pointing out discrepancies. If clients feel attacked or confronted, they may withdraw or become defensive. Try to assume a "not knowing" stance.

Avoid Arguments

Arguments do not help and can lead to defensiveness:

- Provide information so that clients can draw their own conclusions and identify their own reasons for change
- If your approach isn't working, change it
- Labelling the client as a "problem gambler" is not helpful or necessary.

Roll with Resistance

Accept the clients' right to choose:

"You may decide after our discussion that you would rather continue as you are. That is your choice. Should you wish to work on these problems, I am here to help."

Support Self-Efficacy

- Help clients identify their own solutions
- Tell clients that you believe that they can change, cope and overcome obstacles without gambling. Point out examples of success
- Match your intervention to the client's stage of change (see next section).



Stages of Change

Some people seeking help respond quickly when a concern is identified, while others resist. If you suggest that a client go for problem gambling counselling when they have not yet identified that their problems may be related to gambling, you will probably meet with resistance.

You may even discourage the client from continuing to work with you. Your influence will be greater if you understand and match your support to the client's stage of change (see figure 7).

Figure 7: A model of the change process in addictive behaviour. Adapted from Prochaska & DiClemente (1986)



Pre-contemplation

The person is not considering change and does not recognise the need for change. "Yes I gamble and I don't think there's anything wrong with that." Helping professionals can give clients feedback on the impact that gambling is having on their life. Encourage clients to reflect on why others may think there is a problem. Invite clients to use the Gambling monitoring tool provided in the client handout sections at the back of this book to help track gambling and the Problem Gambling Severity Index (refer to client handout section) to enhance awareness. If clients don't respond, let them know that you can discuss the matter in the future.

Contemplation

The person is considering change and may be ready to commit to change. "Yes, I've thought about staying away from the casino, but I'm due for a big win." Helping professionals can help clients weigh the positive and negative aspects of continuing to gamble. When clients begin to deal with the reality of their problems, they may begin to link gambling to their current problems and consider changing their behaviour. The *Stay On Track* mobile application can also help clients keep track of wins and losses, refer to www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/stay-on-track.

The Gambling Monitoring Tool and the Problem Gambling Severity Index may be useful here. They provide information about problem gambling counselling services and safer gambling.

Discuss perceived barriers to accessing these services. Help clients explore possible solutions to the problems they've identified.

Action

The person is ready to commit to change. "Who can I call for help?"

Helping professionals can link clients to appropriate problem gambling support. Several programs are available:

- Problem gambling counselling services are available throughout Australia. The Gambling Helpline (1800 858 858) can provide the phone number of the service in your community. They offer individual, couple, family and group counselling to people with gambling problems. They will also provide counselling to family members and friends
- The Gambling Help Online website can also link clients to online counselling services. The program is suitable for people who are unable to access a local service for reasons such as distance, a disability, concerns about privacy, financial limitations, full-time work obligations or childcare needs www.gamblinghelponline.org.au
- Residential programs for people more severely affected by problem gambling are also available. The local problem gambling counselling service can provide the client with more information about this treatment option and will refer when appropriate
- Gambler's Anonymous is available in many communities. Based on Alcoholics Anonymous, GA uses a 12-step mutual-aid approach to recovery
- Gam-Anon is a 12-step, self-help program for the family members, friends and loved ones of people with gambling problems

- Gam-Block helps gamblers avoid online gambling by blocking access to Internet gambling sites
- Many self-help books and websites are available. When clients reach the "Action" stage, helping professionals should support their efforts and commitment. Give them lots of praise and encouragement to move them to the next stage (Refer to the back of this guide).

Maintenance

The person is adjusting to the change and learning and practicing new skills. "I'm taking things one step at a time." Help the client come up with some strategies to maintain the change. Continue to praise the client's efforts and progress. Acknowledge that lapses happen. Encourage clients to develop relapse prevention skills. At this point, clients may feel motivated to take on a second job as a way of quickly repairing the financial damage caused by their gambling.

This can be helpful in demonstrating responsible behaviour, restoring trust and avoiding further borrowing; however, recovery from gambling also requires a restoration of balance within the person's life. This includes striking a healthy balance between work, family and leisure pursuits and not just replacing gambling with work.

Lapses and Relapses

Lapses and relapses: the person falls back into gambling behaviour. This may be a one off (lapse) or a return to previous levels of gambling (relapse). Relapse is often part of the recovery process and can help reinforce the client's need to manage his or her gambling.

The person has not maintained the change - "I had an extra fifty bucks and I felt lucky." Work with clients to bring them back to maintenance stage. The client may be back at the first stage again or maybe having difficulties maintaining their actions.

Lapses are often an opportunity to increase the clients awareness of potential strengths and weaknesses and strategies for maintaining change for the client. The client may be feeling ambivalent about change and may need to reinforce their actions. Recognise that lapses and relapses are a normal part of the changing process.

Counselling can help the client identify his or her unique patterns and triggers and plan ways to reduce risk and increase control.

(Adapted from the work of Prochaska and DiClemente, 1982)

Self-Exclusion

All Australian gambling providers are required to provide customers with the option to self-exclude from the venue or products, this includes pubs, clubs, tabs and gambling websites such as SportsBet, TattsBet or Tattersalls. These arrangements vary by State and Territory.

For anyone feeling that their gambling is becoming a problem this is a helpful tool to keep them safe and assist their recovery.

This is a voluntary arrangement that the client can enter into with a particular venue or multiple venues / facilities. There are no costs in the process and the client chooses which venues, casinos or websites to be excluded from. There is a minimum time agreed upon, once this time expires the person can apply to have their gambling account re-opened and/or be able to enter the gambling venue/ area again. For further information refer to www.gamblinghelponline.org.au.

Third party and Involuntary Exclusions

The concept of third party exclusion, allows families and friends (third party) of those experiencing problems with gambling the right to apply to have their relative or friend excluded from gambling venues to prevent an escalation of their gambling. While this exists in the Tasmania and South Australia, not every state or territory has this available. Casinos in most states can also apply involuntary bans on customers.

For more information, refer to the Productivity Commission's 2010 review of exclusion policies across jurisdictions in Australia. www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/95710/27-appendix.pdf

Screening Individuals for problem gambling

As gambling is often a hidden issue it is useful for helping professionals to become familiar with the use of brief screening tools to assist in identifying a problem. These can be used for both the individual and family members. As research has found there are several benefits to such opportunistic screening:

A benefit of opportunistic screening is that if people are reluctant to seek assistance for a condition (eg. problem gambling) but are more likely to seek treatment for another (eg. depression) then opportunistic screening of this treatment seeking sub-population is an effective way of finding the other "hidden" population. This situation applies to problem gambling where the rates of help seeking for gambling problems are very low. Many gamblers never seek professional treatment, with a recent survey reporting that only 7–12% of pathological gamblers have ever sought treatment www.med.monash.edu.au/assets/docs/sphc/pgrtc/guideline/problem-gambling-guidelines-web.pdf

The Australian – *Guideline for Screening, Assessment and Treatment in Problem Gambling* (Thomas et al, 2011) recommends that initial screening with a brief questionnaire could be used in primary care settings where at risk clients may be presenting for services. These may include:

- People who present for other mental health problems
- People who come from groups with relatively high rates of problem gambling.

Additionally the guidelines recommend that: *Adults with high risk of mental health problems including those who are presenting for treatment or for assessment for mental health problems could be screened and assessed for problem gambling using a validated measurement tool or tools.*

Those who screen positive for problem gambling using an initial brief (ie. 1–3 items) screening tool could be referred for further assessment and treatment by appropriately trained specialist practitioners in problem gambling.

The recommended tools are:

Brief (1–3 items)

- Brief Bio-Social Gambling Screen (BBGS)*
- Lie-Bet Questionnaire*
- NODS-CLiP*

Medium (4–12 items)

- Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI)

Long (>13 items)

- South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)
- Victorian Gambling Screen (VGS)
- Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM)*

*Validation study information only

SCREENING TOOLS

A Brief Gambling Screen

Researchers and clinicians at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH Ontario) have also developed a brief screening instrument for problem gambling. It is intended as a short screen to quickly identify people who might have a problem, but who are currently not seeking treatment for gambling problems. The screen could be used by anyone who wants to investigate gambling as a possible issue without engaging in a longer questionnaire.

