Preventing Relapse among Problem Gamblers using a Minimal Intervention

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University of Calgary

funding provided by the National Center for Responsible Gaming and Alberta Gaming Research Institute
Analysis of Relapse Situations  
(Cummings et al., 1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Alcoholics (N = 70)</th>
<th>Smokers (N = 64)</th>
<th>Gamblers (N = 19)</th>
<th>Uncontrolled Eaters (N = 29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrapersonal Determinants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotional States</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Physical States</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotional States</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing Personal Control</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urges and Temptations</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Determinants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Conflict</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Pressure</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotional States</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Process of Relapse

1. High-risk situation
2. No Adaptive Coping Responses
3. Decreased self-efficacy
   Positive Outcome Expectancies
4. Initial use of substance (lapse)
5. Abstinence Violation Effect:
6. Return to Pretreatment Level of Use (Relapse)
Figure 20-4. Cognitive-behavioral model of the relapse process.
Treatment Implications

- Prevention Strategies
  - Global, lifestyle
  - High Risk coping
- Minimization Strategies
Figure 20-6. Relapse prevention: global life-style strategies.
Relapse Prevention Interventions For Abstinence Initiation

- High-risk situation
- Identify High-risk situations
- No Adaptive Coping Responses
- Skills Training
- Decreased self-efficacy
- Positive Outcome Expectancies
- Prepare for lapse
Relapse Prevention Interventions For Relapse Management

Initial use of substance (lapse) → Abstinence Violation Effect: → Return to Pretreatment Level of Use (Relapse)

General Strategies
- Lapses are:
  - Mistakes
  - Unique events
  - Attributable to external, specific controllable factors

Specific Strategies
- Stop, look, listen
- Stay calm
- Renew your commitment
- Review high risk situations
- Make immediate plan for recovery
- Use social support

Motivational Enhancement
- Help client see value of returning to treatment

Harm Reduction
- Help client take steps in the right direction
Figure 20-3. Forks along the road to recovery.
Critical Dimensions of Relapse Study: Design

- Recruited 101 people who recently quit gambling
- Media recruitment versus treatment sample
- No gambling for 2 weeks
- South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) > 4
- Interviewed face to face initially, 3, 6 and 12 months
Demographics (N = 101)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Female</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Married or Cohabitng</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Never Married</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Some Post Secondary Education</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Full-time employment</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Unemployed</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Current smoker</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE Mean</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>19-77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Gambling Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of gambling problem</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Oaks Gambling Screen</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% DSM-IV Pathological Gambling</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Previous quit attempt</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Past gambling treatment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Current gambling treatment</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean days abstinent at initial</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major problem type of gambling:**
- % Video lottery terminals: 49
- % Mixed games: 34
- % Casinos: 12
- % Bingo: 3
- % Other: 3
Demographics - Comorbidity

Past Mood Disorders reported by 60% of participants:
- Depression
- Bipolar 1
- Bipolar 2
- Dysthymia
- Double depression
- None

Current mood reported by 20% (all major depressive disorders)

- Lifetime alcohol problems reported by 72%
- Current alcohol problems reported by 7%
- Lifetime drug problems reported by 49%
- Current drug problems reported by 7%
Comorbidity: Suicidal Ideation

- **Suicidal ideation**
  - ever? 71%
  - 7 days in a row? 40%
  - plan? 53%

- **Suicide attempt?** 33%
  - required medical help in 62% of attempts

- **Attempt related to gambling?**
  - 21% of those attempting or 7% of sample
Goals and Confidence

Goal

Quit all forms of gambling 33%
Quit problem type of gambling 67%

Confidence to achieve goal Scale 1-10 (10 most confident)

in the next week M=8
in the next month M=7
in the next year M=6

Follow up rates

3 months - 83% 6 months - 80% 12 months - 79%
Self-change versus Treatment

SOGS

- No treatment: 10.9
- Past only: 14.2
- Current only: 12.4

DSM-IV Criteria Met

- No treatment: 82%
- Past only: 96%
- Current only: 96%
Gambling Over Year Follow-up

Relapse - resumption of gambling after a period of 2 weeks

Over the entire follow up period:

- 6% remained completely abstinent
- 37% were abstinent 2/3 of the time
- 17% were abstinent 1/2 of the time
- 29% gambled 2/3 of the time
- 7% continued gambling
### Monthly Gambling Days Before & During the Follow-up Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days Gambled</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 or more</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gambling Outcome: Conclusions

- Relapse rates are very high
  - 94% relapsed
  - almost half gambled most of the year

