Gambling....The Disordered, The Responsible, and Everything in Between!

Daniel J. Tolaro, MS
Assistant Executive Director
Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc.
3635 Quakerbridge Rd, Suite 7
Hamilton, NJ 08619
1-800-GAMBLER
www.800gambler.org
Agenda

- Background / Overview
- Landscape / Emerging Trends
- Types ofGamblers
- Gambling Psychology
- Demographics / Characteristics
- Similarities and Differences with SUD
- Phases of Disordered Gambling
- Treatment
- Responsible Gaming
Who we are!

- Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ (CCGNJ)
- 501c3 Private Non-Profit
- Support. Treatment. Hope
- Neutral on gambling
- Against Illegal forms and Underage gambling
- Education, Prevention, and Awareness among youth, seniors, at risk, veterans, women, and several other demographics within NJ
- Advocate for the disordered gambler and the loved ones of that individual.
- Refer to Individual counseling, 12 step GA support, or in-patient facility within the state for NJ residents.
- Partner and collaborate with the private sector and other non-profits in and out of the state to promote responsible gaming.
Gambling and Addiction

“I can be a nightmare dressed as a daydream.” - Taylor Swift

“Gambling kills you because it doesn’t kill you.” – Chris Wright
Facts and Figures

- The foundation of every addiction is built upon lies!
- Some children start gambling at age 10!
- Teen gamblers are 2 – 4x more likely to develop a gambling problem than adults.
- Fantasy sports are on the rise!
- 1 in 5 Disordered Gamblers attempt suicide.
Facts and Figures

✧ Illegal sports gambling…HUGE and GROWING!
✧ $14 billion spent on Super Bowl and March Madness in 2015.
✧ Game 7 of NBA Finals most heavily bet in history!
✧ 97% of that was illegal!!
✧ Illegal sports betting in the US is 5 times bigger than the legal sports betting in the UK.
✧ Over $1 Billion wagered illegally on Rio Olympics 2016.
✧ Sports fans want to see a change in the sports betting laws.

American Gaming Association, 2016
Facts and Figures

- Approx. 2 million Americans (1%-2%) meet the DSM-5 criteria for Disordered Gambling.
- An additional 4 to 6 million (2%-3%) Americans would be considered problem gamblers.
- Over 80% of Americans have gambled at least once in their lifetime.

(National Council on Problem Gambling)
Gambling Myths / Beliefs

- “I have enough money so I do not have a gambling problem.”
- “Playing the lottery is not gambling since I am going to lose anyway.”
- “People that are disabled or not able to leave their homes do not gamble.”
- “Poor people do not gamble.”
- “Playing bingo is not gambling.”
- “Playing Daily Fantasy Sports is all skill and therefore is not really gambling.”
Online vs. Brick and Mortar

Online Wagering
- Limited interaction with people
- Electronic transactions
- Sense of fantasy
- Easy access
- Hidden

Physical Casino
- Frequent interaction with people
- Paper money
- Sense of reality
- Driving Distance
- Stigma
The 5 E’s of Why People Gamble!

- **Excitement!**
- **Entertainment!**
- **Escape life’s problems or pain**
- **Economics….It’s all about the Benjamin’s!**
- **Ego….Pride, reputation, or identity**
Gambling along a Continuum

1. No Gambling
2. Social Gambling – Recreational and entertaining
3. At-Risk – Increased frequency and duration.
4. Problem – Having difficulty stopping or controlling and creates problems in various areas of a person’s life.
5. Compulsive / Disordered – DSM-5 Criteria
   a) Action Gamblers
   b) Escape Gamblers
Gambling Psychology

Topics that may provide the hook into gambling and that may be overlooked or taken into consideration.

1. Intermittent Reinforcement / Intermittent Reward is “the hook.”

2. Independent and “mutually exclusive” events (i.e. the coin toss)

3. The concept of ‘skill’ vs. ‘chance.’ (i.e. Poker and DFS / Sports vs. slots and lottery.)
Gambling Psychology cont.

4 Gambling traps / superstitions that create the ‘illusion of control.’

5 Lack of fully grasping the concept of randomness.
Characteristics

- Bright
- Outgoing
- Competitive
- Depression / Mood Swings
- Controls person’s whole life
- Mental prison
- Progression / Tolerance
- Financial Pressures
- Low Self-Esteem
- Enabling/bailout
Demographics - Males

❖ Males:
❖ Tend to be action gamblers
❖ Gambles for excitement, competition
❖ More likely to engage in “skilled” forms of gambling such as poker, horse racing, sports
❖ Miscalculation / misperception of odds
Demographics - Females

- Females:
  - Tend to be escape gamblers
  - Gambles for relief, escape from stress
  - More likely to engage in “luck” forms of gambling such as lottery, slots, video poker, and bingo.
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADDICTIONS: SUBSTANCES vs. PROBLEM GAMBLING

Although substance addiction and gambling addiction have many things in common, there are also some distinct differences between them.

