

New Strategies: Counseling Families Living with Gambling Disorder

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Excellence on Problem Gambling



Impact on Concerned Others

(Svenssen et al., 2013; Wenzel et al., 2009; Lorenz & Shuttlesworth, 1983)

- Financial Problems
- Alcohol Abuse
- Depression
- Anger
- Conflict/Abuse
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Isolation (Particularly women)
- Fear of Job Loss (more so men)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Sx
- Sleep problems
- Headaches
- More sick days
- GI problems
- Breathing problems



Families and Motivation

Families' Motivation

- For the person with GD to:
 - Get treatment
 - Go to GA
 - Stop gambling
 - Be responsible
 - Stop lying

Person with GD's Motivation

- Get family off my back
- Save relationship
- Be forgiven and regain trust
- Bail out



Motivational Shift

- What the family hasn't even considered
 - Focusing on themselves



Where to Begin

- Safety Issues
- Family's priorities
- Strengths within family



Prayer Before the Prayer

I want to be willing to forgive
But I dare not ask for the will to forgive
In case you give it to me
And I am not yet ready
I am not yet ready for my heart to soften
I am not yet ready to be vulnerable again
Not yet ready to see that there is humanity in my
tormentor's eyes
Or that the one who hurt me may also have cried
I am not yet ready for the journey
I am not yet interested in the path
I am at the prayer before the prayer of forgiveness
Grant me the will to want to forgive
Grant it to me not yet but soon

Can I even form the words
Forgive me?
Dare I even look?
Do I dare to see the hurt I have caused?
I can glimpse all the shattered pieces of that
fragile thing
That soul trying to rise on the bronked wings of
hope
But only out of the corner of my eye
I am afraid of it
And if I am afraid to see
How can I not be afraid to say
Forgive me?

Is there a place where we can meet?
You and me
The place in the middle
The no man's land
Where we straddle the lines
Where you are right
And I am right too
And both of us are wrong and wronged
Can we meet there?
And look for the place where the path begins
The path that ends when we forgive?

Desmond and Mbotho Tutu

CRAFT Approach

- Take Domestic Violence Precautions
- Develop an understanding of what leads to gambling episodes
- Learn behavioral skills including communication skills
- Use positive reinforcement for non-gambling behaviors
- Use time out from positive reinforcement for gambling behavior
- Allow natural consequences
- Develop reinforcement for themselves and partners
- Learn to give effective suggestions for treatment/self-help involvement for the person with GD if gambles/relapses
- Cope with gambling/relapse by accessing rapid intake when motivation for treatment arises



Motivational Shift

- What the family has tried to motivate the gambler
 - Confronting
 - Blaming
 - Threatening
 - Arguing
 - Accusing
 - Shaming
 - Badgering
 - Ignoring
 - Punishing
 - Excusing
 - Hiding
 - Enabling



Past Reactions to Gambling

1 = Usually 2 = Often 3 = Sometimes 4 = Rarely 5 = Never or Almost Never

What I have done	How Often	Reaction
Reason with him/her about negative impact of gambling	1 2 3 4 5	
Give him/her the silent treatment after he/she was gambling	1 2 3 4 5	
Plead with him/her to stop gambling	1 2 3 4 5	
Complain or nag about gambling	1 2 3 4 5	
Get angry and yell at him/her	1 2 3 4 5	
Get angry and become quiet or passive/aggressive	1 2 3 4 5	
Get angry and hit him/her	1 2 3 4 5	

Past Reactions to Gambling

1 = Usually 2 = Often 3 = Sometimes 4 = Rarely 5 = Never or Almost Never

What I have done	How Often	Reaction
Sit and mope to show how distressing her/his gambling is	1 2 3 4 5	
Insist that s/he get treatment or help	1 2 3 4 5	
Spend money irresponsibly to get even	1 2 3 4 5	
Extreme reaction – threaten divorce, suicide when he/she gambles	1 2 3 4 5	
Go gambling with the person to at least have fun myself or try to control	1 2 3 4 5	
Paid off debt or bills to reduce financial pressures	1 2 3 4 5	
Other	1 2 3 4 5	

Behaviors Make Sense



"We can recognize that the offender is a valuable human being who struggles with the same needs, pressures, and confusions that we struggle with. We will recognize that the incident really may not have been about us in the first place. Instead it was about the wrongdoer's misguided attempt to meet his or her own needs. As we regard offenders from this point of view (regardless of whether they repent and regardless of what they have done or suffered), we will be in a position to forgive them."