This protocol is largely an adaptation of a subset of items from the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) that have been found to be particularly useful in differentiating problem and non-problem gamblers. Items 1 to 5 are from the SOGS with some minor wording changes. Item number 6 was added based on the frequent occurrence of persistence among people with gambling problems. Item number 7 was added because some people respond yes to some of the questions, but have only "lost" control on one or more occasion. The following screen is available at the back of this resource and can be downloaded from www.problemgambling.ca/EN/Documents/CAMH%20Gambling%20Screen.pdf

The Short Gambling Quiz

1. In the past 12 months have you gambled more than you intended to?
_____yes _____ no
2. In the past 12 months have you claimed to be winning money when you were not?
_____yes _____ no
3. In the past 12 months have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble?
_____yes _____ no
4. In the past 12 months have people criticized your gambling?
_____yes _____ no
5. In the past 12 months have you had money arguments centred on gambling?
_____yes _____ no
6. In the past 12 months did you feel you had to persist until you won?
_____yes _____ no
7. If you answered yes to 2 or more of these questions, how often has it happened?
_____once
_____only sometimes
_____often

Scoring

If the person answers no to all questions it is unlikely they have a current gambling problem. However bear in mind some people do exhibit intermittent binge-type gambling problems which may not have occurred within the past twelve months but do cause significant impacts in their lives. It is worth exploring this with your client. A score of 2 may indicate that he or she is developing a problem, but currently does not have a problem. If the person scores 3 or more you can be very confident that he or she does have a problem; over 97% of people who do not have a problem score less than 2 on these items. A score of 2 is a judgment call; the majority of people who do not have a problem score less than 2, but the majority of people who do have a problem score more than 2. This score may indicate a person that is in transition. Question 7 is used to adjust a person's score. If a person scored 3 or above, but responded once only to question 7, then he or she may be at risk or in transition, but probably does not currently have a gambling problem.

Screening for those affected by another's gambling

As discussed, gambling often affects family members, friends and employers. The following Concerned Others Gambling Screen (COGS) has been developed by the ABACus group in New Zealand, to assist the identification and support of those who may be struggling with the negative impacts of another's gambling behaviour.

COGS Screen

1. Do you think you have been affected by someone else's gambling?
 - No, never (you need not continue further)
 - I don't know for sure
 - Yes, in the past
 - Yes, that's happening to me now
2. How would you describe the effect of that person's gambling on you now? (identify one or more)
 - I'm uncertain
 - I worry about it sometimes
 - I am nervous about it
 - It is affecting my health
 - It is hard to talk with anyone about it
 - I am concerned about my or my family's safety
 - It doesn't affect me anymore
3. When I think about it, gambling has sometimes caused me problems. (identify one or more)
 - I would like some information
 - I would like to talk about it in confidence with someone
 - I would like some support or help
 - Nothing at this stage

Scoring Guide

This is an awareness-raising questionnaire that allows a person affected by another's gambling to indicate what assistance they desire. Gambling Help services 1800 858 858 work with the person affected by gambling as fully and seriously as the gamblers themselves.

- A 'Yes' to any one of the last three responses to the first question identifies that the person may be adversely affected by another's gambling
- Question two provides an opportunity for the person to think of ways in which they are currently affected by the gambling of someone close to them
- Responses to question three can be followed up as necessary through your own service and/or by contacting one of the Gambling Help services 1800 858 858

COGS (Concerned Others' Gambling Screen) Developed by Dr Sean Sullivan, Abacus Counselling & Training Services Ltd, www.acts.co.nz

Problem Gambling Treatment Services

There are a range of problem gambling treatment support services funded by governments across Australia. These include specialist counselling services, financial counselling services, legal services and residential programs. These services are available for anyone affected by problem gambling including those gambling excessively, family and friends. For information about your local services call the Gambling Helpline 1800 858 858.

Problem Gambling Counselling Approaches

Problem gambling counsellors will not make the client stop gambling. Only the client can make that choice. Instead, counsellors support clients as they explore issues they see as priorities. The client may be ready to focus on gambling or may be more motivated to address concerns related to finances, work and family relationships first. Counsellors may also help clients identify new options and provide feedback as to whether goals are reasonable and achievable. Counselling for family and/or significant others provides opportunities for change.

Problem gambling counsellors use a variety of approaches with clients. These include:

Solution-focussed approach

By focussing on clients' identified concerns, strengths and solutions - and by helping them set short-term, achievable goals - counsellors inspire hope and a sense that change is possible. When ambivalence is high, a brief solution-focussed approach may be most effective in increasing awareness, building trust and engaging the client in a therapeutic relationship.

Harm reduction approach

Harm reduction is a common counselling approach. Counsellors help clients assess their gambling and reduce the negative impact it is having on their lives. This is a method of reaching clients who are at all stages of change, and it respects clients' rights to choose their own goals. Some people who gamble choose to set time and money limits, or to stay away from gambling activities that cause them the most harm. Others decide that the only solution to their problem is abstinence and to stop gambling completely.

Motivational interviewing approach

Using motivational interviewing, problem gambling counsellors provide accurate information, advice and support that helps clients assess the harm gambling is causing and decide what is right for them. Problem gambling counsellors will often encourage clients to take a break from gambling in order to assess its impact and gain control.

Cognitive and behavioural techniques

Using cognitive and behavioural techniques, clients learn to control gambling triggers, patterns and urges and to plan ways to stay in control of their gambling. Counsellors may help clients identify faulty beliefs about gambling, such as the role of skill, the odds of winning, randomness and their ability to influence outcomes. Counselling helps clients uncover and explain those faulty beliefs in a way that helps them understand their urge to gamble and gain life-long control.

Some of the common faulty beliefs about money that may be addressed in counselling include:

- money lost through gambling is not "lost" and, with time, it will be won back
- gambling is a good "investment" and persistence will eventually pay off
- gambling is a quick and easy way to "earn" money
- if you gamble enough, you will eventually win
- past gambling losses indicate that a win is due
- debts can only be paid off as a lump sum.

Counsellors can help clients understand that once money is lost, it is lost, that future gambling is not affected by past gambling, that the more they gamble, the more they are likely to lose and that debts can be paid off in stages.

Deal with Feelings

Some people use gambling to cope with abuse, sickness, loss or caregiver burden, or to avoid difficult feelings such as depression, anger or anxiety. Counselling helps clients understand and cope with those challenges in other ways. Learning to identify feelings and accept them as normal and healthy can help to reduce the urge to gamble, restore intimacy, health and a sense of well-being.

Address Health Problems

Clients may also be struggling with other serious health problems including problems with alcohol or other drugs, physical illness and emotional or mental health concerns. Problem gambling counsellors can help link clients and families to the services they need.

Heal Family Relationships

Through individual, couple or family counselling, counsellors help the family understand what has happened and explore ways to restore trust within the family or to deal with the impact of separation.

Find Balance

Gambling problems often result in the loss of overall balance in life. Counselling can help the person who gambles and his or her family return to normal routines and replace gambling with healthier and more rewarding lifestyle choices.

Helping your client to access specialised gambling counselling services

There are many reasons why people with gambling problems don't get help. Recent research has revealed that many people in need of help are unaware that specialised problem gambling counselling services are available. Other people initially refuse help because they are ambivalent about giving up their gambling, fear what may happen in counselling or are afraid of being stigmatised. Some others have not made the connection between their current difficulties and their gambling behaviour.

As a helping professional, you can address these concerns and provide accurate information about what happens in problem gambling counselling and what services are available.

Normally, clients are encouraged to contact a problem gambling counselling agency themselves. Their motivation to seek help will waver however, so take any opportunity to link clients to services. You may want to help clients make appointments from your office or provide them with print materials they can take home.

Take any opportunity to link clients to services. You may want to help clients make appointments from your office or provide them with print materials they can take home.

Gambling Help Services ph 1800 858 858

Gambling Help counselling is free to anyone affected by problem gambling - not just the person who gambles. In most areas, an agency that offers specialised counselling for problem gambling is available close to home. In addition, telephone counselling, online counselling and self-help guides are available.

For both the person who gambles and their family and friends every effort is made to respond to calls within 24 hours and most people can be seen within days. Finding out about available specialised and community resources is easy by contacting the Gambling Helpline 1800 858 858 a free, confidential and anonymous service open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This service provides information about, and referrals to, problem gambling counselling services, telephone-counselling services and mutual aid organisations such as Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon.

Help for a problem with gambling is available:

- free of charge and close to home
- to anyone affected by problem gambling, not just the person who gambles
- confidentially
- individually, in groups and through couple and family counselling
- in residential treatment programs
- by telephone in some areas and online.

Clients who are actively involved in counselling report that it has helped them identify their gambling triggers, restore balance and made them feel better equipped to deal with life.

Residential treatment programs

Residential treatment services are also available in a number of locations in various states and territories across Australia. These are usually run by not for profit organisations and may also address drug and alcohol issues e.g. Salvation Army – The Bridge Program or Odyssey House, Sydney.

Some drug and alcohol residential programs also accept people with gambling problems. There are programs such as South Pacific Private Hospital, Sydney and Foundation House, Sydney.

Financial counselling

Financial counselling services are delivered by community and local government organisations and help people in personal difficulty to address their financial issues and make informed choices. Financial counsellors deliver services through casework. A financial counsellor can help your client work through financial issues, advocate on their behalf on any debts they may have or provide links to other community services that may be able to help.

Your clients can talk with a financial counsellor by phoning the national 1800 007 007 financial counselling helpline. Please note that calls to 1800 007 007 from public phones/mobile phones may be timed and charged at a higher rate.

