



# **An Approach to Gambling Treatment: Harm Reduction Part 1 Limited Gambling-Limited Harm**

**Anthony S. Parente, MA, LCPC, NCC, MAC, ICGC II, BAC**

**Deborah Perry, LCPC, MAC**

# Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to define limited gambling and the role of harm reduction and its problem gambling treatment planning.
- Participants will learn strategies to engage the problem gambler in the treatment process
- Participants will learn how to assess and establish a treatment plan using limited gambling and harm reduction strategies.
- Participants will be able to gain an awareness of how harm reduction strategies can be employed in the context of family and couples counseling.

## Think about it...

When you think about your current clients...

1. Which 2 come to mind when you think of the harm their SUD or GD causes them in their lives?
2. What about the harm that they are causing others in their lives? Family and friends? What about the communities in which they live?

Make a list.

3. What are the obstacles that interfere in their awareness or ability to address these harms?

Make a 2<sup>nd</sup> list.

4. What might help them to become more aware of the harms and their ability to address them?

## Did You Know...

The Super Bowl of 2022 it was expected that 31.4 million Americans were expected to place \$7.6 Billion in legal bets.

**\$7,600,000.00**

These were records and increases of 35% and 78% respectively.

**+10,990,000 Americans**

**+\$5,928,000,000.00 in Wagers**

The American Gaming Association

# Harm Reduction and Problem Gambling: Basic Principles

- **Harm reduction is a public health alternative to the moral/criminal and disease models of addiction**

Video 1 - Harm Reduction 101



# Basic Principles

- ▶ Harm reduction recognizes abstinence as an ideal outcome but accepts alternatives that reduce harm
- ▶ Reality of high relapse rates
- ▶ Illogic of abstinence as requirement for continuing treatment
- ▶ Evidence of “natural” recovery
- ▶ Evidence from treatment outcome studies

# The Three Approaches of Gambling Harm Prevention

HARM REDUCTION

## **Population-Level Prevention**

Adopts a public health approach that considers how factors outside the gambler's control influence their likelihood of experiencing harm

**public health**

## **Individual-Focused Health Promotion**

Identifying at-risk individuals for moderate/high risk of problem gambling; harm minimization

**harm  
minimization**

## **Traditional Clinical Treatment and Prevention**

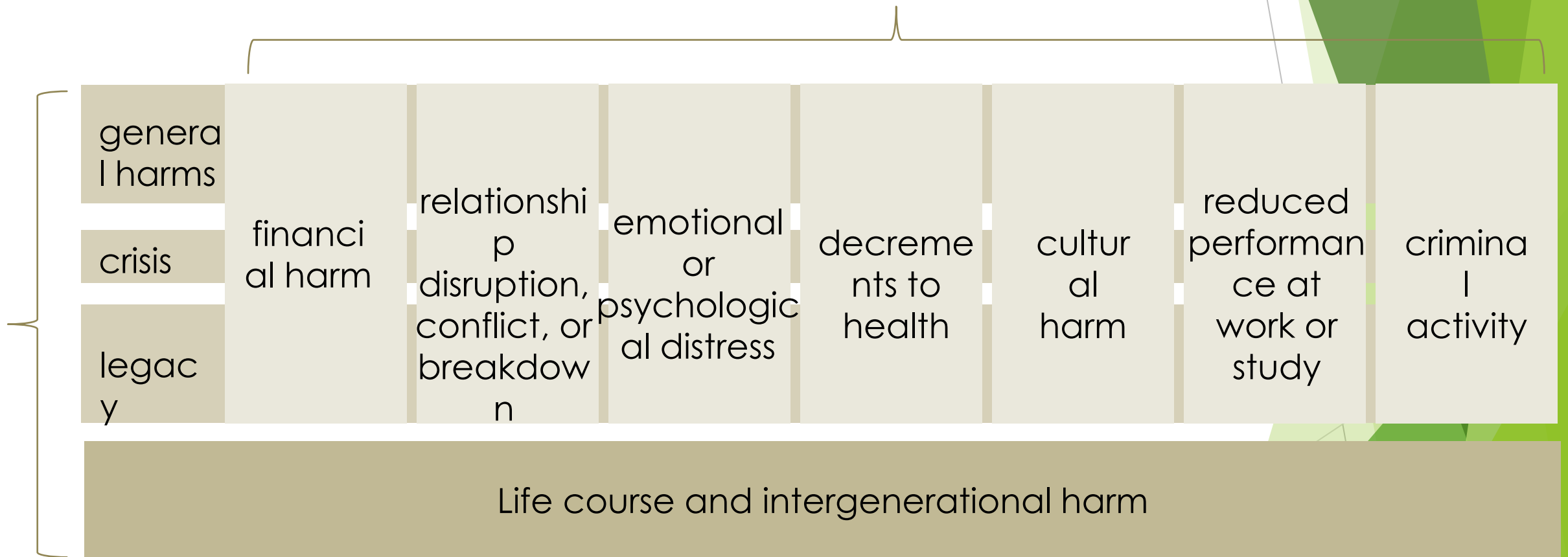
Increase the use of evidence-based interventions for those experiencing moderate harm with problem gambling

