

THE SIMILAR FACES OF ALCOHOL, DRUG AND GAMBLING ADDICTION



SAVE THE DATE: MINNESOTA CONFERENCE ON PROBLEM GAMBLING SET FOR MARCH 8-9, 2018

The 2018 Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling will take place March 8-9 at the Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center. Make plans now to join your colleagues and learn more about new developments in problem gambling in Minnesota. Jon Grant, MD, JD, MPH, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Chicago and director of the Addictive, Compulsive and Impulsive Disorders Research Lab, will be returning as the keynote speaker by popular request. Watch for more details in the coming months.

What: Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling

When: March 8-9, 2018

Where: Brooklyn Center

For More Information: Follow NorthstarProblemGambling.org

“John” was doing well in his recovery from alcohol addiction. He hadn’t had a drink in eight months, was regularly attending AA and individual counseling, and was well supported in his recovery by family and friends.

Several of John’s college buddies were planning a trip to Las Vegas and asked him if he wanted to join them. John was feeling good about life and the progress he’d made with his alcohol addiction, so he thought a first-ever trip to Las Vegas would be fun and well deserved.

Once in Las Vegas, John visited the famous strip. He was mesmerized by the sights and sounds, and eventually decided to enter one of the casinos.

John opted to play the first slot machine he saw so he could experience the thrill of Las Vegas. He placed four tokens in the machine, hit the spin button and watched. He hit a jackpot on his first play, winning a payout of \$150.

John felt an immediate rush of excitement. It was a such a good feeling, in fact, that he was driven to experience it again. He spent much of the evening and most of the weekend at various slot machines on the strip in hot

pursuit of another large payout, often at the expense of enjoying the company of his friends. He’d also lost \$700 in the process.

John’s obsessive focus on gambling and his desire to experience the high from a win—despite obvious negative consequences—was similar to his behavior while drinking. In both instances, nothing else seemed to matter—and he was powerless to stop himself.

Addiction Switching. John’s story demonstrates how easy it is for people in recovery to unwittingly switch addictions. While many people in recovery may be familiar with the concept of addiction replacement, it’s a notion that would surprise members of the general public who think that addiction is a condition that pertains to a single, particular behavior which, when treated, ceases to wreak havoc with someone in the future.

Research suggests that people addicted to a substance, such as alcohol or drugs, are at greater risk for developing problems with other addictions, such as binge eating, sex, pornography, shopping, work or gambling. These so-called process addictions occur when someone becomes addicted to a rewarding behavior that does not involve an

Continued on page 7



Cathie Perrault
Executive Director
NPGA

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

We thank all our members, donors, volunteers and affiliates who have contributed to our mission.

Become a member today. Visit NorthstarProblemGambling.org to join us.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Achievements for 2016-17

The completion of another fiscal year provides a timely opportunity to reflect back on the year's accomplishments. As always, I am amazed at the amount of work it takes to increase awareness about problem gambling and to let people know about the resources that are available.

From July 2016 through June 2017, our staff, alliance of volunteers, members, contractors, donors and others conducted a variety of projects. Some of the highlights from the last fiscal year include:

- *Northstar's Speakers Network, which provides free presentations to community groups and professional agencies about problem gambling prevention and education, made more than 50 presentations over the last six months alone. These talks address diverse audiences—from college classes studying addiction to inmates at county jails to treatment professionals and soon-to-be-released prison offenders throughout Minnesota.*
- *Our multi-faceted communication efforts enabled us to reach thousands of Minnesotans with updates about emerging therapies and news and events surrounding problem gambling. This included four print newsletters, 10 electronic newsletters and numerous postings through our social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.*
- *We launched an advertising campaign to create awareness about problem gambling among older adults (those aged 65 and up). This is a group that's considered at high risk for developing gambling problems (as detailed on page four of this issue of Northern Light).*
- *In November, we hosted the Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling, a significant event attended by approximately 100 addiction and mental health providers.*
- *We created a brochure for legal and law enforcement professionals to help attorneys, judges, prosecutors, court personnel and others identify and assist those in need of help for gambling issues.*
- *We updated and reorganized our website to include new features that make it easier for visitors to find the information they need.*

We also finalized plans for next year's Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling, which will take place next March. Mark your calendars now.