Financial counsellors can also be located through the 'Find a Financial Counsellor Map' by going to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's website www.moneysmart.gov.au, searching for 'counsellor' then clicking on the Financial counselling/Money Smart link".

Credit reporting

If the gambler agrees, a notation can be placed on the gambler's file with Veda such as "no further credit without the approval of my gambling counsellor". Contact Veda on 1300 762 207 or at www.veda.com.au.

Where a family member is worried about a forged credit application, she / he can pay for My Credit Alert service from Veda at \$30 per annum. The service will report any finance applications or overdue listings.

6 | COUNSELLOR'S PERSPECTIVE

A PROBLEM GAMBLING COUNSELLOR'S PERSPECTIVE

My name is Michelle, I'm a psychologist and I work for Gambler's Help – a free service for people with problem gambling. I've been working in gambling for four and a half years.

All sorts of people come and see me for counselling, people from different backgrounds with various levels of education, people of all ages - young and old. I think the oldest client I have had is about 80.

I take a flexible approach to working with people. The way we work together is very much dependent upon what their needs are and what they're comfortable dealing with.

The warning signs for people who are developing a gambling problem are things like: spending a little bit too much time at venues; feeling as though they want to gamble more and more; gambling on their own; and spending more money than they can afford. When these things start happening, wanting to gamble more, and spending more money and more time gambling, it's a warning sign that a gambling problem might be developing.

I've seen a lot of people who have lost their family homes, lost their families, lost relationships and jobs due to gambling.

A number of my clients tell me that their gambling had made them consider suicide. They felt as though they were at the bottom of a pit, and couldn't see a way out. With a little bit of support, and with some strategies in place, they are able to turn their lives around.

If a person is committed, and they are willing to work hard, counselling is going to work. But, it's important that people get help as soon as they think they are developing a problem.

Often people come to see me when they have lost a lot of hope about their lives. They often feel powerless, that their gambling is controlling them and they can't stop.

Part of effective counselling is helping people believe in their own ability to make changes in their lives. When people feel out of control, it's very important that we get across to them that they are still in charge, and to help them believe in themselves again.

Through counselling we share stories about how people can and have changed. We talk about how people have actually stopped gambling and have turned around their gambling problems.

Counselling helps people maintain hope and a sense of hope is incredibly important in moving forward, it also plays a part in helping people commit to the change process.

If people need counselling and want to access the free services available, the first port of call is usually the free call number 1800 858 858.

Calling the number provides immediate assistance (counsellors are available 24 hours a day seven days a week) and you can also find out about free counselling services near you where you can make an appointment and get ongoing support and assistance.

It's really important that people understand that everything about a counselling service is free and confidential. And it's not just what is said in a counselling session that is confidential, even that counselling is taking place is confidential.

For example, I've had situations where friends, family members or partners of someone with a gambling problem have called and said "has so and so got an appointment" or "is so and so coming to see you". I tell them I can't give them any information. Having confidence in the confidentiality of counselling is critical to its success.

The number of counselling sessions someone has, and how often they come to counselling, very much depends on the person.

On average, we see people for somewhere between three to five sessions and we usually see them on a weekly basis. Though we certainly see people over a longer period of time and provide ongoing support.

Once people have their gambling behaviour under control, I usually see them on a monthly basis just to touch base, make sure that things are still OK and give them a place to talk if they need to.

Another important thing for people to realise is that help is available - they really just need to make a phone call – and none of us are scary!

I think a lot of people fear they are going to come to counselling and be told what a terrible person they are. That's not going to happen. No one is going to wave their finger at them and tell them they've been bad. There's no judgement involved.

Counselling is talking. We're here to help people learn how to deal with the issues in their life that are worrying them. We're about helping people find more positive ways of managing their own lives.

It's not scary, and once you call us or come see us you'll realise that it's actually OK. People end up feeling that counselling is a comfortable place to come. It's where they know they can get support and talk about things that they need to talk about.

I have an enormous amount of respect for people who take that step and actually come to see a counsellor. People make amazing changes when they're ready.

When someone is ready to break that cycle of silence, when they decide they no longer want to keep their gambling problem secret, they make some fantastic steps forward. Irrespective of what their backgrounds are, regardless of what they've done in the past, they can make some really big changes in their lives. It's supporting that change and seeing the result that's the most exciting thing for me.

"Michelle's Story" was developed for the website www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au and is reproduced here with permission of the Victorian Government

Harm Minimisation

Low-risk or “controlled” gambling

Some people decide they must stop gambling completely. Others may set time and money limits for gambling, or stay away from the gambling activities that cause the biggest problems. If the person decides to continue gambling, encourage him or her to reduce the risks.

Low-risk gambling means people:

- limit how much time and money they spend gambling
- accept their losses, and don't try to win them back
- enjoy winning, but know it happened by chance
- balance gambling with other fun activities
- don't gamble to earn money or pay debts
- don't gamble when their judgment is impaired by alcohol or other drugs
- never borrow money or use personal investments or family savings to gamble
- don't gamble to escape from problems or feelings
- don't hurt their job, health, finances, reputation or family through gambling

Pre-commitment

Pre-commitment technology provides a tool that can help gamblers set limits. It is available in some venues and jurisdictions. Australia is moving towards a national approach to provide this technology on all EGMs.

Financial Tools

MoneySmart is an initiative of the Australian Securities & Investments Commission. They offer tips & tools to help people make the most of their money. www.moneysmart.gov.au

TrackMySpend Track your personal expenses on the go with this free easy-to-use app. TrackMySpend Nominate a spending limit (per week, fortnight, month or year) and track your progress Separate 'needs' and 'wants' to identify opportunities to save. www.moneysmart.gov.au/tools-and-resources/calculators-and-tools/mobile-apps/trackmyspend

Stay-on-Track is a free mobile application for iphones and android mobile phones. It aims to help those who gamble to set a gambling budget and stick to it. It can be downloaded from the App store or Google play store. For more information see www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/stay-on-track

Self-Exclusion

Self Exclusion programs are available in all States and Territories (refer to page 50). For further information refer to www.gamblinghelponline.org.au.

Support groups

Gamblers Anonymous (GA) is a twelve step self-help fellowship formed to support those gambling problematically. For information on local groups contact the helpline 02 9628 5065 or www.gansw.org.au.

Gam Anon is similar to GA but for the family and friends of those gambling problematically. For information on local groups contact www.gansw.org.au/GamAnon/ or call 02 9628 5612.

SMART Recovery is a voluntary self-help group that assists people in recovering from alcohol, drug use and other addictive behaviours. The service offers face-to-face and on-line groups to people in the community who want and need help managing and overcoming their addictive behaviours.

SMART Recovery is based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The group helps people to understand, manage and change their irrational thoughts and actions. The SMART Recovery program is comprised of four key points:

1. building and maintaining motivation
2. coping with urges
3. problem solving
4. lifestyle balance

For further information about the program and local groups contact 02 9373 5100 or www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au.

Education, information and advocacy

The Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. is a health promotion charity established to support those affected by problem gambling. The service also promotes increased awareness of problem gambling issues amongst help services and the general community. It provides education, information and community advocacy on gambling and problem gambling issues. For more information contact 02 4421 5077 or www.gisnsw.org.au.

The GIS publication *Problem Gambling: A Self-Help Guide for Families* is a comprehensive 44 page guide for families affected by problem gambling. It is available in a hard copy and also free soft copy. www.gisnsw.org.au or www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/gambling-help/help-for-friends-and-family.

Insight Crystalis Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation that is committed to rebuilding and connecting community to lessen the destructive effects of problem gambling. Social isolation is a major contributing factor to gambling and other addictions. Their vision is that the provision of safe, recreational alternatives to poker machine gambling will make a difference to those who are in crisis due to gambling and social isolation. For more information contact www.chrysalisinsight.org.au.

The Free Yourself Program (FYP) was designed by Gabriela Byrne, an ex-problem-gambler, to provide help and hope to those fighting a poker machine gambling addiction and to their loved ones. It is a clear and simple self-help guide that teaches hands-on strategies on how to escape the “gambling trap”. For more information contact www.freeyourself.com.au.

8 | CONSUMER VOICES

Since its establishment in July 2000 the Gambling Impact Society (NSW) has been keen to encourage those affected by problem gambling to share their stories as a means to educate others about the impacts of problem gambling and the journey of recovery. For many years this was through the GIS quarterly newsletter - Impact News.

In 2012 the GIS received Department of Social Services funding to establish the Consumer Voices Community Education Program. A peer spokesperson program where those affected by problem gambling are trained to become public speakers.

Since its launch in May 2012 the program has been delivering free community education sessions to a range of community health services, welfare groups, students, and community service organisations across the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Sydney regions. These sessions are co-facilitated by a Gambling Counsellor and are available to any group interested to learn more about problem gambling. If you are interested in arranging a session for your group/staff members please contact the GIS through their website or email. www.gisnsw.org.au or email info@gisnsw.org.au.