- Overall general improvement within the sample
  - 8+ days per month reduced from 65% to 14% of people
Assessment of Relapse

- Open-ended interview audiotaped
  - based on Marlatt’s interview
  - extensive description of context, thoughts, feelings, circumstances
  - mood ratings before and during
  - consequences
  - reasons and strategies for terminating
Relapse Rates and Patterns

- Minor 29%  Major 71%
- Mean was 40 days with 12 days of gambling
  - $368. Loss
  - Range loss of $3,000. to win of $4,000.
## Characterization of Relapses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early afternoon</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late afternoon/early evening</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late evening (after 10pm)</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekday</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend (after noon on Friday)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With friends/family</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Characterization of Relapses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in task prior to relapse</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No task engagement</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dominant Form of Gambling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VLT’s</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casinos</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scratch tickets</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports select</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slots</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characterization of Relapses

Main Reason for Relapse - open ended responses

- Thought I could win: 20%
- Boredom/killing time: 18%
- Giving into urges/habit/opportunity: 15%
- Dealing with negative situations/emotions: 15%
- Make money: 10%
- Socializing/fitting in: 10%
- Seeking excitement/enjoyment: 5%
- Giving up: 3%
- Control issues/testing: 2%
- Access to money: 2%
Characterization of Relapses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional State Prior to Gambling</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about finances</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characterization of Relapses

Extreme Consequences
(overall 54% had one)

- Family Life: 16%
- Social Life: 14%
- Work Life: 12%
- Financial Situation: 51%
Major Conclusions

- Relapse rates were extremely high (94%).
- Relapses were most likely to occur during late evening (and least likely to occur in the morning), on the weekend and when the individual was alone.
- Positive and negative moods were equally likely to precede gambling.
- Most relapses were major and half had an extremely negative consequence.
Predicting Relapse: Comorbid Disorders

Three outcome variables were identified when Cox Regression Survival Analysis was performed to assess the impact of comorbidity on time to achieve 3 months of continuous abstinence from gambling.
Role of Treatment/support in outcome

- 63X more likely to achieve stable abstinence

- 25/101 (8 in more than one)
  - Individual 60%
  - GA 44%
  - Group 24%
  - Residential 8%
What can we do for the 75% who don’t attend treatment?

- Smoking Cessation Study (Brandon et al., 2000)
  - Minimal interventions for smokers who quit on their own
  - Hotline and mailings of RP booklets
  - Hotline (verification call, call if no contact for 3 months) 20% used
  - 12% vs. 35% smoking at 12 months
  - Cost $21. per person, $126. Per abstinent person
Follow-up Study

- Preventing Relapse in Gamblers who have Quit
  - 1 versus 8 relapse prevention booklets
  - No no-intervention control
  - Media recruitment
  - One-year follow-up
  - Alberta Gaming Research Institute
Staying on Track

A guide to remaining gambling free

Overview

Brought to you by the Addiction Centre and the University of Calgary. Funded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute.
Staying on Track
A guide to remaining gambling free

Avoiding a Relapse

Brought to you by the Addiction Centre and the University of Calgary. Funded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute.

BOOKLET 2
Nine tips in nine pages

- Identify triggers
- Prepare a budget
- Limit access to Money
- Develop ways to deal with urges
- Challenge your thinking that allows you to gamble
Get more balance in your life
Deal with problems of depression
Deal with substance abuse problems
Get back on the wagon if you slip

- Seven exercises
- Encourages to save booklet and review
Staying on Track: Avoiding a Relapse

- Reviews the most frequent triggers and gives examples of people’s stories
  - Dealing with negative situations or emotions
  - Seeking enjoyment and excitement
  - The desire to make money
  - Combating boredom
- Maintenance factors and plan
EXERCISE

List any leisure activities you would like to do more of or try for the first time.

EXAMPLE

*I want to start bowling again on Thursday evenings.*

A Healthy Lifestyle is a matter of balancing your physical health, your emotional well-being, the relationships you have, and your leisure life.
**ACTIVE**

- Reading
- Journaling
- Playing board games
- Doing crossword puzzles
- Painting the house
- Stretching exercises
- Running

**PASSIVE**

- Watching TV
- Renting videos
- Napping
- Surfing the internet
- Listening to the radio
- Sunbathing

You may ask yourself, how can reading be an active pursuit? It is active because it engages your mind. Watching TV, on the other hand, is one of those “mind-numbing” activities. The danger with passive activities is that they are a little too easy, and can be a quick fix for boredom. Active pursuits take a little more effort, but are usually more rewarding in the end.

