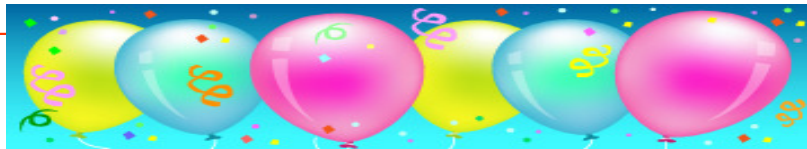




Autumn Newsletter 2009



CCPGS CELEBRATES A DECADE OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY!

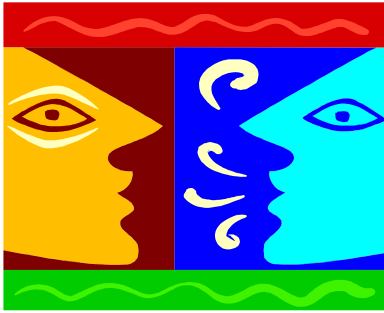
This year we are celebrating a decade of service to the community and are proud to say we are growing in leaps and bounds. After small beginnings with an office in Woy Woy and Gosford CCPGS has expanded to four locations including San Remo and The Entrance. We are a small but active team. Chris Davidson is the Manager/Counsellor, Bronwyn Schwetz, Counsellor and Deborah Rhoades, Counsellor. We provide one on one gambling treatment counselling, for the problem gambler, family and friends and also provide education on problem gambling to the wider community and service providers. In 2008 we bought Julie Bird, youth worker on board to provide a youth gambling workshop to local high schools. This has become extremely successful and much sort after, assisting to highlight youth problem gambling on the Central Coast. Corrina Peck from Links at San Remo Neighbourhood Centre also very active, incorporating gambling awareness into her plan, we thank both women for their invaluable support.

SELF EXCLUSION: With ongoing support for our clients around issues of problem gambling, self exclusion becomes an essential part of duty of care. We now offer this service to our clients who wish to self exclude from pubs within the privacy of our counselling rooms. We will report back in our next newsletter on our progress in this area.

In February we attended an Aboriginal cultural competence workshop over two days, which was informative and created great understanding amongst the participants. It was presented with knowledge, compassion and humor. Thank you to Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council. Highly recommended.

Our CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) worker will be attending the Aboriginal interagencies and has formed strong links with the Pilipino community. She attended the GOATS festival in the north of the coast; this turning out to be a great event. Thank you to San Remo Neighbourhood Centre for your support.

On the 2nd and 3rd April we attended the Conference for Problem Gambling Counsellors in Sydney. It was a great opportunity to connect once again with colleagues from across NSW. We return motivated and enthusiastic!



Is Hearing Listening? 'Knowledge speaks but wisdom

Is hearing listening? Even though the other is holding eye contact, nodding appropriately, you have an over whelming feeling of not being heard. Maybe the listeners ears wandered to a nearby conversation and for just a moment your words disappeared into the ether; suddenly awareness kicks in and the listener tries to recover by throwing in for good measure an affirmative gesture, which has now alerted you to the shock, horror of not being heard. How often does this take place during conversation? What factors come into play? How interesting is the conversation and does it hold the others attention? Is the listener really a listener or merely someone trying to listen politely, not really wanting to be involved in the conversation, simply trying to do what is expected socially?

Maybe listening is a skill. After all we pay professionals to listen, don't we? Do they? Or are they concocting tonight's dinner menu or tomorrow's shopping list or working out exactly how to get out of this session early as it has been a long day? So how do we know if someone has been heard?

Empathic listening is an active process. Commence with the intent to connect. The listener takes an empathic posture, motivating the other to speak whilst not judging, creating a safe environment to talk. He/she does not use pauses or silences to interject and permits the speaker to guide the conversation. It is not sufficient to just have an interest in someone, it must also be shown and felt; it is a genuine connection. The speaker will soon detect if the listener is distracted or bored. With trust comes a deeper level of communication and an increase in self understanding. Now possible options can be considered as well as outcomes. As Alfred Benjamin states' *Genuine listening is hard work. There is little about it that is mechanical...we hear with out ears but listen with our eyes and mind and heart and skin and guts as well*'.

By using empathic listening the speaker feels heard, validated and respected. The listener can use this technique to great benefit but must remain mindful of his/her own beliefs and values; *Egan suggests 'that living by a value system may well be a prerequisite to properly challenging others'*, without judging. Listen with your whole self, do not prepare to interrupt, this creates a barrier and the speaker is not heard. Allow time to hear not to interject with your story.