**health care**

# Dimensions of Harm

HARM REDUCTION

## CLASSIFICATIONS OF HARMS



(Langham, Thorne, Browne, Donaldson, & Rockloff, 2015)



# Gambling Harms Map

(Gambling Research Exchange Ontario)

- ▶ Ethnocultural Factors
- ▶ Colonization
- ▶ Stigmatization
- ▶ Mental Health and Wellbeing
- ▶ Substance Misuse and Addictions
- ▶ Crime and Deviance
- ▶ Changes in the Gambling Environment
- ▶ Socioeconomic Status
- ▶ Lifespan

Video 2 - What is Harm Reduction

# Harm Reduction: What it is/what it isn't

*Based on “Changing for Good” Prochaska and DiClemente, and Norcross:*

- ▶ Harm Reduction is a way to break down barriers to engaging the client.
- ▶ H.R. is a public health alternative to the moral/criminal and disease models.
- ▶ H.R. recognizes abstinence as an ideal outcome but accepts alternatives that reduce harm or risk.

# Public Health and Regulatory Approaches

	Legal Drugs	Illegal Drugs	Gambling
Age Limits			
Operating Hours			
Outlet Density or Proximity			
Pricing & Taxation			
Information and Warnings			
Early & Brief Interventions			

### Know your limits



UK Health Experts recommend adults do not regularly exceed	
Men	3-4 units daily
Women	2-3 units daily
Avoid alcohol if pregnant or	



**WARNING**

1. WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS.

2. CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY.



**Implicit assumption: those without a gambling disorder are largely free of significant adverse consequences.**

Focus on **individual person** with a gambling disorder as the source of harm.

Negative consequence from gambling bound up with **addiction pathology**.

# What are the odds?

- ▶ **“Playing the ‘Odds’ Gives Great Uncle a \$50,000 Bonus Match 5 Win”**
- ▶ **“Two-Time Cancer Survivor ‘Beats Odds’ Again With Big Lottery Win”**

What appears on lottery website when searching for odds of winning.

Video 3 - Terrell and HR

## Harm Reduction:

- ▶ H.R. isn't a replacement or alternative for abstinence
- ▶ H.R. isn't for use with only one age group or gender.
- ▶ H.R. isn't only for use when all else fails.
- ▶ Focus on **individual person** with a gambling disorder as the source of harm.
- ▶ Negative consequence from gambling bound up with **addiction pathology**.

# Harm Reduction: What it is and what it isn't

- H.R. promotes low-threshold access to services as an alternative to traditional, high threshold approaches.
- This is a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach based on client advocacy rather than policy.
- H.R. is based on tenets of compassionate pragmatism vs. moralistic idealism.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnRvzEuP0Yo>



# What are the Harms of Gambling

- ▶ Health Problems
- ▶ Psychological/Emotional Problems (Depression, Anxiety etc.)
- ▶ Relationship breakdown (separation, divorce, isolation)
- ▶ Family members' health and well-being
- ▶ Lost productivity and workplace costs
- ▶ Unemployment
- ▶ Bankruptcy
- ▶ Foreclosure/eviction
- ▶ Homelessness
- ▶ Crime
- ▶ Suicide