The following stories are drawn from members of the Consumer Voices spokesperson team and/or stories that have been previously published in our newsletters. Some consumers choose to remain anonymous but all are the authentic stories of those struggling with this issue in their lives.

Thank you to these GIS members who have been willing to share their stories for the benefit of others. You can read and hear more personal stories at the GIS website www.gisnsw.org.au or subscribe online to receive the quarterly newsletter.

LOSING GAVIN

My name is Karen and I was married to a gambler, although I never knew it until it was too late. I was married to Gavin for 17 years, it was pretty much like most marriages are - tough going. Gavin was in the Navy, he was away a bit and we had two kids early in our marriage only 13 months apart. We were both young but we loved each other and that kept us together and kept us struggling on trying to solve the things that weren't quite right.

It was in June of 1998 that I decided I needed to finally do something for myself. I had been thinking for a long time that there had to be more to life - we couldn't just be here to work, buy things and die. So I started to go back to church. I made friends and slowly Gavin and I began talking, spending time together, not a lot, but it was a start. I stopped feeling so "hard done by" and realised it was up to me to help myself and make my life happy. It wasn't my husband's job to do that.

Gavin got a new job and he was so much happier, he'd hated where he was for about 18 months. Money was tight and we always seemed to be struggling. So new job - a little more money - things were looking up! Wrong... the money situation got worse. Gavin took care of all the finances, even the shopping. If I needed money he gave it to me. It just didn't seem right though. Others could have take-away or go for a weekend away, we both worked full time and had pretty good wages. Something just wasn't right!! I started asking why? Could he show me when payments were due and how much each one was? Gavin put this off for a long time until finally, he could no longer and showed me - all seemed to add up ...???

Monday 7th December - a letter from the bank - three cheques had bounced and the home loan was overdrawn. I had come home early and picked up the mail (with Gavin's new job he would have been able to come home when he felt like it to check the mail). "What's going on?" I ask "oh there's a mistake at the bank I'll fix it" he'd say.

Tuesday 8th December - very quiet Gavin laid on the bed most of the night saying he had hurt his back. Same on Wednesday. I went to a Christmas party with my church group. Gavin cooked tea, made the kids their favourite - spaghetti boll, he went outside & worked on his Ute (so my neighbours could tell me later). Later that night he went in and told Kirby (our daughter) that he loved her - Dale (our son) was asleep.

Thursday 10th December - 5.30 am I get up and get dressed. Gavin had slept on the lounge saying his back was too sore to sleep in bed. I was annoyed at this as the lounge was much worse for his back. I didn't say goodbye to him, even when he walked past me in the hall as I walked outside. It was a drizzly morning but cleared as I walked and realised that the night's events weren't worth it. I would tell Gavin how much I loved him when we got home that night as he would be gone when I got home from my walk. He was - he had just left his clothes on the bathroom floor, he had never in 20 years done that. I got dressed and went to work. It was a busy day and I had missed lunch. I was just making a snack when the phone rang. It was my pastor from church telling me I needed to come out there, there was a problem, he wouldn't say what. I told him he was scaring me, but thought on the way "Oh, it'll be nothing, Gavin might have finally gone to talk to them".

When I got there his Ute wasn't there, so it wasn't that. They took me into Pastor James's office, Janice was there, I had become very close to her, I sat down. Pastor James sat down and said "there's been an accident with Gavin" I said, "where is he, I want to see him" he then told me Gavin was dead and that he had taken his own life because he had been gambling...At that point it was just nothing, the world as I knew it had changed forever, there was nothing I could do to fix this situation, nothing, just nothing my world

had become one very big hole that engulfed me. I just wanted to die, the pain was so unbearable, it is truly like my insides had been torn away, and then the kids - how does a mother tell her kids that shocking news and know that they will feel like her?

I thought Kirby would never stop crying, it was heartbreaking again, I couldn't take away the pain. Dale didn't say much, as sixteen year old boys don't, he cried, but not like Kirby.

Then came the rest - the story unfolded, a briefcase filled with bills, loans and cheque books - it was unbelievable. How had I not seen this? Gavin had a post office box, all new loans, other than the car and house, went to it and as the bills came in, he would hang them on the hook on the fridge then a week later take them off and file them in his briefcase that was kept at work locked, I just thought he paid them. It all totalled to about \$120,000 plus our home loan about \$120,000. When you think about it, a lot, together we could have paid it off.

He left a letter, it said how the gambling had gotten the better of him. Gavin was a proud man, intelligent, very good-looking, a good sportsman, a mate, a dad, and had always been a good provider and very diligent. This was all so unbelievable. It is all so easy, just, last night I received a letter from one of the companies that re-possessed his Ute, asking if I would like a loan. They are just looking for easy targets, they have no morals!

It was twenty months this month that Gavin died and I still find it all so unbelievable and shocking. The changes that have been made won't stop others who are addicted to gambling ending up the same way and other families being shattered. We will never be the same - that which does not kill you, makes you stronger - by the grace of God!

Karen

ALKA-SELTZER

I could start this story with the typical G.A. (Gamblers anonymous) introduction, "Hi, my name is... and I'm a gambler and have been free of my addiction for (X) many days." But like all addictions, the beginnings all have their individual stories... Unique, just like all of us.

My gambling story began when I was a child...

I came from your typical 'nuclear' family, but unfortunately my family suffered a forced cell division in the form of the passing of my mother to cancer.

Victoria, in those days, did not yet have EGMs or pokies and wasn't to get them for another 4 years. (At least in hotels and clubs). My father continued to work and take care of us as he always had for another 3 years after my mum died. Our circumstances changed when my brother was diagnosed with an intellectual disorder and my father made the decision to leave the workforce to look after my brother as a full time carer.

He later made friendships with other women and began a steady relationship with a woman who later turned out to have many addictions, including alcohol, marijuana and later pokies.

He was steady with her for a tumultuous few years when he finally separated from her. By then the addictions had now been passed on and the money from the redundancy completely dried up.

The next hellish few years of my life were lived out in the parking lots of hotels, particularly on Tuesday afternoons. All three of us hoping and praying the pokie gods gave dad a break, so we could enjoy a few short days spending the win and eating like kings. The other eventuality, more often the case, was we went home empty and broke with little to no food left in the pantry to survive the fortnight. This would require one of us to go and get a food parcel from St Vinnie's or the likes to get us through the week.

I had a hatred of poker machine unlike anything else I know. I would refuse to enter venues my mate frequented simply on the grounds they had pokies. Back then this wasn't much of a problem as EGM venues weren't as prevalent as today.

My father's issue, as I see it now, was the substitution of his issues. He filled the loss of his relationships with the numbness of a poker machine, endlessly chasing little victories trying to chase a win.

And my gambling addiction began in much the same way. My relationship to my now wife was in a stressful period and I needed to send her to live away due to university and health reasons. I was required to stay in location due to work. This separation created a hole in my life that I sought to fill by way of entertaining myself.

To chase away the boredom of being temporarily single, I started going to Texas Hold'em poker nights at the local club. In between registration and game, my friends and I would pass the time by 'having a slap' on the Pokies, at first only occasionally and only small amounts, but later the denominations got larger and I started going by myself to the club.

I had a forced break from the pokies in the form of a location change to the west coast. (WA has no pokies in pubs and clubs). But on my return to the east coast the problem very quickly reignited itself with a greater force.

I had now been able to save a substantial amount of money and I was living in the inner suburbs of Sydney, so access to pokies was considerable. My wife had now cottoned on to the issue as our bank account was taking considerable and frequent hits as my boredom breaker started eating large amounts of money.

I started to camouflage the problem by shifting money around our bank accounts and 'stashing' amounts of money specifically for playing on the pokies. Like Alka-Seltzer dropped in water, the trust in our relationship was dissolving and every time I agitated or aggravated the situation our trust would dissolve further.

My wife finally moved back up to NSW and we began living together once again, but secretly I still had an addiction with the pokies that I was dealing with. The money had dried up or was now tied up in assets we'd purchased. Now I was dipping into our credit cards and overdraft. The final blow came when I failed to perform not only as a partner but as a parent as well.

My work mates and I were celebrating our end of year breakup, I had been enjoying myself and the company of my friends, the celebration was coming to an end and we migrated to other areas of the bar, I found my way to the gaming room. Earlier my wife had telephoned me to ensure that I called into the pharmacy to get some Panadol for the children, as two of them were sick with the flu. By this time all the local chemists had now closed.

In the throws of what I thought were to become the last moments of our relationship, heated words were said and brash decisions, which saw us separated for some 9 months. The stigma attached to admitting addiction caused me to dive further into an abyss of debt and relationship woes. I finally made the decision to see someone, regardless of the impact on my job or my standing in my social circle. (Unbeknown to me, my friends were already acutely aware of my gambling habit). I soon began to rein in control of my vice and with that the beneficial side effect of regaining the affection of my wife. The journey to recovery has not been without mishap, but the changes I've made in seeking counselling have limited the damage that previously would have been considerable.

Had I continued to 'deal with it' myself I believe I would have continued to carry on my destructive path to it's crushing end.