Another trend this survey revealed was that gamblers spend less time in social activities like visiting friends, going to church, or being involved in community organizations. Activities are more enjoyable when done with other people, you find a greater commitment to the activity if others are involved. It is easy to make excuses to not go to the gym when you are going alone. However, if you have a buddy to go with, there is less chance you will cancel out. Therefore, when balancing your lifestyle try to include some social activities.
Pleasant Activities List

The following list was modified from a Pleasant Events List, which was produced by asking people what they do for fun. Read through the list and check off all activities that may help you balance your lifestyle.

- Being out in the country.
- Wearing nice or new clothes.
- Talking about sports.
- Meeting someone new.
- Playing ball.
- Planning trips or vacations.
- Buying things for self or someone you care about.
- Going to the beach.
- Doing art work.
- Rock climbing.
- Reading the Bible.
- Playing golf.
- Decorating my room or house.
- Going to a sports event.
- Reading a "how to do it" book or article.
- Reading stories, novels, poems or plays.
- Watching TV.
- Talking to myself or a friend.
- Camping.
- Working in politics.
- Working on machines.
- Thinking about something good in the future.
- Completing a hard task.
- Laughing.
- Solving a problem, puzzle, cross-word.
- Being at weddings, baptisms, confirmations.
- Having lunch with friends.
- Playing tennis.
- Driving long distances.
- Woodworking, carpentry.
- Writing stories, novels.
- Speaking in a foreign language and learning.
- Going to service, civic, or social club meetings.
- Going to a business meeting or a convention.
- Being in a sporty car.
- Playing in a band.
- Making soap.
- Combing, brushing or washing my hair.
- Acting.
- Taking a nap.
- Canning, freezing, making preserves, etc.
- Solving a personal problem.
- Taking a bath or shower.
- Singing to myself or in a group.
- Making food or crafts to sell or give away.
- Having a good meal.
- Going out with friends.
- Going to lectures or hearing symphonies.
- Breathing clean air.
- Thinking up a song or music.
- Boating.
- Restoring antiques, refinishing furniture.
- Being with animals.
- Riding an airplane.
- Flying.
- Having a frank and open conversation.
- Working on my job.
- Going to a party.
- Being with children.
- Playing chess or checkers.
- Doing craft work.
- Putting on makeup, fixing my hair, etc.
- Designing or drafting.
- Visiting people who are sick or in trouble.
Staying on Track: Taking Control of Your Finances

- Financial Assessment Exercise
  - Are you heading for trouble?
- Budget Exercise
  - Income, expenses, debts
- Adjusting Budget Plan
- Limiting access to money checklist
Staying on Track: Other Booklets

- Dealing with Urges
- Changing your Thinking
- Lifestyle Balance
- Getting Back on the Wagon
  - Motivational enhancement
- Dealing with Mood and Substance Abuse Problems
  - Self-assessment and treatment resources
Preventing Relapse: Design

- Recruited 168 people who recently quit gambling
- Media recruitment vs. treatment sample
- No gambling for 2 weeks
- DSM (NODS)
- Interviewed by telephone initially, 6 weeks, 6 months and 12 months
- Collateral verification
Who calls to participate?

- First timers
- Small towners
- The shamed
- Busy people
## Demographics (N = 169)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or Cohabiting</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some post secondary education</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current smoker</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Mean</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>21-70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Gambling Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of gambling problem</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Oaks Gambling Screen</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NODS – Lifetime</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Past year</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Previous quit attempt</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Past gambling treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median days abstinent at initial</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 (max = 5 yrs.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major problem type of gambling:**

- % Mixed games: 46
- % Video lottery terminals: 38
- % Casinos: 8
- % Bingo: 4
- % Other: 4
Examples of Participants

- Will
  - 38, vlt, quit for 6 years,

- Melanie
  - 26, bingo, few GA meetings, ambivalent

- Jack
  - 52, no success with treatment, court date
Impression of Booklets

- Still have at 6 months 97%
- Read?
  - Not at all 6%
  - Some 27%
  - Completely 67%
- Procedures? Some times 72%
Six Month Outcome (N=88)

- Gambled 78%
- Met Goal?
  - Not at all 17%
  - Partially 27%
  - Mostly 25%
  - Completely 31%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>Month 4-6</th>
<th>Relapse Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Six Month Outcome (N=88)

Receive Treatment?

- Booklet 15%
- Control 7%
Conclusions?