(National Research Council, 1999; Neal et al, 2005)

# Reducing the harm of excessive gambling for an individual

- ▶ Access to money and credit
- ▶ Can involve family, individuals, or hopefully both
- ▶ Gambling industry intervention
- ▶ Reduce addictive potential of games
- ▶ Decrease speed of play
- ▶ Decrease cost of play
- ▶ Loss limits
- ▶ Time limits

**E**nters into a supportive relationship

**N**on-blaming

**G**ives options

**A**ccepts their choices

**G**ains awareness

**E**ducates around potential harm or risk

# Harm Reduction: What it is and what it isn't

- ▶ H.R. is against harm, not against gambling.
- ▶ It is in favor of *any* positive change as defined by the client.
- ▶ Client's set their own rate of change.
- ▶ The best pace possible for each individual.
- ▶ Can you develop a “not knowing stance” with your clients? Open mind?



# Harm Reduction: What it is and what it isn't

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# Harm Reduction with Therapeutic Reinforcement

Help client:

see consequences of their choices

see they have options

analyze likelihood of success if they follow  
guidelines or not

sincerely try options, but failure or inability to stay  
with limits leads to commitment to abstinence

HARM REDUCTION

*Allows client to  
define their  
own problems  
and find  
collaborative  
solutions*

# Short-Term Goals

## INCREASE/IMPROVE

- ▶ motivation and treatment retention rates
- ▶ awareness of harms related to gambling patterns
- ▶ harm reduction actions  
(crime, money issues, etc.)
- ▶ family participation in recovery program
- ▶ client's and family knowledge of problem gambling and dependence dynamics
- ▶ organizational skills, scheduling, budgeting, etc.

HARM REDUCTION

## REDUCE

- ▶ frequency of gambling
- ▶ negative consequences of gambling

# Mid- to Long-Term Goals

## INCREASE/IMPROVE

- ▶ Increase abstinence rates and reduce problem gambling
- ▶ Increase health and wellness practices (e.g. diet, sleep, etc.)
- ▶ Improve long-term relationships with family
- ▶ Improve family members' support and understanding of PG
- ▶ Increase stability at family home as well as on the job
- ▶ Increase referral rate to your services

HARM REDUCTION

## REDUCE

- harmful gambling practices (e.g. lies, crimes, etc.)



# Responsible Gambling Tools

HARM REDUCTION

Voluntary self-exclusion

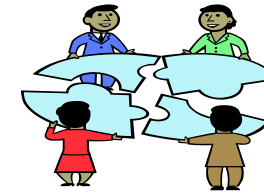
Play limits

Gamban  
([gamban.com](http://gamban.com))

Gamblock  
([www.gamblock.com](http://www.gamblock.com))

# Harm Reduction: Basic Issues

- ▶ Reducing the harm of excessive gambling
  - ▶ Access to money and credit
  - ▶ Can involve family, individual or hopefully both



# Harm Reduction in Practice

- Prevention efforts target High Risk Behaviors and Focus on Reducing Potential for Harm
- Risk Reduction - a strategy for use with those problem gamblers unwilling or unable to use abstinence programs
- Identify the highest risk areas and help client with reduction, containment & limit setting Behaviors.

- ▶ Elana is a 33-year-old recently divorced Latina, with one daughter who is 6 years old. She works as a receptionist in a medical practice. She has been feeling noticeable sad, tired and stressed since the divorce and was recently talking at work about not having any fun anymore. Her co-workers took her out to the Casino, with one co-working volunteering to babysit. She had a great time and forgot all about her problems. She even won a little bit of money. She got her sister to babysit the following weekend and went to the casino with an old friend. This time she had fun but lost more than she had budgeted for. She didn't go back for several weeks until it was her birthday and she decided to treat herself. She went back to the casino with a group of friends, but quickly lost the money she had. She didn't want the fun to end so got money out of the ATM. She lost this and got more money hoping to win back her losses. Her friends were concerned and suggested she see a counselor.

## Approaches in Harm Reduction

- ▶ Develop a harm reduction strategy for Elana
- ▶ Develop a containment strategy
- ▶ Develop a limit setting strategy

What are the Pros and Cons of each?