I hope you are enjoying a relaxing summer before the busy fall season is back upon us.

Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to help those affected by problem gambling in Minnesota. We do this by promoting awareness and understanding of the issue via our website, newsletter, community education programs, sponsorship of the Minnesota State Conference on Problem Gambling, and training of professionals in preventing and treating problem gambling.

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BOARD MEMBER

Profile



DEB MUNDINGER

As a recovering gambler, Deb Munding, Northstar's newest board member, brings a personal voice of recovery to Northstar. "I'm familiar with the various aspects of gambling treatment and am interested to see how those pieces can work together to serve addicts and compulsive gamblers," says Deb. "I believe that sharing information between organizations will improve both individual recovery as well as enhance Minnesota's excellent treatment reputation."

Deb's diverse work experience also will allow her to make a significant contribution to Northstar. She owned an e-commerce business for 15 years and has an extensive background in website architecture, user experience and social media marketing. Prior to being a business owner, Deb was in the political realm, working for elected officials, non-profits and government organizations.

While managing her own recovery from gambling addiction, Deb has been struck by

the different ways that people find success in treatment. "I've learned that what makes one route effective for one gambler may not be the same for another," says Deb. "Some are drawn to community recovery whereas others are best motivated in a one-to-one setting."

"I'm familiar with the various aspects of gambling treatment and am interested to see how those pieces can work together to serve addicts and compulsive gamblers."

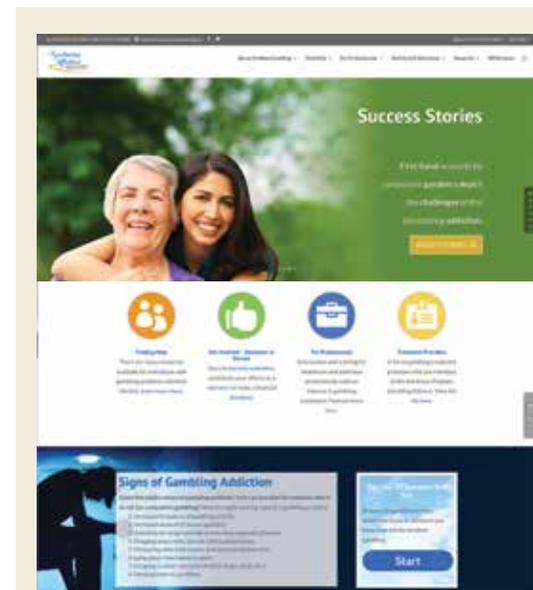
Deb also notes that there are different bottoms—the point at which people seek help—for each person struggling with gambling addiction. "For some, it's encouragement from family and friends or pressure from the workplace," says Deb. "In my case, I woke up one day and realized I couldn't handle one more day of chaos."

A member of a 12-step program, Deb learned about Northstar while manning the organization's booth at a conference. She networked with those working the Northstar booth and subsequently took an interest in the Northstar mission. Deb eventually talked with John Rundquist, Northstar board president, and joined the board in January. Deb was also a participant on a panel presenting personal stories of recovery at the 2016 Minnesota Problem Gambling Conference in November.

Deb is originally from Los Angeles but is proud to call Minnesota her home. She lives in a Minneapolis suburb with her shih tzu, and has many hobbies, including travel and photography. "One of the joys of recovery

is that things become interesting and wonderful again. Being behind a camera has given me the courage to go to new places and enjoy the excitement of making pictures."

"I look forward to getting to know the rest of the board and the leaders in the community and helping to figure out how we can all work together to help those suffering from this addiction."



NORTHSTAR UNVEILS NEW WEBSITE

Northstar's website has been updated to include several new features. In addition to possessing a more modern appearance, the site has been reorganized so that visitors can more efficiently find the information they seek. Please take a look and send any feedback or suggestions for additional enhancement to linda@NorthstarProblemGambling.org.

THE DANGER OF GAMBLING AMONG OLDER ADULTS



As with other segments of the population, most older adults enjoy gambling as a fun recreational activity. However, for some it can become an addiction, bringing potentially devastating consequences.

Gambling Is Increasingly Popular Among Older Adults. Seniors are one of the fastest-growing groups of gamblers. One study found that gambling was the most frequently identified social activity among adults over 65, with casinos and bingo surpassing movies, lunch, shopping and golf as preferred social activities.

