

Substance Abuse and Pathological Gambling: Similar or Different

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Co-occurring disorders

- In the problem gambling treatment population, 70 percent of participants reported using illicit drugs and 24 percent reported drugs had been a problem at least once in their life (Toneatto, 2002).
- Iowa (Shaffer et al., 2002) found 23% of gamblers had been treated for substance abuse.
- A review of 520 problem gamblers receiving gambling treatment in Nebraska revealed that 45% had received mental health or substance abuse services in the six months prior to gambling treatment, and 43% of those were receiving outpatient substance abuse treatment (Christensen, 2001).

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Is it possible to have a drug addiction and a pathological gambling problem at the same time?

Several studies show that approximately 50% of the problem gamblers were found to also have drug or alcohol problems, while studies of people in treatment for substance abuse have found between 10-30% also have a gambling problem. It is not unusual for people to be simultaneously, or to switch from one addiction to another.

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So is Pathological Gambling a  
sibling to Substance Abuse?  
Or is it different?

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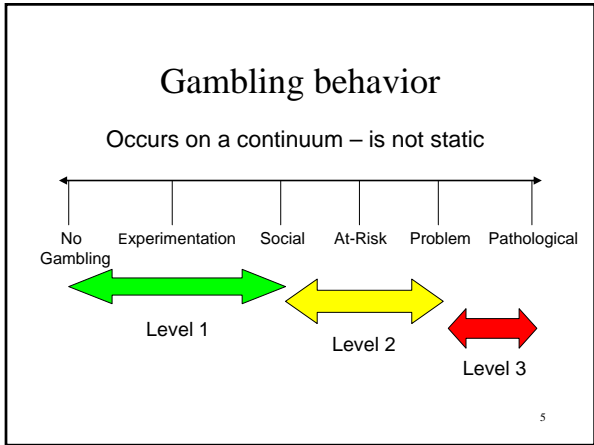
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- Types of problem gamblers**
- Action/Skill
    - Stereotypical gambler
    - Likely to be male
    - Earlier onset / late treatment seeking
  - Escape / Luck
    - Increasing numbers
    - Prefer machines, games of chance
    - More females
    - Late onset / early treatment seeking
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### Similarities and differences with substance abuse

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similarities</li> <li>– Progressive</li> <li>– Denial</li> <li>– Mood/affect instability</li> <li>– Used to escape</li> <li>– Preoccupation</li> <li>– LSE / high ego</li> <li>– Immediate gratification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences</li> <li>– More hidden</li> <li>– No overdose potential</li> <li>– Financial issues</li> <li>– Behavior may solve presenting problems</li> <li>– Few resources for help</li> <li>– No “test” for gambling</li> </ul>
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### Common characteristics of gamblers and substance abusers

- Extensive use of lingo
- Relapse history
- Severe financial problems
- LYING
- Erratic spending
- Family/client will ask for help
- Continued disruption after abstinence

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### Criteria for Pathological Gambling

Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior indicated by 5+ of the following:

Preoccupation	Planning next venture, handicapping, getting \$
Tolerance	Gambles with amounts of \$ to get same effect
Withdrawal	Restlessness/irritability when stopping
Escape	Relieving stress and/or dysphoric mood
Chasing losses	After losing money, returns to “get even”
Lying	Conceals extent of involvement to others
Loss of Control	Unsuccessful efforts to control behavior
Illegal acts	Forgery, fraud, theft, embezzlement
Risked Sig. Relationship	Jeopardized/lost important relationship, job, educational, or career opportunity
Bailout	Reliance on others to provide money
Gambling behavior is not better accounted for by a manic episode	

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**Lie-Bet Scale**  
(aka “Two Question Assessment Tool”)

1. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
2. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about the extent of your gambling?

*Endorsement of these two questions has a high correlation with problem or pathological gambling (80-90%)*

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**National Outcome Measures and Pathological Gambling**

What should counseling be designed to accomplish?

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**NOMs for Problem Gambling**

- Abstinence
- Improved employment status
- Reduced gambling related problems
- Reduced family relationships and problems
- Reduced/eliminated gambling frequency
- Reduction in gambling activity
- Improved financial status
- Reduced hospitalization
- Reduced loss of home or business
- Reduced bankruptcy/legal entanglements

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**What are National Outcome Measures**

- Reduced morbidity
  - Decrease of abuse of gambling
  - Increase in understanding of risk behaviors
  - Decrease in symptomology of problem gambling

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**Steven Wright**

“I’m addicted to placebos,

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**Steven Wright**

“I’m addicted to placebos,  
I’d give them up but it wouldn’t make  
any difference.”

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Questions / Comments



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In Conclusion

Pathological Gambling is an addiction and it is an impulse disorder.

We need to treat it as similar but different

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A FINAL QUOTE

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."

• Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

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