(Margaret Holmgren - US psychologist)



Behavior Analysis of Loved One's Gambling: Helping Partners Understand Gambling Motivation



Behavior Analysis and Motivation

- Behavior
 - What type/s of gambling does your loved one usually do?
 - How often does your loved one gamble?
 - How long are gambling episodes?
 - How much money does your loved one gamble with?



Behavior Analysis and Motivation: Triggers

External

- Who is your loved one with when he/she gambles?
- Where does your loved one usually gamble?
- When does your loved one usually gamble?

Internal

- What do you think your loved one is thinking about right before using?
- What do you think your loved one is feeling right before using?



Behaviors Make Sense Worksheet

Reasons for Use	Basic Needs Being Met	Alternatives

Behavior Analysis and Motivation: Ambivalence is Normal

- Pick a behavior you would like to change

Reasons to Change (Benefits)	Reasons to Not Change (Costs)



Behavior Analysis and Motivation

Positive/Pleasant

- What do you think your loved one likes about the people s/he gambles with?
- What do you think your loved one likes about the places where s/he gambles?
- What do you think your loved one enjoys about how s/he feels when gambling?
- What pleasant thoughts do you think your loved one has while gambling?
- What other benefits do you think your loved one experiences from gambling?
- Are there any positive consequences for you?

Negative/Distressing

What do you think are the negative or distressing results of your loved one's gambling in each of these areas?(star the ones s/he would agree with)

- Relationships
- Physical health
- Emotional well being
- Work/school
- Financial
- Legal
- Other



Enabling and Other Myth-conceptions

- **Idea #1:** gambling disorder is caused by flaws in character, morals, and genetics; your partner is “powerless” to control his use and you are “powerless” to help
- **Idea #2:** your partner’s reluctance or trouble in deciding to change is evidence of their “denial” rather than natural ambivalence about change
- **Idea #3:** attempts by you to help are “enabling”; that is, involvement on your part is actually helping them to keep using. You will often get the message that any love or kindness toward a partner who is gambling is “enabling”
- **Idea #4:** the recommended path is to “detach with love” (the “Anon” programs) or to force compliance “lovingly” (e.g. have an Intervention)



Self-Compassion

- Three Components (K. Neff)
 - Mindfulness
 - Self-Kindness
 - Common Humanity



Mindful Self-Care

- Being present for yourself
- Developing safe space, holding environment
- Recognizing thoughts and stories
- Self-Compassion Practices
 - Recognizing pain
 - Be-friending yourself
 - Loving Kindness
 - Connection and shared experience



Managing Difficult Emotions

Trigger	Usual Response	Alternatives	Difficulty	Likely Consequences
		Choice:		



- Attack is an easier response than forgiveness, and that is why we are so tempted to give into it. Throughout our lives we have seen more anger than examples of true forgiveness.



Helpful Communication

- Teach MI Skills
 - Open-ended Questions
 - Affirmations
 - Active Listening/Reflections
 - The Information Sandwich
 - Ask Permission
 - Provide options
 - Offer; Don't Impose
 - Allow Disagreements
 - Provide Information
 - Check Back or Clarify



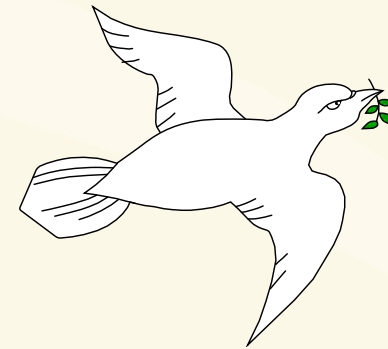
Helpful Communication

- Be Brief
- Be Positive
- Be Specific
- Label Your Feelings
- Offer an Understanding Statement
- Accept Partial Responsibility
- Offer to Help



Family Peace Treaty

- Agree to seek Win-Win resolution
- Take time to relax, meditate, journal
- Set time for meeting
- Involve third person if feelings too intense
- Acknowledge at least one positive
- Take personal responsibility
- I statements/Here and Now
- Listen deeply



Communication and Lying

- Lying and Stigma
- Everyone Lies
- Remember motivation analysis
- How can you have a conversation when you can't trust what the other person is saying?
- How can you increase your partner's motivation to tell you what is really going on?