Older adults have higher gambling participation rates than ever before due primarily to the aging population and the rapid expansion and increased access to legalized gambling. According to the American Gaming Association's 2013 Survey of Casino Entertainment, casino visitation rates among the elderly are high, with 28 percent of people aged 65 and older reporting having gone to a casino in 2012. Research at the University of Pennsylvania revealed that 70 percent of those 65 or older said they had gambled in the previous year, with nearly 10 percent admitting to gambling away more than they could afford to lose.

The number of older adults participating in gambling is expected to rise considerably given that Americans over 65 represent the fastest growing age group. By 2030, this segment of the population is expected to total approximately 71 million, accounting for one in five Americans.

Casinos Market Heavily to Seniors.

Casinos cater to seniors by enticing them with free bus transportation, free or discounted meals and entertainment, promotional coupons (such as player reward cards) and other prizes. Casinos also provide seniors with wheelchairs or motorized scooters to make them feel at home in their facilities.

Concerns About Older Adults and Problem Gambling. Gambling among older adults is different from gambling in younger age groups for the following reasons:

- When people are coping with big changes or losses they are more vulnerable to developing a gambling problem; many older adults face life transitions and losses, such as death of loved ones, end of career or isolation from family and friends
- Older adults who have gambled away their retirement savings don't have working years to make up their losses
- Many older adults may not understand addiction, making them less likely to identify a gambling problem
- Older adults appear less willing to seek assistance for a gambling problem than younger adults
- Many older adults hide their gambling because of the stigma associated with it; health professionals rarely assess for problem gambling
- Many older adults have easy access to gambling and are drawn to gambling to

fill their time or to be with other people

- Some older adults may have cognitive impairment that interferes with their ability to make sound decisions

Addicted seniors are either gambling their retirement funds away or spending too much of their fixed income, leading to unmanageable financial strain. Over time, seniors feel the financial burden of continued betting and often believe they must continue gambling to overcome their financial stress. Once addicted, it can be very difficult to break this cycle that will eventually lead to financial ruin.

Signs of Gambling Addiction in Seniors. Because seniors tend to live away from their younger family members, their addiction can remain hidden for long stretches of time. However, there are some detectable signs that an older adult may have a gambling addiction. Seniors may:

- appear withdrawn or are frequently unavailable
- be vague when describing their days and activities
- have sold off their valuable possessions for unexplained reasons
- talk a lot about exciting wins – but never discuss their losses

Female Seniors Are Fastest Growing Group of Problem Gamblers.

Studies have shown that addiction rates are currently rising for seniors. As baby boomers continue to move into retirement, experts believe the

number of addicted seniors will continue to rise, presenting a worsening socioeconomic problem.

The fastest growing group of problem gamblers is female seniors, due mainly to the loss of a spouse, as women typically outlive men. Compared to men, women experience a later age of onset of habitual gambling (54.8 versus 33.2) and reach problematic levels of gambling faster (5.6 years versus 16 years for men). However, women enter treatment sooner than men (4-5 years versus 11 years).

Help Is Available. If you or someone you know needs help, call the Minnesota Problem Gambling Helpline at 800-333-4673. The Helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides free, confidential help from specially trained counselors. Treatment is available at no cost to Minnesotans with gambling problems. Additional resources available in Minnesota can be found on NorthstarProblemGambling.org.



CONSUMER PROTECTION GUIDELINES INCLUDED IN DRAFT TO REPEAL FEDERAL BAN ON SPORTS BETTING

In May, the U.S. Congress unveiled The Gaming Accountability and Modernization Act (GAME), a draft of legislation seeking to lift the federal ban on sports betting. The GAME Act aims to remove federal barriers, outline consumer protection and allow states to legalize and regulate sports betting, including fantasy sports.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) has been instrumental in ensuring that the act has provisions that protect consumers. "The bill incorporates all major aspects of our recommendations, including Department of Health and Human Services authorization to address problem gambling, establishment of research programs and a \$5 million annual appropriation," says Keith Whyte, executive director of the NCPG.

The legislation's current language establishes the first ever federal "minimum consumer protections" for legalized gambling, including age and problem gambling provisions. However, the bill has not yet been introduced, and as a discussion draft it will likely be revised numerous times by various groups desiring to shape the language, so the final prospects are very unclear.