I would like to thank the GIS and Kate Roberts for helping me in my recovery.

Like Alka-Seltzer dropped in water, the trust in our relationship was dissolving and every time I agitated or aggravated the situation our trust would dissolve further.

A PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

Until a couple of years ago, I thought my story was rare. I felt like the loneliest person in the world. Today I know differently. When our first child was born five years ago, life couldn't have been better. I was married to a wonderful man, had a beautiful home we had both worked so hard to buy and renovate and had just started a family.

Our life was shattered when our son was just six months old. I came home one day to find a letter from my husband telling me that he was a compulsive gambler. His addiction to poker machines was getting out of control and he didn't know how to stop. Those two words 'compulsive gambler' were never part of my vocabulary. Why would they be? This type of thing could never happen in my life - or so I naively thought. When David finally came home that night we talked about the problem and he promised me that he would stop gambling and get some help. I believed him - why wouldn't I? This was the man whom I was going to spend the rest of my life with, my best-friend, a hard-worker and wonderful father. That promise didn't last long...

Within a few months he was stealing blank cheques out of the cheque book that I thought I had hidden so well! Obtained credit cards from various banks and eventually personal loans. All of which I knew nothing about. This went on for the next couple of years during which time we would borrow against our mortgage to pay off the debts and the promises started all over again.

In 1998 we decided to sell our home and move out of Sydney, something I had been wanting to do for a while. We also thought the change would do David good, and it did - for about 6 months. We bought another house and David got a new job. I thought our move had paid off. When I was three months pregnant with our second child, the bomb dropped again. David had started gambling again. This time it was much worse, more than I could ever imagine. As well as credit cards and personal loans, David started to take things from our

home to hock at pawnbrokers. He would find out when I wasn't there and nick home to grab something to sell. A simple task such as walking to the corner shop now seemed out of my reach, I would have knots in my stomach and upon arriving back home would run around checking to see what was missing. Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, he started embezzling money from employers. Not even the birth of our second son seemed to make a difference. His whole life had become consumed by pokies.

In early 2000 I accepted what I had known for so long, there was nothing I could do to stop him from gambling. I felt angry, betrayed, ashamed and useless. What had I done to make him gamble? This man who I had loved so much, had slipped away, I didn't know him anymore. I packed up the kids and left - a feeling which left me sick to my stomach! The following weeks seemed such a blur. There were endless arguments and blame thrown from both sides. The amount gambled away over the years amounts to around \$200,000 although we will never really know.

Twelve months on and David has not gambled for a few months and is slowly rebuilding his life. We have both been attending counselling, GA and GAMANON meetings for some time now. What a lifeline they have been - I don't know where I would have been today without them.

I still love David very much and I don't know when or if we will get back together. I suppose a lot of people find it hard to understand how I could still love him after all that has happened. But he is still the same person I fell in love with 15 years ago. He is still my best friend, he still makes me laugh, he still puts up with my moods and he is still the father of my two kids. The most wonderful, beautiful boys in the world - who still adore and love their Daddy.

Yes, I still get angry, hurt and sad, but the rage that was within me for so long has now gone. What is the point of being bitter and angry for

the rest of my life? I have my faults too, just like everyone, and I hope I am learning from them.

The best thing that I can do now is learn to take care of myself, raise my two gorgeous boys and hope David and I can learn from this experience and build a new, better life together. We'll just take "one day at a time".

Maree

SALLY'S STORY

Up until I started school, my father had been in the Navy. He was often at sea, and as a result, I have few memories of him during that time. He left the Navy not long after I started Kindergarten, and for some time, was to take on the role of primary carer while my mother worked full time.

This arrangement worked quite well, Dad would walk us to school, and be there to walk us home as soon as the bell rang. After a while, it seemed that Dad felt that my eldest sister could take on a little responsibility, and some days, it would fall to her to make sure we got home safely. Then, Dad stopped picking us up all together.

One of my most profound memories of my father during that time is from when I was 6. I had stayed home from school sick, Mum had told Dad what to do to look after me and left for work. I was so excited - all my siblings had to go to school and I got to stay home! It was a great morning, Dad let me watch cartoons, and we even watched one of his favourite movies together. At around midday, Dad said he was ducking down the road for a minute and told me to keep the door locked until he came home. Not long after 3pm, my

sisters arrived home from school, and Dad was still not home. My illness had become worse, and my eldest sister was furious. She rang the number to the Bowling Club down the road (the number was on our list of emergency contacts) and sure enough, Dad was there.

Another memory my siblings and I clearly recall are the days when the milkman would come around to collect the money we owed him for the week. Mum would leave the money out where we could get it, and often, we would be standing at the door trying to explain that Mum had left it in the morning, but it just wasn't there when we came home.

Some of the lowest points for my family came not too long before my parents' marriage ended. One day, Mum went to do the grocery shopping, and found the bank account empty. She marched to the Bowling Club and demanded the money back from Dad. All he had left to give her was \$50 and that's all the money that Mum had to feed 6 people.

The real betrayal came after Mum had done everything that she was advised to do, she rearranged finances so Dad wouldn't have access to cash, arranged for the mortgage to come directly out of her pay and attended Gambling Anonymous meetings with Dad. After a while, Dad was determined that he could go on his own. As it turned out, he was skipping the meetings and going to play the pokies instead. Then one day, Mum told Dad she was going to the bank in her lunch break to see how far ahead on the mortgage they were, she was so excited. When she got to the bank, she was told that Dad had been in - starting out sporadically and becoming increasingly regular - and withdrawing money on the mortgage. It had gone from being well in the black, to the point that we were facing losing our home. When Mum went home to confront Dad, he was gone, taking our only car, and had left a note saying "I'm sorry."

COPING ALONE A father's concern

Ever since, Dad has had very little part in our lives. Mostly, he would call on our birthdays and Christmas, the background noise was mostly the music from the pokies. We can't trust him to the point where I don't carry more than \$20 cash with me on the rare occasions we do see him. I don't really have any kind of relationship with him, my rare phone calls are brief and I never visit unaccompanied, just because there is nothing to say. He won't admit to having a problem with gambling, and either doesn't recognise or blatantly ignores the impact that it has had on his four children and his relationship with them. It also makes us sad that at the end of the day, he has nothing – he doesn't own his own home, or a car, he doesn't have happy memories of watching his children grow up and has essentially become no more than a spectator in their lives.

Sally (aged 22)

I envy the gambling addict who has support. To have a loving, caring sensible person around—so close at hand to help overcome this monster of addiction is something I can only hope for, for my son, but that someone seems a remote possibility.

At present my relationship with my gambling son is at an all-time low. Since my wife and I first became aware of his gambling problem my feelings have swung from anger to sympathy to despair. Even fear has taken hold on some occasions, a fear that his loneliness, in facing the difficulty of making ends meet and suffering feelings of guilt, he might do something desperate.

To begin with, when he first got into trouble over his uncontrolled gambling my wife and I went to his aid. We did the wrong thing. We paid his debts - on more than one occasion. He made promises and never kept them. He betrayed our trust and I was furious. I wanted to disown him, leave him out of our will. We finally learnt that giving him money was the worst possible thing to do. We resolved that that would never happen again, even if a gaol sentence threatened. I often wonder if we would ever allow that to happen - probably not. How easy it is for people around the gambler to become enmeshed. How difficult it is to divorce oneself from the problems of a loved one, even though one tries to put it at the back of the mind, forget about it and get on with life.

As I said before, I have felt angry, so angry that on many occasions, particularly when my son's gambling has affected other members of the family; when the paying of rent to a brother, another of our sons, has not happened and when in a drunken state (drinking being part of the problem) he arrives home and causes an uproar, a fight. And worst of all, when he neglects to contact his mother to enquire how she is after a major operation. But then my hostile feelings turn to sympathy. The anger dissipates, I feel a great sadness and, once again, I

know that I can't be too hard on our troubled son because I realise that what he does is beyond his control. I realise he feels guilty and he is all ALONE.

The worst part about his addiction as far as we are concerned has been the fall-off in communication. He lives in Sydney and we live in Nowra. Whereas our other adult children ring us on a regular basis, we rarely hear from our eldest, our gambler son. We put it down, once again to feelings of guilt. Why communicate with those I have hurt so much, must be the only reason we know because we know that he loves us.

Helping him is not something we can do because although he understands he has a problem he doesn't recognise that he needs help, regular help. I've spoken to him about this on a number of occasions, but like many gamblers, I believe that he doesn't think anyone else can help.

Perhaps he doesn't want anyone, particularly a stranger, to intrude into his addictive life?

All alone with his problem and no friends. He used to speak of the friends he had but we soon realised that they were a myth. His only friends were acquaintances, people he met at the club or pub. Anyone he had as a friend at all, he soon lost because, as with us, he borrowed money with which to gamble and pay debts and didn't pay it back. At one time he shared accommodation with a friend but before long he was looking for another room. He had failed to repay borrowed money.