# Abstinence Seems to Be Appropriate in the Following Circumstances

HARM REDUCTION

SEVERE  
DIAGNOSIS

When the gambling has reached the extreme end of the continuum, i.e., when the client has received the diagnosis of disorder gambling, severe, using the DSM-5 criteria

ATTEMPTS  
WITHOUT  
SUCCESS

When the client has already made attempts to moderate without success

ABSTINENCE

When the client names his or her goal as abstinence

When a client wants to enter an abstinence-based treatment program

MANDATE

When a client is mandated by an employer or the criminal justice system

RELATIONSHIPS

When relationships are at risk, especially for the peace of mind of the partner

To match the non-gambling partner's belief system about what needs to happen in order for the relationship to be saved

SUICIDE

When client is having suicidal thoughts or at risk

# Disadvantages of the Abstinence-Only Approach

## IGNORES IMPROVEMENTS

Abstinence doesn't recognize improvements or successful attempts to cut down.

## EXCESSIVELY STRINGENT

Abstinence criteria may be excessively stringent and therefore a barrier for some potential clients entering a treatment program where abstinence is a requirement—they might not be ready, it might not match their belief system, or it might be too difficult to achieve now.

## CONTRADICTS SOME RESEARCH

An abstinence-only approach contradicts some current research that suggests moderation is appropriate for some clients.

# HARM REDUCTION IN PRACTICE I

- ▶ Client Takes Responsibility of Choice
- ▶ Examines Options and Chooses Plan for Recovery
  - ▶ Abstinence Plans *with* Structured Support
  - ▶ Abstinence Plans *without* Structured Support
  - ▶ Risk Reduction *with* Structured Support
  - ▶ Risk Reduction *without* Structured Support
- ▶ Counselor supports and recommends,
  - ▶ guides use of clients **CHOICE** - **FEEDBACK**

**Pros and Cons**





# HARM REDUCTION IN PRACTICE II

Using FRAMES, be sure client:

- ▶ Sees consequences of own behavior
- ▶ understands alternative options
- ▶ constantly re-clarify client's goals
- ▶ judge client's adherence to plan as measure of motivation
- ▶ continue feedback loop to client
- ▶ Can client consider Abstinence as an option now?

## Goals for Gambling with Harm Reduction

- ▶ How would you like to enjoy gambling?
- ▶ What type of gambling would you like to do, if any?
- ▶ How often would you like to gamble?
- ▶ How much money can you afford to gamble with?
- ▶ Which people do you want to gamble with, if any?
- ▶ Are there people who are higher risk than others?

# Harm Reduction: Limited Gambling vs. Abstinence

## Assessment Goals

- ▶ To explain the process of counseling
- ▶ To collaborate with client in defining what is problematic in client's life
- ▶ To facilitate exploration, clarification, and enhancement of client's motivation
- ▶ To define mutually acceptable counseling goals
- ▶ To establish process and priorities for meeting counseling goals



# Harm Reduction: Limited Gambling vs. Abstinence

## Assessment

- ▶ Conducted in partnership
- ▶ Let's look at problems you are concerned about and how to reduce them vs. Let's find out what the extent of your really is the harm that is impacting your and those that you care about.
- ▶ What does client consider most serious problem(s)



# Harm Reduction: Limited Gambling vs. Abstinence

## Assessment

- ▶ What are problems that client may be less focused on or aware of?
- ▶ What does or would family or friends consider to be a problem?
- ▶ Which problems are most threatening to client's life or lifestyle?