BEHIND THE NUMBERS

2x

The percentage of those aged 65+ who reported gambling in the previous year doubled from 1975 to 1998. (Desai & Potenza, 2007)

54.8 vs. 33.2

The age of onset of habitual gambling for women (54.8) compared to men (33.2) (Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling webinar, May 26, 2017)

5.6 vs. 16

Women reach problematic levels of gambling faster than men (after 5.6 years vs. 16 years for men) (Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling webinar, May 26, 2017)

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The percent of hospitalized veterans receiving substance abuse treatment program who met problem gambling criteria (Pathological Gambling in Hospitalized SA Veterans. Daghestani, A. J. Clin. Psych [1996])

800-333-HOPE

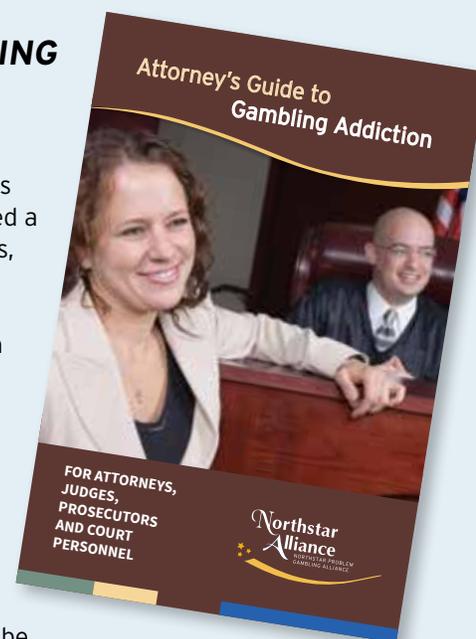
The phone number for the Minnesota Problem Gambling Helpline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ATTORNEY'S GUIDE TO GAMBLING ADDICTION NOW AVAILABLE

Working in conjunction with Minnesota Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Northstar has produced a brochure to help attorneys, judges, prosecutors, court personnel and others identify and assist those in need of help for gambling issues. The guide addresses the various scenarios in which gambling addiction may play a role in events leading to legal proceedings.

"It's important that those in the legal field become educated about gambling addiction so they can consider whether a gambling problem might be at the root of criminal activity," says Cathie Perrault, executive director at Northstar. "With appropriate screening and assessment, such problems can be better diagnosed."

Brochures can be requested from linda@northstarproblemgambling.org or viewed online at NorthstarProblemGambling.org.



Christine's STORY



Looking back on it, I guess it's not surprising that I developed a gambling problem. I had a risk-taking personality . . .



I was exposed to various forms of gambling as early as age nine. My father was a bookie and sold football tickets. I'd spend my allowance and purchase tickets from him.

When I was asked to share my story, I didn't hesitate. I think it's so important for people to see that everyday, regular people can have a gambling addiction. And by telling my story I hope I can help others and reduce the shame of compulsive gambling.

Looking back on it, I guess it's not surprising that I developed a gambling problem. I had a risk-taking personality and was exposed to various forms of gambling as early as age nine. My father was a bookie and sold football tickets. I'd spend my allowance and purchase tickets from him.

I became insanely addicted to gambling in my early twenties. I was working at a charity bingo hall when the casinos opened in the '80s, and a lot of us would go to the casinos after work.

For many years, blackjack was my game of choice. Then one night in the mid '90s, I had a dream that I put \$20 in a slot machine and won a huge jackpot. Shortly after that dream, I went to the casino, put \$20 in the slot machine and won \$15,000.

From that point on, I switched almost

exclusively to slot machines. It was a bigger, faster win, and I liked that I could isolate myself more. With cards, I had to communicate with others.

Within six months after the big win, I realized I bit off more than I could chew. I had given back all the money, and more. I kept chasing that feeling of the huge win.

I soon became secretive about my gambling. I lied about losing and I lied about playing. I gambled at any chance I could.

In 2004, I started a business that quickly had financial success. I had so much money that I thought I'd never run out. But eventually I couldn't even come up with postage to ship a package. I started selling stolen goods to cover my losses and eventually ended up in prison on a mail fraud charge.

After prison, I was released to a halfway house, where I stayed for six weeks before I had to move out. I had nothing but a car. I'd lost a beautiful home, a great marriage, and had never previously wanted for anything.