What of the future? I worry about this because he has no assets at all. Although he is in his forties, he has no money in the bank, no investments, no home to call his own and no partner or real friends with whom to share the remainder of his life. The question is always at the back of my mind - "When his mother and I are not around what

will become of him?" I can only hope that he will not divorce himself entirely from his two brothers and sister. Better still, I keep hoping for a dramatic change in his life when he is able to save money instead of gambling it away and take steps to look after his health which he has neglected to do.

As I come to the end of this article, I must add that just recently there were some signs of change for the better - rent is being paid regularly, some money owed is being paid back, less alcohol is being consumed and junk food is less often on the menu. Along with my wife, I can only hope and pray that our son will eventually emerge from the world of addiction.

A worried but hopeful father

A JOURNEY OF RECOVERY...

My story has a long history of gambling, beginning when I was first allowed to get into clubs. It started as just a game & fun with friends. This led in time to me spending more time at poker machines than I intended. At the time I felt I had it under control and could give it up at any time. I chose not to give it up. My losses were only small and occasionally I received a reassuring win which encouraged me to play even more. There was a sense at that stage that I could beat the machines. Also, 25 years ago the machines used small bets and only required coins, as a result it was difficult to lose substantial amounts of money in a short period of time. I gradually increased my playing i.e. spending longer. I justified that this was entertainment.

I continued this pattern for about ten years and during that period I never considered myself as having an addiction. There were however periods in those years where I did stop for months on end, but I always managed to return. It was during these periods, where I returned to gambling, that I felt I developed my emotional connection with the machines. I didn't believe it at the time but upon reflection, it was linked to periods in my life where I wasn't connecting with my feelings. Not knowing what to do with these I drowned myself in gambling on poker machines. It seemed to work at that time.

I got married in my thirties and my partner never knew anything about my gambling. I was not open enough to explain. I suspect that I knew that it was a problem but never wanted to show that I had a weakness. Initially my gambling was not active when we first started our marriage together, but gradually it crept in with occasional binges at pubs and clubs. What I was totally ignorant about was that now I had a shared bank account, all these transactions were open to scrutiny. I initially explained these with lies about my expenses etc. As my gambling continued these could not be explained away as easily and eventually I confessed - more that, I was found out, after the amounts became ridiculous.

This was the first time that I openly discussed my gambling. My gambling was initially kept under wraps between myself and my wife as we considered that this could be resolved between us i.e. me to just stop gambling. Months passed where I didn't return to gambling. But eventually I returned and again I was found out. This pattern occurred every 12 months or so and sometimes more regularly. I eventually started seeing a counsellor, however I was not ready to let go and really explain my addiction and at times the counsellor also believed that this was not a problem with gambling but something to do with my level of communication. Yes, my communication with people was not great and I tended to shy away from intimate discussions but at the time I was relieved as it gave me the opportunity to blame my behaviour on something else rather than dealing with my addiction. At that time I didn't like being labelled with an addiction.

Over the following years I repeated my behaviour and pattern over and over again, damage to my marriage was severe. It wasn't until I commenced GA that I eventually took some responsibility for actions and admitted that I had an addiction. The GA process helped me to come to terms with what this addiction meant to me and how it was affecting me. This was most evident whilst listening to other members tell their story and finding out that I had similar experiences and feelings. It was great to feel not alone in this addiction and be able to share my experiences. I was also continuing my counselling sessions and together with my experiences with GA was able to get something out of these sessions. It also gave me the opportunity to look at my history, this was scary stuff.

In an attempt to get to know myself better I attended a 3 week program, full time at Maryfields Day Centre, Campbelltown. The whole course was developed to look into ones-self and explore feelings, attempt to resurrect them and discuss them with either your Counsellor or other members of the group. The whole experience was very powerful and I still recall many of those experiences.

My gambling returned from time to time with devastating effects on our marriage. The trust was all but gone. To make matters worse, I had a major bust whilst my wife was away overseas. This was the worst bust I had and the most amount of money lost. I'm still baffled by my actions as to how I was ever going to be able to explain this huge loss. This was another nail in the coffin of our marriage and trust. To my wife's credit she still managed to soldier on and support me as best she could.

After many more years of counselling and GA I had more periods and longer periods where I didn't gamble. But every now and then it resurrected itself. But now it wasn't the amount of money that was lost but the level of distrust I was demonstrating. During all these years of gambling I never allowed myself to confess that I was gambling again. It was always that I was found out in some way.

This process was more than emphasised in my last gambling event more than 2 years ago. For a number of months I had been gambling during my lunch hour at work. Inevitably I gambled longer than the hour allocated to me and often well beyond. Eventually I came under suspicion at work and was pulled up before management. Instead of seeking support from friends, colleagues or counselling, I went it alone. Management were threatening to fire me and still I kept it to myself. It was only that, we were embarking on a family reunion overseas and my wife was about to pay for the tickets, that

I told my wife what was happening. It was a great relief to me that she supported me at this difficult time, although she was probably fuming underneath. Even with all the support of family and friends I unfortunately lost my job. This was the wake up call, I have not gambled since.

The things that have helped me most during these last two years has been that I have self-excluded from all pubs in about a 50 km radius of my home, also all the nearby clubs. I have had also the support of my wife, and slowly some of the trust between us has increased which has given me more confidence in our marriage. My work situation has changed considerably, initially I was working in a small business, which we established, totally unrelated to my profession. This probably also assisted me in breaking the pattern I had established over the years. I have now returned to my profession, on a consulting basis, which has restored my confidence in returning to my profession.

Though over the past 25 years my life has been plagued by gambling, I now believe that it has come to an end. This is a great relief for me, and I suspect, one for my family and friends.

Leo

DEALING WITH RELAPSE

For the past twenty years of his life my husband must have been struggling with the effects of gambling. However it is only in the past five years that he and I (wife of 12 years) have realised the seriousness of this disorder. A major relapse in his health and significant financial damage to our assets, finally convinced both of us that he had a serious problem for which we both sought professional help. Up until then, his occasional binges had been reasonably insignificant in expenditure although emotionally damaging, in indulging in what I had seen, as a somewhat bizarre behaviour often due to stress.

However, the magnitude of the 1997 “bust” led to an awakening of the family to face the impacts of what was clearly a “pathological gambling disorder”. This was a difficult time for all, involving not just ourselves but the extended family and in many ways I felt I was the guilty party for breaking the family secrets, reflecting the difficulties back to the family and shattering the “no worries” image. To make it worse possibly, from the family’s perspective, I was already a social worker with a wide range of views on social justice to which gambling became an extension - I’m sure the family loved and hated me at the same time!

However, five years down the track we are now facing the reality of this disorder and learning more and more about how to deal with it in our lives. As a partner, dealing with relapses has been a difficult journey and one which has demanded a lot of energy and emotional strength. One of the biggest fears in dealing with the effects of gambling on one’s life as a partner is the inescapable feelings of mistrust and anguish about the possibility that your partner may through his own problem be the cause of your “undoing”. For me it felt that at any given moment I could have the carpet pulled out from under my feet. I used to feel that I was living on egg shells and that at any moment “this

monster could jump out of the cave to grab me”. Consequently, this meant I was often suspicious of my husband, checking on his movements, questioning and generally wanting to feel more “in control”.

When relapses occurred they were usually the result of me finding out through my gut instincts and curiosity rather than being told. My reactions were often driven by fear and uncertainty, resulting in anger, emotional trauma and accusations. Often leaving me feeling drained, scared and totally disempowered in the face of this disorder.

However, overall I have been determined not to be a victim of this problem. Through much support through the likes of GamAnon, professional counselling, self-help reading and drawing on my professional experiences, I have learnt new and proactive ways of dealing with both the possibility and the reality of relapses.

What this means in practice is an increasing confidence in myself to both protect myself and my family, whilst supporting my husband. It has meant taking on more financial responsibilities and necessitating a greater awareness of financial management opportunities.

We have adjusted his access to cash and limited access to cheques which has helped me feel more secure, without reducing his involvement in financial planning. We have worked out how and who will access ATM cards and how he will access funds safely when needed. We have worked on telling each other how we feel about the situation and have confided in each other’s need for support when the other is feeling daunted. I have found myself less likely to react and more likely to respond when faced with a relapse and no longer jump to anger to deal with my fears and pain.

HOW MY LIFE HAS CHANGED

Many of you may have grand children and you would know how addicted they can become to games on the computer or the TV. I even joke with my son-in-law who plays ‘Words with Friends’ that he can hardly put his phone down, and if he does, it constantly beeps with someone on it wanting to play. At least these addictions do not cost money like poker machines.

I had never entered a club until I was in my forties. I hated poker machines, so you would wonder how a person like me could become addicted. I went to please my husband who was playing music in clubs and hotels. After my marriage ended I found I could play the poker machines and forget all my pain and worries, but if I thought I had pain and worry during the breakup of my marriage, it was nothing to what I ended up with through gambling on poker machines. I became Dr .Jeckle and Mrs Hyde. I was a successful business woman with a prosperous business and on the other hand I felt ashamed and hid the gambling person from as many as I could. I did not play because I needed money; it was an emotional need. I was selling assets. I lost my beautiful home – the home I loved. And I borrowed from the bank to feed my addiction. I kept going until it caught up with me and I sought help. I eventually went to GA and they have been a great help; and I continue to attend. With GA I have also had the opportunity to assist in helping others with a gambling problem.