What are they.....?
Similarities with SUD:

- Isolation
- Withdrawal
- Progression / Tolerance
- Preoccupation
- Lying / Cheating / Stealing
- ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ type personality
- Inability to control despite numerous attempts
- Family and relationship issues
- Trust / Neglect / Job loss
Differences from SUD

- Typically bigger financial issues
- Cannot take a test for gambling
- Higher incidence of attempted suicide
- “Hidden Addiction”
- Intermittent reinforcement
- No overdose or saturation point
- Higher stigma due to less understanding / data
Phases of Disordered (Problem) Gambling

- The Winning Phase
- The Losing Phase
- The Desperation Phase
- The Critical Phase
- The Rebuilding Phase
- The Growth Phase
- The Recovery Phase
The Winning Phase

- Big win early can lead to problems later.
- Occasional gambling develops into more frequent gambling.
- Fantasies
- Excitement
- Increased bet amounts
- Still fun / enjoyable
The Losing Phase

- Preoccupation
- Losing time from work
- Lying
- Personality Change
- Home Life Unhappy
- Borrowing
- Chasing Losses
The Desperation Phase

- Bailouts
- Reputation impacted
- Remorse
- Panic
- Blames others
- Isolation
- Alienation
The Critical Phase

- Hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Arrest / Prosecution / Incarceration
- Withdrawal
- Emotional Breakdown
- Turn to alcohol or drugs
The Rebuilding Phase

- Hope Returns
- Clearer thinking
- Responsible decisions
- Problem solving slowly returns
- Return to work
- Writes letters of forgiveness
The Growth Phase

- More family time
- More patience
- New hobbies
- New friends
- Accept strength and weakness
- Restitution plans
- Improved family relations
- Paying obligations on time.
The Recovery Phase

- Giving Back
- Deeper insight into self
- Deal with life on life’s terms
- Less desire to escape
- Experience the joy of life and the sorrows
- Sacrificing for others
- New way of life
BEST TREATMENT FOR PROBLEM OR DISORDERED GAMBLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IS HOPE, HUMILITY, PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION, AND A 12-STEP PROGRAM

SUPPORT. TREATMENT. HOPE
Attitude of Recovery

- Humility vs. Pride
- Gratitude vs Blame
- Mindfulness vs. Denial
- Determination vs. Incompetence
- Respect vs. Ignorance
- Relation vs. Isolation
- Love vs. Hate
- Attention vs. Neglect
- Being Present vs. Being Absent
Humility

- Belief in a Higher Power
- Removal of Pride
- Quality of one’s life is determined by what they serve
- Get Smaller
- Rules w/o Relationships leads to Rebellion
Diagnostic Tools

- South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)
- 20 Questions of Gamblers Anonymous
- 3 Questions Screen
- DSM V
3 Questions Screen

1) Have you often spent a lot of time thinking about past gambling experiences or planning future gambling ventures or bets?

2) Have you ever lied to family members, friends, or others about how often you gamble or how much money you lost gambling?

3) After losing at gambling, do you try to return as quickly as possible to win back your losses?
Professional Treatment

- Psychotherapy - CBT
- Group Therapy
- Marital Therapy
- Family Therapy
Psychotherapy - CBT

- Identify negative thoughts, cognitive distortions, and errors in perception responsible for continued gambling.

- Cognitive exercise includes identifying risky life situations that could trigger relapse and then work through how to handle the problem.
Psychotherapy - CBT

- Behavioral component includes giving up control or limiting access to money.
- Encouraged to sign up for ‘Self-Exclusion’
- Disconnect from the Internet, don’t carry Smartphones......Unlikely??
- Remove from mailing lists.
Harm Reduction

- Limit one’s gambling in an attempt to regain some element of control.
- Case by Case
- Establish limits (time, $)
- Play with cash, not on credit
Drawback of Harm Reduction

- Can continue indefinitely provided there is enough $.
- Is reduction in gambling and associated behaviors really an improvement at all?
- Unpredictability means there are times the gambler may win.
- Disordered gambling about consequences.....one session of gambling can create lifetime consequences.