Addressing a Lie

- Step back
 - Lie probably wasn't meant to be hurtful
 - An unsuccessful attempt to maintain relationship and avoid discomfort of difficult feelings, confrontation or fight
- Speak to the function of the lie
- Express that you will do your best to manage your response so that an honest conversation will happen
- State the overall goal for the conversation
- Don't forget to reinforce any honest response



Consequences for Lying

- More challenging
- Express feelings while avoiding being too punitive
- Be clear about expectations/agreement up front about how you will handle suspicions of lies or situations of uncertainty
- Start by agreeing or indication what partner can do to demonstrate they are being truthful
- Is there evidence they can provide?
- Establish regular check in
- Clearly define truth and not truth



Helpful Actions

Promote Positive Behaviors with Positive Outcomes

Allow Negative Behaviors to Have Negative Outcomes



Forgiveness is not always easy. At times, it feels more painful than the wound we suffered, to forgive the one that inflicted it. And yet, there is no peace without forgiveness. Attack thoughts towards others are attack thoughts towards ourselves. The first step in forgiveness is the willingness to forgive.



Rewarding Recovery Behavior

Do (Have a good time with the person you love, focusing on enjoying their positive actions)

- Spend time with him/her doing something fun when not gambling
- Take a walk together
- Talk about topics (other than gambling) she/he enjoys
- Prepare her/his favorite foods
- Give a 5 minute shoulder rub
- Watch a movie together
- Give praise and support
- Give a card that expresses your caring
- Get involved in an activity he/she enjoys
- Offer her/his favorite sexual activity
- Other:



Rewarding Recovery Behavior

Don't (All the things you have learned don't work):

- Nag him/her about their actions the last time they were gambling
- Try to punish him/her for recent gambling by giving the "cold shoulder"
- Lecture or give rational explanations why gambling is bad
- Repeatedly explain why he/she "has to stop"
- Follow him/her around to make sure they stay out of trouble
- Threaten her/him
- Resort to emotional pleading, crying
- Get caught up in yelling/fighting about the gambling that took place
- Spend money to compete with his/her gambling
- Act "crazy" so she/he can see what it is doing to you.
- Other:



Rewarding Myself

Please rate each activity as to the likelihood that you will actually do it

1 = Very Likely 2 = Likely 3 = Maybe 4 = Unlikely 5 = Very Unlikely

Ways I can reward myself are:					
Take a walk	1	2	3	4	5
Take a bath	1	2	3	4	5
Read a book	1	2	3	4	5
Talk to a friend	1	2	3	4	5
Eat a favorite treat	1	2	3	4	5
Visit family	1	2	3	4	5
Go to lunch with a friend	1	2	3	4	5
Listen to music	1	2	3	4	5
Watch a movie or a favorite show	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

Rewarding Myself: Barriers

Use the scales below to rate each item as to the likelihood of it being a barrier to Rewarding yourself.

1 = Very Likely 2 = Likely 3 = Maybe 4 = Unlikely 5 = Very Unlikely

Barriers to rewarding myself are:					
I haven't rewarded myself in the past	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have any money	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have the time	1	2	3	4	5
I don't know how	1	2	3	4	5
I don't deserve to be rewarded	1	2	3	4	5
I have to take care of others first	1	2	3	4	5
No one has given my permission to reward myself	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have the ability to reward myself	1	2	3	4	5
Since I can't get a big reward, I won't give myself any reward	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

Rebuilding Relationship

- Creating a healing environment
- Compassion (self and other)
- Acceptance and Tolerance (self and other)
- Trust (self and other)



- Re assessment
- What is improving? What isn't?
- Is gambling still problematic?
- Have other issues emerged?
- New goals? New strategies?



- Resources

- Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change, J. Foote, C. Wilkens, N. Kosanke, S. Higgs
- The Partner's 20 Minute Guide, <https://the20minuteguide>
- <https://motivationandchange.com/online-and-in-print-resources/>



Thank You

Forgiveness is not an
occasional act; it is a
permanent attitude.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