# Limited Gambling vs. Abstinence: Dimensions for Assessment

## Gambling Behavior

- ▶ Gambling History
- ▶ Cravings
- ▶ Withdrawal Symptoms
- ▶ Longest period of limited gambling or abstinence
- ▶ Self-monitoring helpful



# Limited Gambling vs. Abstinence: Dimensions for Assessment

## Motivation

Client's perceived benefits vs. harm from gambling

- ▶ Decisional Balance
- ▶ Explore client's self-acknowledged readiness for change
- ▶ URICA - University of RI Change Assessment



# Jake

- 35 yr. old male, Single, lives with girlfriend and friend
- Owns a business in service industry, Owns real estate properties. Rents, buys, and flips houses.
- Played Sports in College. Currently Coaches.
- 3 years ago, made his 1<sup>st</sup> wager on a game. Saw betting as a business opportunity. 15 months ago, betting increased.
- Started with one sport, and eventually to others. He then bet a particular player > end of period> Wagers increased.
- Figured out a way to “BEAT THE SYSTEM”
- Started spending more and more time on betting. Neglecting businesses.
- Increased relational conflict. Socially withdrawing. Workouts increased.
- History of Anxiety and Depression. Dad and Brother/Depression, Brother Suicide attempt.
- Loves gambling and doesn't want to commit to total abstinence. Willing to try limiting gambling. Would like to control it.



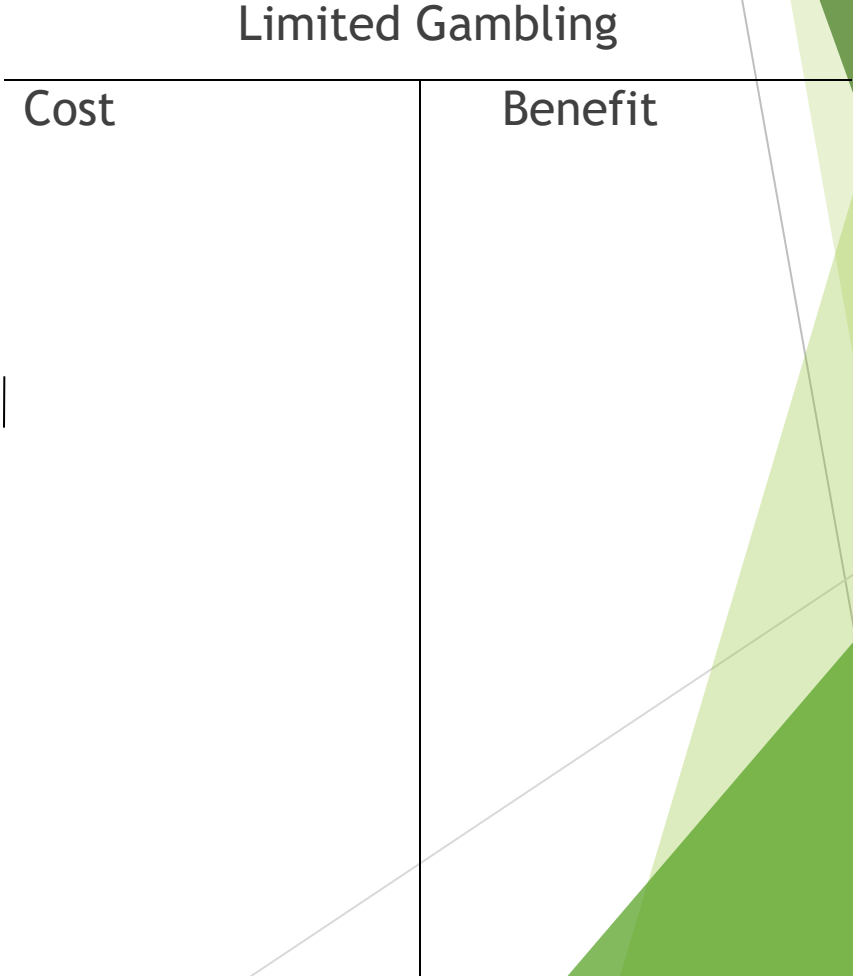
# Cost - Benefit Analysis

Please list all the benefits you receive from gambling and on a scale of 1-9 list how important each benefit is to you (1= not important; 9 = extremely important) and lists the costs of gambling (emotional, physical, relational etc. as well as financial) and how distressing that cost is on a 1-9 scale (1 = not distressing; 9 = extremely distressing)

Gambling Benefits	Importance	Gambling Costs	Distress
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- ▶ After you have made your Cost-Benefit list, look over the list and write down any feelings arise when you think about the balance of benefits and costs of gambling:
- ▶ Do any of these costs seem too expensive or too distressing?
- ▶ Are there alternative ways of getting any of the benefits?