Gregorio Bilikopf Encina adds '*There is a great therapeutic value in being able to think aloud and share a problem with someone who will listen. In empathic listening success is measured by the ability to unpack the often pain-soaked narrative and let it float to the surface*'.

These skills are available to everyone. All it takes is the intention to connect genuinely with another and to be fully present and really hear their story, without interference or judgment. Assisting the speaker to clarify their needs first, being aware of timing before offering your feelings or suggestions. It is a true gift. Therefore, are YOU listening?

'Seek first to understand, then to be understood'

Stephen Covey (Seven Habits of Highly Effective People)

B. Schwetz



The voice in your ear.....

Abstinence & Letting Go: Each step forward requires a decision; when you choose abstinence; then you need to let go of dysfunctional relationships with other gamblers.

Accountability, Honesty & Money: Be accountable to yourself by being honest with others about your spending.

Celebrate: Celebrate all your achievements, if you don't give yourself credit for what you have achieved, you devalue the success.

Child Within: What activities bring you joy, contentment and give you a good belly laugh? Find a child to share your child with.

Honour the present: Look ahead and see all the possibilities waiting but honour the present by living each moment.

Live, Love & Fun: Live each day as if it were your last. Love life and most of all have fun. Dance like no one is watching and laugh loud and long.

Remain Mindful: Be mindful each day of your priorities and goals. Use your STOP card daily to stay on track.

Responsibility: Remain diligent, own what is yours take responsibility for your decisions and actions.

Stop Looking Back: Stop looking back in order to see how far you have come, release the burden, close the door and move on.

Trust: Trust is earned not demanded.

You are more than a gambler: Look at the other roles you play in your life that give you a sense of honour, worth, achievement and empowerment.

Zero: Develop zero tolerance for gambling, become the true YOU.



BEFORE WITHDRAWING MONEY

STOP
TAKE A BREAK
ORGANISE YOUR PRIORITIES
PUT INTO ACTION





Dysfunctional 'Siamese Twins'.

In my time as a gambling counsellor I have frequently listened to members of Gamblers Anonymous tell me how the 4th step in *The 12 Step Program* is often the most difficult. That is; taking a searching and fearless moral inventory of yourself. It's not surprising that this is difficult to do. Who wants to rehash shameful memories of lies, stealing and deception - the hurting of loved ones through a desperate compulsion? Most people would much rather forget all the things they've done to support their addiction. The pain of facing up to these things is all too much for the person to cope with so they let it go. And who could blame them, after all, even professionals in this field believe that the addict already has more than enough shame to deal with:

"Shame and addiction are Siamese twins. You cannot find an addict without shame – or a shameful person without an addiction. Shame and addiction are attached at the heart, sharing the same blood that keeps them alive. Where one leads the other must follow". Shame Faced – Stephanie E. 1986.

If this is the case, then the gambling addict is stuck between a rock and a hard place. If facing up to past behaviours associated with gambling gives rise to Shame - the "Siamese twin" of compulsive gambling, what can be done? How can a person clean their house without looking at the mess? Any therapist would agree that the fear of self-reflection undermines a person's ability to heal and grow. A Smash Repairer, for example, needs to fully assess all the damage before he can begin to fix the wreckage. So what is the answer? Without a full and honest personal inventory how can you begin to change and heal the destruction you have caused – to you and others? The answer to this problem lies in understanding the notion of accepting guilt and letting go of shame.

Lookup the word Shame in the Webster's Dictionary and you'll find four interpretations, one of which is of interest for this discussion. Specifically it states that shame is, "*The parts which modesty requires to be covered; the private parts*", (*Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary .1913*). While this could understandably be referred to our body parts, it also has a direct reference to anything about us that we don't want exposed – including our thoughts and behaviour. So in this definition shame implies hiding something, while guilt on the other hand means, "*the consequent exposure to punishment resulting from wilful disobedience of law, or from morally wrong action.*" (*Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary .1913*). The words "*consequent exposure*" mark the big difference here. Shame requires hiding something while guilt requires exposure, an admission - coming clean and enduring the consequences.

