

Treatment recommendations for gambling disorders

Learn about the latest evidence-based and developing treatments for gambling disorders.

High quality evidence

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The most frequently studied treatment type for gambling disorder is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). This type of treatment attempts to change the thoughts and behaviors that are fundamental to maintaining a pattern of behavior (e.g., gambling disorder). The goal of CBT for intemperate gambling is to identify and change "cognitive distortions and errors" that are associated with excessive gambling and its adverse sequelae. For gambling, CBT can include at least four components: (a) correcting cognitive distortions about gambling; (b) developing problem solving skills; (c) teaching social skills; and (d) teaching relapse prevention. There are a number of CBT trials that suggest that it is an effective form of treatment for gambling.

Motivational Enhancement/Interviewing

Motivational enhancement strategies (e.g., motivational counseling; resistance reduction) are brief therapeutic strategies designed to lower resistance and enhance motivation for change. Motivational enhancement strategies augment pre-existing motivation by improving the therapeutic alliance. Further, by attending to the dynamics of ambivalence, clinicians improve the quality of treatment; treatment providers establish a therapeutic context that resonates with the client's mixed motivations toward their object of addiction (e.g., gambling). These interventions typically accompany other types of interventions as a supplement; however, clinicians can use motivational enhancement interventions on their own. Studies of motivational enhancement suggest that it yields clinically meaningful changes in gambling behavior and symptom experiences. Studies of a single session of motivational enhancement therapy found benefits associated with this treatment persisted as long as 12 months after the intervention. Studies with longer follow up periods are needed to determine whether such clinical effects extend beyond a year.

More in depth articles can be found at this link: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/treatment-recommendations-for-gambling-disorders

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