# John: Cost-Benefit Analysis



# Low Risk Gambling

## Some Characteristics of Low-Risk Gambling

- ▶ Done in social setting with friends or family
- ▶ As a form of recreation, not to make money
- ▶ Within a set budget
- ▶ Within a set timeframe and with frequent breaks
- ▶ Done in balance with other social/recreational activities
- ▶ Done with discretionary money, not money needed for necessities
- ▶ Not done with borrowed money
- ▶ Accept that money lost is the cost of entertainment, don't chase losses

▶ What are characteristics of low-risk gambling for you?

# High Risk Gambling

## Some Characteristics of High-Risk Gambling

- ▶ When it's viewed to make money or fix financial problems
- ▶ Done in isolation
- ▶ Done to the exclusion of other activities
- ▶ Done in combination with alcohol or drug use
- ▶ Done in response to stress or emotional distress
- ▶ What are characteristics of high risk gambling for you?

# High Risk Situations

## Some Characteristics of High-Risk Situations for Gambling

- ▶ When highly emotional: angry, lonely, depressed, under stress - or feeling euphoric or overly optimistic
  - ▶ When coping with loss or grief
  - ▶ When coping with trauma
  - ▶ When under financial pressure and stress
  - ▶ During times of major life change
  - ▶ When drinking or drugging
- ▶ What are characteristics of your high risk situations for gambling?  
**What situations have caused you the most harm?**

# Life Goals

- ▶ *List 5 important goals in your life (things you would like to have in your life or accomplish) for the next 2-5 years.*

Goal One:

Goal Two:

Goal Three:

Goal Four:

Goal Five:

- ▶ *For each of these goals write down any ways that gambling will help you reach that goal and ways that gambling will interfere with reaching that goal.*

Ways Gambling will Help

Ways Gambling might Interfere

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Re-evaluating

- ▶ After looking at the Cost-Benefit Analysis and your Goal Assessment, are there any changes you would like to make in your personal goals for gambling?
- ▶ What thoughts and or feelings came up as you were looking examining your life?

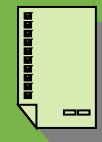
# Limited Gambling vs. Abstinence: Dimensions for Assessment

- **Feedback**

- Summarize

- ✦ Risks and problems that have emerged from assessment
- ✦ Client's own reaction, including self-motivational statements
- ✦ Invitation for client to correct or add to summary

- Discuss next steps - provide options





# Harm reduction treatment planning for clinicians with SUD or MH clients

HARM REDUCTION

- ▶ I will spend no more than \_\_\_\_% of my budget which is \$\_\_\_\_ per month.
- ▶ I will spend no more than \_\_\_\_ hours per time I gamble.
- ▶ I will only gamble at the following low risk activities: \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ I will only gamble in the following low risk situations: \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ I will be sure to be accountable to the following people about my gambling:
- ▶ I will not gamble when I am feeling:
  - ▶ Angry
  - ▶ Lonely
  - ▶ Depressed
  - ▶ Stressed
  - ▶ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Making a Plan for Treatment: Collaborative Engagement

What is your plan if you notice any warning signs of problem gambling?

- ▶ Talk to sponsor
- ▶ Talk with counselor
- ▶ Stop gambling
- ▶ Attend GA meeting
- ▶ Develop plan to protect my money
- ▶ Other \_\_\_\_\_

# Identifying Your Warning Signs

- ▶ Characteristics for Low-Risk Gambling
- ▶ Characteristics for High-Risk Gambling
- ▶ History of Gambling Behavior and Harm
- ▶ Plan for Reducing Harm
- ▶ Meet the Client Where They Are  
Challenges to Our Own Biases

# Mindfulness -Loving Kindness



# Thank You

## Practice Random Acts of Kindness...

Anthony S. Parente, MA, LCPC

410-321-7753

[asparente12@gmail.com](mailto:asparente12@gmail.com)

Deborah Perry, LCPC, MAC

443-717-0226

[deborahperry@gmail.com](mailto:deborahperry@gmail.com)

Video 4 - End Song - Playing for Change