(Dr. Timothy Fong, MD)
Professional Treatment

- In-Patient Treatment
- Out-Patient Treatment
Six Benefits Professionals Offer Clients

- Interrupt Family Patterns That Encourage Addictive Living
- Enrich The Disordered Gambler’s Experience in Gamblers Anonymous
- Offer The Disordered Gambler Hope That Change Is Possible
- Discuss Benefits of Harm Reduction
- The Knowledge And Training of a Professional
- Provide Specialized Intensive Treatment Programs
12-Step Self Help Groups

♦ Gamblers Anonymous

♦ Gam-Anon
Five Benefits Provided By Gamblers
Anonymous

1. Identification
2. Acceptance
3. Pressure Relief
4. 12-Step Philosophy
5. Peer Support
DSM-5 Internet Gaming Disorder

- Not a formal disorder….under review
- Some people play games compulsively online
- Persistent, constant, and recurring nature…..
- Can lead to withdrawal, isolation, preoccupation, and the inability to control.
- Decrease in drive, performance, or motivation?
- Requires further research and data
Potential Risks to Gaming

- Can lead to Problem Gambling.
- Bigger concern among the youth.
- The earlier one starts, the higher likelihood to develop a problem.
- The brain develops the “gas pedal” faster than the “braking system.”
- Inability to control impact on time or money.
- Unrealistic expectations pertaining to risk.
- Sense of identity and belonging.
Potential Risks to Gaming

- Exposure to constant marketing and advertising.
- “Gateway gambling drug?”
- Free play transitions to real money play.
- Rate of winning declines.
- Free play tends to “pay out” in excess of 100% then transition to real money where odds shift.
- Consumer Protection risk (i.e. fake games, scams)
- Are social games a relapse trigger for disordered gamblers?
Responsible Gaming – What is it?

- It means a shared responsibility with collective action by the gaming industry, government, individuals and communities. The aim is to achieve outcomes that are socially responsible and responsive to community concerns. The principles that govern responsible gaming are grounded in science and driven by collaboration. (RISE Services, Jamaica)
Elements of Responsible Gaming

- Measures for prevention and harm reduction of disordered and problem gambling,
- Proper training of the staff
- Provision of data for research.
- The display of brochures with guidelines for responsible gambling
- Information about the odds of winning and losing
- The possibility of suspending people who have gambling problems
- A training program for gaming employees and relatives on how to deal with those who have gambling problems.
 Responsible Gaming Guidelines

- Decide ahead of time how much money you decide to gamble with and stick to your limits!
- Play, knowing that it is likely that you will lose more often than win-so make sure you are playing with money you can afford to lose.
- Make informed decision about your gambling-know the odds.
- Think of gambling as a form of entertainment-not a way to make money.
- If you win big, enjoy! But remind yourself it may never happen again.
Responsible Gaming Guidelines

- Don’t gamble when you are tired, bored, anxious or angry.
- Keep track of how much time and money you spend on gambling.
- Take your family and friends seriously. If they are worried about your gambling, they might be seeing something you don’t see.
- Do not gamble alone.
- Only use your own money to gamble. Don’t borrow.
- Realize that in most forms of gambling you have no control over the outcome of the game—it’s random.
Responsible Gaming Guidelines

- When gambling, take breaks—walk around, eat, or go outside to clear your head.
- Keep your head clear when you gamble.
- Balance gambling with other leisure activities.
- Go gambling with someone who does not have a problem with gambling.
- Don’t make the hole bigger—don’t chase your loses.
- Don’t take your credit and bank cards with you when you gamble.
Self-Exclusion

- Allows a person to request to be banned from all legalized gaming activities
- Prohibited from collecting any winnings
- Recovering any losses or accepting complimentary gifts or services
- A person may have his or her own name placed on the self-exclusion list by submitting, in person or online.
We all have a choice. We can choose an inner dialogue of self-encouragement and motivation or one of self-defeat and pity....The key is to realize it’s not what happens to us that matters....it’s how we choose to respond.” – Success.com
References

- http://www.pacouncil.com/
- http://www.deproblemgambling.org
- http://www.ncpgambling.org
- http://www.problemgambling.ca/EN/ResourcesForProfessionals/Pages/GamblingandSubstanceAbuseAComparison.aspx
- http://dbhids.org/gambling

- http://gamingcontrolboard.pa.gov/?p=67

- http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/gamble/etc/cron.html


SUPPORT. TREATMENT. HOPE.

Hope and Help are Available 24 Hours per Day!

Visit www.800gambler.org

OR

Phone: 1-800-GAMBLER

OR

Text ‘800GAMBLER’ to 53342