But I was angry, and the first thing I did was drive straight to Mystic Lake Casino.

Less than nine months later, I was back in prison for violating probation by gambling at casinos. I was sentenced to 15 months in a higher security prison. But this time it was different.

Something clicked the day I was shackled off to jail and I had a spiritual shift. I decided that I would never gamble again, no matter what. I evaluated the choices I made and why I did what I did. Once I was released, I took responsibility for my own actions and worked hard to get back on my feet. I took a job at a restaurant and am now the manager.

My life is so much better and calmer now. I meditate every morning and am very involved in GA meetings. I listen to others and share my story whenever I can. I receive so much respect from other people and have enormous respect for others. I am very available to my family and my friends, some of whom have gone through recovery with me.

I had nothing but a car. I'd lost a beautiful home, a great marriage, and had never previously wanted for anything. But I was angry, and the first thing I did was drive straight to Mystic Lake Casino.

It means a lot to me to be very honest about this disease and what it's done to me. A lot of things about gambling made me feel like the scum of the earth. It was much worse than anything I felt as an alcohol and drug addict.

I focus on my recovery at every opportunity. I hope to make a difference to others who similarly never expected they would go through the horrible things we do as gambling addicts.



THE SIMILAR FACES OF ALCOHOL, DRUG AND GAMBLING ADDICTION *continued from page 1*

addictive substance. Although they are not commonly thought of in the same way as alcohol or drug addiction, process addictions can become a significant problem for people or become a substitute for their primary addiction.

The reason that a new addiction can take the place of a previously addictive behavior is because individuals who have an addiction aren't actually craving a physical substance; they're craving the fulfillment of an emotional or psychological need. They are essentially substituting one addiction for another in an effort to keep producing the same feeling or high that results from the release of dopamine.

The Link Between Substance Use Addiction and Gambling Addiction.

One of the most strongly linked addiction combinations is alcohol and gambling, suggesting that those in recovery from an alcohol or drug addiction are at significant risk for becoming addicted to gambling. In fact, one study showed that 10-20 percent of people with a substance abuse problem also have gambling problems.

Likewise, substance use disorder (SUD) is very common in those with gambling problems. According to Jon Grant, JD, MD, MPH, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience at the University of Chicago, the rate of substance abuse among gamblers is seven times greater than that of non-gamblers. The most common substances used by problem gamblers are nicotine and alcohol.

More than half of Gamblers Anonymous participants reported either alcohol or drug abuse, and 35-63% of individuals seeking treatment for gambling disorder also screened positive for a lifetime SUD, which is much higher than rates found in the general population (26.6%).

However, this does not mean that if someone has a gambling problem that they are guaranteed to become addicted to other things—or vice-versa. Some problem gamblers never experience any other addiction because no other substance or activity gives them the same feeling as the gambling does.

When recovering alcoholics try gambling, their brain will essentially remind them of the pleasurable feeling they've gotten in the past. Their experience with a previous addiction effectively rewired their brain, meaning that the pleasure pathway remains. This is why alcoholics are three times more likely to develop a gambling addiction than the population at large.

Given the similarities between addictions and the documented high rates of co-occurrence among addictions, those in recovery from an alcohol or drug addiction need to be aware of the potential for crossing addictions. When there's a strong focus on the primary presenting addiction, it can be easy to miss the development of other, new behaviors that become unhealthy until they become quite obvious and destructive.



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Conference on Problem Gambling and the Criminal Justice System, Sept. 15

The American Institute for the Advancement of Forensic Studies (AIAFS) presents *Problem Gambling and the Criminal Justice System: Implications for Criminal Justice, Forensic Mental Health, and Legal Professionals* on Friday, Sept. 15 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Mall of America. The conference will provide an overview of problem gambling and gambling addiction with a particular focus on the implications for criminal justice, forensic mental health and legal professionals. The conference is \$99 and provides 6.5 CEUs. To register, visit www.aiafs.com/trainings. For more information, contact Darian Buel at (612) 250-5432 or at aiafsassoc@gmail.com.

Northern Light

NORTHSTAR PROBLEM GAMBLING ALLIANCE

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Changing Problem Gambling Behavior through:
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • RESEARCH • ADVOCACY