Greg from Mission Australia is my counsellor and continues to help and support me. I was a fairly proud and private person, and as I had a business, I was very reluctant to ban myself from any of the clubs that I used to go to. Somehow I knew that I needed to do this, but I just couldn’t bring myself to do it. Finally, one day, a close friend of mine whom I respected, said that she had banned herself from the clubs, and I suppose that was an

The result of this has been my husband is more willing to share his own fears and emotions and a sense that we are working this out together. He still has difficulty telling me about his weaknesses and I still have difficulty not checking up occasionally, but overall, we have shifted in our attitude and this has made dealing with relapse a more positive and less damaging event.

Thankfully the opportunities have been small and the nature of this disorder in my husband as being stress driven, combined with the recovery work he has been doing, has meant the gaps between relapses has steadily increased.

Right now we are dealing with a crisis, but that’s another story - it is relapse driven but comes after almost two years of non-gambling. The financial damage is minimal and the emotional damage whilst painful, is manageable and has meant that more in roads have been made into self-care and therapeutic initiatives.

I am not sure there will ever be a time when a relapse may not be around the corner, but I know that I can deal with them either constructively or destructively - I know, because I have experienced both. I will not allow the possibility of a relapse to influence my life unduly - that would be like waiting for the sky to fall in and we all know the story of Henny Penny don’t we?

Kate

WAKING FROM THE NIGHTMARE

important turning point for me. I decided that if she could do it, I could too. So I went ahead and also banned myself from the two clubs that I frequently went to and which I felt posed the greatest problems for me.

Another key moment in my recovery was when my daughter visited me one morning and said, 'Mum, go back to be the person you were.' That afternoon I had an appointment with Greg and when I went to see him he also said, 'Be the person you want to be'. Greg confirmed what my daughter had said to me, and the message hit home. I could indeed be the person I wanted to be if I just quit gambling.

I prayed that God would direct me to a church that I could fit into and feel comfortable in. He did. I now attend a church that accepts me for who I am. I am no longer ashamed. I enjoy the church and love the people who go there. I have made many wonderful friends who have been a wonderful support to me. God has really answered my prayer, and my life is so happy and full of hope.

My life has changed. I am now healthier, and free to live my life and enjoy it to the full. I am happier than I have been for a very long time. I now wish to help those under the grip of gambling to taste the freedom of a life without gambling.

I have had the opportunity on a number of occasions to tell my story through the 'Consumer Voices Program' run by the Gambling Impact Society. Thank you for allowing me to tell my story

Stella

It lasted for a long time. A few years have passed, since we, our addicted son and our other children emerged from a long, dark tunnel.

Over the previous years – nearly 20 – it was a roller-coaster ride. First came shock, then disbelief, when we first became aware of the extent of our son's gambling addiction. Then followed anger, frustration, lack of sympathy and fear; a fear that his debts and depression would lead to something terrible.

He had no savings and no other assets and marriage was only a remote possibility. To feed his addiction, he stole money from his employer and was consequently sacked. Hopes were raised when he soon acquired a new job but they were again dashed as he lived a lifestyle he could not afford. He was in the grip of depression. Loss of friends (he didn't pay back money lent), changes in accommodation, withdrawal from family, lack of communication with us and knowledge of his occasional drunken behaviour caused us to be suspicious and angry. How could this happen to our son? He was a contradiction of his former self. We were at a loss to find help for him, let alone interest in the problem of gambling addiction.

It was only when we became involved with Gam-anon, and then with the Gambling Impact Society, that we began to feel a real sympathy for him; his inability to control his urge to gamble; to gamble till it hurt. The friends we made, and still have, all victims of out-of-control gambling in one way or another, helped us tremendously; they gave us strength and helped us to understand, forgive and love our son, unreservedly, again.

We had never doubted that, at times, he did try to rid himself of the urge to gamble but, overwhelmed by the desire to play the pokies (loneliness was always there), and having no one for support and not believing anyone could step in and help him, it was all

downhill into further difficulties. His siblings wanted to help him to get back on his feet; first his sister, then his brother. This worked well at first but then promises of rent were continually broken which greatly impacted on the financial commitments of his siblings who had mortgages to pay. We could not stand by and watch our daughter's life ruined and we supported her in her having to tell him 'to go'. Tough love! Things went well for a time but the gambling hadn't stopped. (albeit less so), as we later found out, and soon a real crisis developed – a more critical one.

Living so far away from him; he in Sydney and we in the Shoalhaven and lack of access to professional help, disempowered us, completely, or so we thought.

Then, despite all the hurdles, red lights and brick walls, a light appeared unexpectedly at the end of the dark tunnel. While living in his brother's house he managed to cope, somehow, for a while, but then he was unable to pay the rates and electricity bills. Added to this, the car that he was using to get to and from work and to do his job, belonged to his boss who was about to sell it. Without a car - the means to look for a job and get to work - and unable to pay his debts, our son faced this crisis: unemployment, mounting debt, deeper depression and, dare I say it, possibly the gutter and even worse.

This was not only a crisis point for our son; it was a crisis for us, too. He was our loved son, after all, and we did not want his problem to further impact on our family. We had told him previously that we wouldn't give him any further money but, nevertheless, he rang (a rare event) and told us of his problems, hoping we would change our minds.

Giving him money was not an option. After much soul searching however, we told him what we would like to do to help; he was

to send to us his household bills, which we would personally pay by cheque, and then we would arrange to buy his boss's car which he had been using. He was overwhelmed. He couldn't believe what we were about to do. We felt great relief and satisfaction in the belief that we might be responsible for "slaying the monster", at last.

Our plan, hopefully, would not only save his job, but help with his mental well-being and, perhaps, save his life. We could only hope that our plan would work.

Since then, 2003, the gambling has stopped, he's always had a job, he's regained some self-esteem and confidence, he is happy and part of the family again and takes great pleasure in being with his niece – a five-year old. I think she sees him as a grandfather! However, our son still lives his life for today; tomorrow is not to worry about (except for us) and he has virtually no assets. We, being old, worry about what the future holds for him. At least, the scourge of pokies, and the pain, is a thing of the past, we hope.

To survive from the gambling labyrinth, with its lures, enticements and gimmicks, has taken its toll, and the Clubs Industry is to be condemned for the misery it inflicts on society.

Survivors; a Father and Mother, and a Beloved Son

RALPH'S STORY

I first started gambling at age of 8 years with SP bookmaker. I grew up in a gambling culture of horse racing/greyhounds, watched two up games in the bush on Sunday afternoons (which were often raided by the police).

Fund raising functions always had forms of gambling; chocolate wheels, crown and anchor, card games, mechanical racing tracks, raffles, sweeps, housie housie now bingo, and illegal poker machines (prior to 1956).

These was run by sporting clubs, charities, the catholic church; raising money to build schools. Mainly this was widely accepted by the community and was the norm.

I started work in 1957 at Roseberry, it was a large government department, there was a sp bookmaker, always there, and you could put bets on the races most days and football for the weekends. Credit was available also.

My gambling was rather small at this stage, but it did begin to increase as I started frequenting the races and greyhounds.

I played rugby league regularly until into my 30's and attended many gambling nights to raise money for the club. These were illegal, and food and drinks were mostly free.

As the clubs grew, due to poker machines, the scene changed a bit and clubs grew much larger and became a major part of people's lives. I personally remained focused on horse racing and greyhounds.

I worked in many clubs and witnessed patrons develop a gambling problem , losing fortunes, their family, businesses, friends, self-respect and sometimes lives.

I know in the long run you cannot beat the machines but I developed a gambling problem which is hard to admit to and hard to break. I classify myself as the typical problem gambler "when you win, it is not enough and when you lose, you have to chase it" hoping to win back the loss or I am due for a win.

I can remember when poker machines were introduced in 1956 in NSW, the tab / totaliser agency board 1965. This gradually put SP bookmaking out of business and added more revenue to the state coffers.

The introduction of the tab to clubs and pubs during the 80's had a big impact on me, as I could gamble on the races and watch every race. It was fairly comfortable and you could have a drink to celebrate or, drown your sorrows.

Then poker machines were introduced into the pubs so you had the lot at your disposal.

My connection with poker machines increased from this point but my main venues remained with the clubs. I could gamble on the races all afternoon and switch to the pokies, sit on a comfortable stool and stay to closing.

In November 2001, 12 years ago, my problem with gambling had escalated. I had a fairly good stream of money coming in and I was away from home for long periods due to my work in regional areas. I was losing large amounts of money and my relationship was suffering. One morning, I woke up after a bad Saturday evening on the pokies, my partner refused to talk to me. Our relationship was on the ropes. I was depressed, broke and felt lousy.