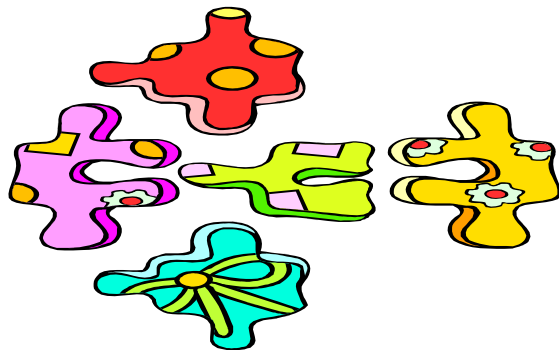
It's not possible to be in a state of guilt while you shamefully hide your wrong doings? Shame covers guilt; it is the avoidance of guilt and a substitute for the *legitimate suffering* involved in admitting what we've done. Carl Jung believed that "*all neurosis is the substitute for legitimate suffering*". As one of the founders of Psychoanalytical Therapy, he assisted his clients to face hidden demons (or "shadows") to help cure their suffering. With an appreciation of this approach, it's easy to understand that in order to address their neurotic tendency to gamble excessively, the problem gambler will need to face their hidden guilt as it is a part of legitimate suffering.

Shame implies a lack of responsibility and a self-imposed powerlessness to change ones behaviour. "*How can I fix things if I'm so pathetic*" you'll hear the shameful person cry. When a person does take responsibility for their behaviour and is willing to accept an appropriate level of guilt associated to their actions, shame becomes redundant and fades away. An appropriate level of guilt can often motivate a person to make amends for past behaviour. Shame on the other hand, is the generalised and pervasive feeling that says, "*I am flawed. It's me (as opposed to my behaviour) that's the problem!*"

An appropriate level of guilt applied to bad behaviour is healthy; shame on the other hand applies to the person, it is inappropriate and unhealthy. So even though shining a light on the ugly truth may *seem* too much to bear, and although the veil of shame may *seem* to keep this pain at bay, when left to fester for too long, shame like a disease seeps its way through the whole being. Accepting the pain of guilt and acting on it by making amends is the way out of shame. Once past misdemeanours have been fully settled a sense of self-respect returns. Taking responsibility breaks the shackles of shame and leads us on a path to empowerment and freedom – the very thing that so many problem gamblers long for.

C. Davidson.

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**WONDERING HOW TO PUT THE
PIECES TOGETHER.**

**GAMBLING EDUCATION
& WORKSHOPS**

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Understanding & Managing Conflict.

Here it is April already, and its time for another newsletter. It seems like only yesterday that I was writing about Christmas and how I was going to try to positively manage the stresses of that busy time of the year. In the December newsletter I discussed how 'in the midst of the movement and chaos of Christmas it was possible to keep stillness inside us' and manage the imbalance between the demands being made on us and our resources to cope with those demands. I would like to continue to explore this statement (by Deepak Chopra) by discussing conflict, as conflict is something that people have engaged in, throughout the history of mankind.

Additionally, conflict has the potential to cause destructive consequences personally, socially, emotionally and physically (it can also be expensive when we consider legal actions). Importantly, whilst people tend to associate conflict with negative consequences, conflict situations provide the potential for several positive outcomes such as an improved understanding of oneself and others and increased cohesion and constructive change. Firstly within this exploration let's examine what is meant by the term conflict. Conflict can be described as a form of relating or interacting where we find ourselves (either as individuals or groups) under some sort of perceived threat to our personal or collective goals. These perceived threats may be either real or imagined (Cottle 2006, pp. 17-21). Therefore, a threat only needs to be perceived in order for conflict to exist. It does not need to be real. Further, it takes only one of the people/ parties/ sides to perceive a threat in order for conflict to exist.

With this in mind it is important to state that not all conflict can be resolved, but all conflict can be effectively managed. When individuals are prepared to deal with the conflict, have a degree of commitment to the relationship, and when the level of competitiveness' within the relationship is conducive towards change then conflict can be effectively managed (Claremont 2005, p.262). Therefore, what are some effective conflict management techniques which will enable us 'to keep stillness inside us in the midst of' the movement and chaos which is conflict?

The Mindtools website (2008) suggests effective conflict management techniques as: encouraging all points of view, using effective and clear communication skills, being aware of your tone, speed of speech and body language and listening (to be an effective and active listener you must be able to concentrate well), Mindtools also suggest managing conflict through the accepted resolution techniques of taking responsibility for dealing with the situation, listening and discussing the conflict, showing empathy and sensitivity, and being willing to compromise and co-operate.

Perhaps then, I could suggest, that it is through acknowledging that there will always be conflict within relationships, but how we choose to work through and resolve or manage our conflict that enables us 'to keep stillness inside of us in the midst of movement and chaos'. Furthermore, when we perceive conflict as an opportunity to improve our understanding of oneself and others we not only increase our cohesion which leads to constructive change but we enhance our own growth through personal development.

Take care, until next time

Deborah Rhoades