I wanted to change things then. After an early morning walk and much thinking, I decided to seek help. I rang the gambling helpline and began seeing a problem gambling counselor. That was the most important phone call I have ever made.

My recovery has been over 12 years with a couple of relapses but it is nearly 5 years now since I last gambled.

My life is much happier and I have gained confidence and renewed friendships with family and friends. It is fantastic to be able to speak to you here and hope that my experience can benefit you.

SCREENS AND HANDOUTS

for your clients this section includes

- 1 Short Gambling Quiz
- 2 Gambling Self-Monitoring Chart
- 3 Concerned Others Gambling Screen (COGS)
- 4 Checklist for Families

SHORT QUIZ

The Short Gambling Quiz

- In the past 12 months have you gambled more than you intended to?
_____yes _____ no
- In the past 12 months have you claimed to be winning money when you were not?
_____yes _____ no
- In the past 12 months have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble?
_____yes _____ no
- In the past 12 months have people criticized your gambling?
_____yes _____ no
- In the past 12 months have you had money arguments centred on gambling?
_____yes _____ no
- In the past 12 months did you feel you had to persist until you won?
_____yes _____ no
- If you answered yes to 2 or more of these questions, how often has it happened?
_____ once
_____ only sometimes
_____ often

SELF MONITORING

Self-Monitoring Gambling or Urges to Gamble

Learning to understand and control gambling urges is an important step in regaining control over gambling behaviour. Using this tool will help you discover gambling patterns, triggers and coping strategies that are working.

| Date | Time | Type | Where | With Whom | Mood | Gambled? | Time Spent | Net Won/ Lost |
|------|------|------|-------|-----------|------|----------|------------|---------------|
| | | | | | | | | |

Comments:

Consequences if gambled:

Coping strategies if not:

| Date | Time | Type | Where | With Whom | Mood | Gambled? | Time Spent | Net Won/ Lost |
|------|------|------|-------|-----------|------|----------|------------|---------------|
| | | | | | | | | |

Comments:

Consequences if gambled:

Coping strategies if not:

| Date | Time | Type | Where | With Whom | Mood | Gambled? | Time Spent | Net Won/ Lost |
|------|------|------|-------|-----------|------|----------|------------|---------------|
| | | | | | | | | |

Comments:

Consequences if gambled:

Coping strategies if not:

Counselling can help you resolve problems caused by gambling and consider ways to lower your risk by stopping, reducing or modifying your gambling. Contact the Gambling Helpline 24 hour support and referral service 1800 858 858 for information. Services are free, confidential and available in many languages.

COGS

Concerned Others Gambling Screen (COGS)

Screening for those affected by another's gambling

Pre-ambule:

Sometimes someone else's gambling can affect the health and well-being of others. The gambling behaviour is often hidden and unexpected, while its effects can be confusing, stressful and long-lasting. To help us identify if this is a factor in your own well-being could you answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

COGS Screen

1. Do you think you have been affected by someone else's gambling?
 - No, never (you need not continue further)
 - I don't know for sure
 - Yes, in the past
 - Yes, that's happening to me now
2. How would you describe the effect of that person's gambling on you now? (identify one or more)
 - I'm uncertain
 - I worry about it sometimes
 - I am nervous about it
 - It is affecting my health
 - It is hard to talk with anyone about it
 - I am concerned about my or my family's safety
 - It doesn't affect me anymore
3. When I think about it, gambling has sometimes caused me problems. (identify one or more)
 - I would like some information
 - I would like to talk about it in confidence with someone
 - I would like some support or help
 - Nothing at this stage

CHECKLIST FOR FAMILY

Is There a Gambling Problem in Your Family?

Sometimes gambling problems are right out in the open. Sometimes the family only gradually comes to realise that there is something wrong. You may be uncertain about whether there is a problem or how serious it is.

Some warning signs that may indicate a gambling problem in an adult:

Money

- there is less money available, although income has not changed
- debts are building up
- money has gone missing from a bank account or wallet, or valuables have disappeared
- spending priorities or habits have changed
- a person holds a second job, but there is no change in his or her finances
- RRSPs, insurance plans, etc., have been cashed in or allowed to lapse
- a person commits criminal acts to obtain money for gambling or to pay gambling debts.

Behaviour

The person:

- avoids family functions or other social events
- neglects responsibilities or makes excuses
- arrives late for work or other commitments
- disappears for large blocks of time
- spends a lot of time on sports statistics, racing forms or phone calls.

Relationships

The person:

- withdraws from family and friends
- appears preoccupied
- appears deceptive or secretive about his or her behaviour, particularly around money
- appears to be edgy, reactive or defensive
- changes his or her sleep, eating or sexual relationship patterns.

Some warning signs that may indicate a gambling problem in an adolescent:

The young person:

- can't account for missing money
- skips school
- borrows or steals money from friends or family
- sometimes has large amounts of unexplained cash
- has a fake ID, casino entry card, race track or ProLine receipts among belongings
- is preoccupied with video arcades, Internet gambling sites or day trading
- has left a trail of Internet visits or credit card charges to gambling sites.

Counselling is available to anyone affected by gambling problems and can help you understand what is happening and support you in dealing with the problems caused by gambling. Contact the Gambling Helpline 24 hour support and referral service 1800 858 858 for information. Services are free, confidential and available in many languages.

SUGGESTED READING

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Other Resources

Problem Gambling: A Self-Help Guide for Families - www.gisnsw.org.au

Practical Financial Strategies Booklet: A Self Help Guide for Problem Gamblers By Gerri Coleman (Central Coast Problem Gambling Service) www.problemgambling.net.au

Free Yourself Self-help Guide and Audio Tape kit - www.freeyourself.com.au

My Passionate Affair with Poker Machines (DVD) www.freeyourself.com.au

Free Yourself (DVD) www.freeyourself.com.au

Women & Gambling Information Kit - Karen Richardson & Kate Roberts - www.gisnsw.org.au

Less than Even: The Hidden Cost of Gambling - DVD www.gisnsw.org.au

Against the Odds - Youth & Gambling - Discussion CD www.gisnsw.org.au

No More Bets Please - DVD. www.monkeysee.com.au or sales@livingsolutionsbookshop.com.au

Know the Odds - Community Discussion Paper - www.gisnsw.org.au

Problem Gambling Help Sheets - www.gisnsw.org.au

You Figure It Out - Youth and Gambling Education Kit - www.labyrinth.net.au/~knowodds/philos.html

Gaming Machines: Facts and Myths. NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, Communities NSW - DVD www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au

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USEFUL WEBSITES & CONTACTS

Problem Gambling Training & Resources for Helping Professionals

NSW Responsible Gambling Fund (RGF)

Supports problem gambling focused training provided by the Centre for Community and Welfare Training (CCWT) for further details or information about the training
www.acwa.asn.au/Show_Found_CDs_by_Stream11.php?stream=Problem+Gambling

NSW Problem Gambling Treatment Providers Conference is held in April each year contact Centre for Community and Welfare Training (CCWT) for further details www.acwa.asn.au

Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. provides a variety of programs, presentations, workshops and seminars for helping professionals info@gisnsw.org.au

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation has a range of information and resources
www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (RGAW) Annual awareness week event in May across Australia. This is an opportunity for your service to get involved in raising awareness on this issue and promoting the Gambling Impact Society and the Gambling Help services. For further information contact info@gisnsw.org.au and/or call Gambling Helpline 1800 858 858

National Association of Gambling Studies (NAGS) hosts an annual conference in Australia and past conference proceedings are available at their website
www.nags.org.au

Useful Resources

www.problemgambling.ca/EN/ResourcesForProfessionals/Pages/InformationforHelpingProfessionals.aspx

www.problemgambling.ca/en/resourcesforprofessionals/pages/clinicaltoolsproblemgambling.aspx

www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/family-friends

www.gisnsw.org.au/Help.html

www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/help-for-health-welfare-professionals

www.problemgambling.gov.au/

Self-Help Websites

www.gamblinghelponline.org.au

www.gisnsw.org.au

www.gansw.org.au

www.gansw.org.au/GamAnon.htm

www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au

www.chrysalisinsight.org.au

www.freeyourself.com.au

www.nrgs.org.au

www.stvincents.com.au

http://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/Gambling2/index.php

www.gamblersanonymous.org.au

www.miph.org/gambling

www.responsiblegambling.org

www.femalegamblers.info

www.professionals.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/gamblers-help-services/cald-services

www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/accessing-support/non-english-speakers

General Interest Websites

www.socialwork.unimelb.edu.au

www.nags.org.au

www.unsw.edu.au

www.afm.mb.ca

www.societystudygambling.co.uk

www.camh.net

www.pgfnz.org.nz

Gambling Help

www.gamblinghelponline.org.au

www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/accessing-support/find-support-in-your-state/

www.problemgambling.gov.au

Gambling Helpline 1800 858 858
a 24 hr National Hotline - information, support
and referral service





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