

# Central Coast Gambling Service

## CHANCE..NEWSLETTER

### SUMMER 2010

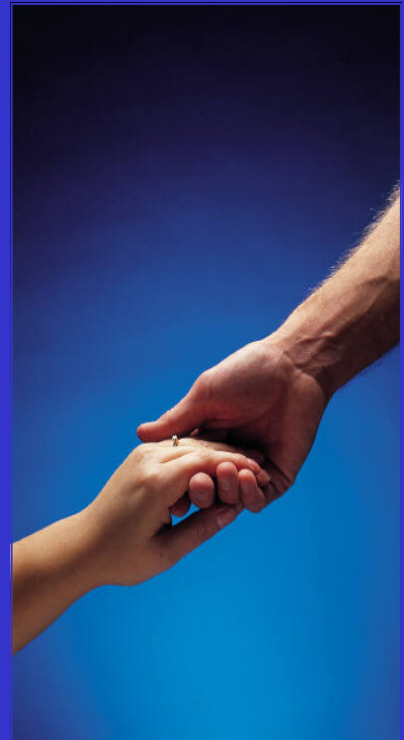
**'GAMBLING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A PROBLEM'**

#### Take a CHANCE and create the life you want:

- Gambling Free
- Health and Wellbeing
- Strong Relationships
- Elevated Self Esteem
- Fulfillment
- Bright Future
- Happiness and Inner Peace.
- Self Worth

#### Come and explore the possibilities:

- Gambling Check Up
- Self Exclusion
- 1-1 Counselling
- Treatment Plan
- Strategies for Change
- Group work for gamblers & family/friends.
- Continued Support
- Education



**We are here to assist you now.....43 447992'**

**Funded through the Responsible Gambling Fund**

**"The first Wealth is Health"  
Ralph Waldo Emerson.**

Welcome to our final newsletter for 2010. We are already experiencing the first throws of summer as the humidity begins to creep in and the endless singing of cicadas is only just around the corner.

As we all look forward to a Christmas break and reconnecting with family and friends, we acknowledge not all will be experiencing a happy Christmas. Some will be struggling with unpaid bills, limited funds for Christmas shopping and food buying and feeling guilty and filled with shame.

Turning now to our clients, we are aware many will struggle with gambling over the festive season. Some to relieve pressure and anxiety and others hoping to win the 'big one' in order to meet commitments or buy presents for their family or repay debts.

Someone said to me only a few days ago, 'they should use their willpower to stop gambling, after all it is the choice they make'.

Pondering this comment I could hear logic kicking in, from his point of view it was true and did make sense. But from a gamblers point of view it is never that easy or there would be no problem gambling. Dealing with the underlying emotional sea is tricky. Many highs and lows, lack of will, desperation at the prospect of such a daunting task; to stop gambling as it had become their crutch or coping tool.

I listened to his theoretical explanation of compulsiveness supported by text; but I believe the most important ingredients were lacking; 'empathy and respect'. Had he lost the ability to walk in another's shoes and understand from their plight even though it may conflict with his own? To gain understanding of their dilemma is to have insight into the entangled web that they call their life. Sitting with them, teasing out the barriers and resistance takes time, patience and letting go of our own need to resolve 'the problem' or fix him/her.

As Fisher 1987 states 'people are essentially storytellers and make decisions based on good reasons'. For a gambler filled with remorse he/she may decide it is OK to hock the TV/DVD in order to buy a Christmas gift for their child or take money from the petty cash at work without permission in order to pay an outstanding electricity bill, believing they have not stolen the money but borrowed it, with full intention of paying it back.

So what is our role? Shaffer 1978 quotes Rogers 'The theory of person centered therapy suggests any client, no matter what the problem, can improve without being taught anything specific by the therapist, once he/she accepts and respects themselves'.

To wait for the invitation, to walk in their shoes, listen, learn from them and assist by shining the light into the dark corners to illuminate fears, resentment, anger and grief, to become the navigator and relinquish control to the client keeping close watch on the speedometer, ready to grab the handbrake if necessary to get things cruising again.

Rogers was a visionary of hope with 'a strong belief in the positive nature of human beings'. He was empathic, respectful and an inspiring teacher.

Let us now take a moment to reflect on our clients and send good wishes to them and theirs, 'appreciate their uniqueness, stage of growth and their continual state of change'.

Best wishes for a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

Bronwyn



## Pre-commitment – a preventative measure for excess poker machine playing

Gambling is without doubt a popular and enjoyable pastime within our culture. The large majority of Australians will gamble on something at some time in the course of a year (Productivity Commission, 1999). Most of us can enjoy a flutter without getting into trouble. In fact only around 1% of the population get into serious trouble with gambling (A.C. Nielson, 2007). However around 85% of all those in treatment are addicted to one form of gambling - gaming machines.

Griffith (2001) speculated that advances in electronic gaming machines has escalated the risk of their addictive properties. It seems that all the “bells and whistles” featured on gaming machines are just too enticing for some people and it has led them into compulsive urges to play.

To help curb the destruction caused by this addiction the NSW State Government is developing a “Smart Card System” – a pre-commitment strategy where players nominate how much they are willing to lose before they begin playing. Once they have reached their limit they will not be able to continue playing.

Among other things, this strategy should take some of the pressure off gambling venue staff in knowing when and how to assist those who may have a problem. McCorriston (2002) said, “venue staff should not see their role as being to ‘diagnose’ problem gambling. This would be inappropriate and outside their role and expertise”.

Pre-commitment helps the individual take responsibility for their gambling and it seems to have all the hallmarks of a good harm minimisation strategy. That is it:

Protects participants from developing gambling problems

Reduces problems for the gambler

Has little impact on the enjoyment or play rates for recreational gamblers

Has an impact on revenue that is sustainable for the gaming industry

Has no unforeseen or unintended negative consequences. (Allcock, 2002)

That is not to say this system is foolproof. There is little to stop the cards being shared among players, enabling the addicted person a second or third session of playing. Cards could be bought and sold on the “black market”. So while we should applaud the NSW government for this step in the right direction, one may also wonder if there are other preventative measures to complement the pre-commitment strategy.

One answer may be in the actual machines. If advances in technology over the years have made poker machines more addictive, it stands to reason that further advances, (in the right direction), could make them less addictive for those at risk, yet just as pleasurable to the average player. Unfortunately though, to date the manufactures of pokies have not been able to come up with anything to assist the vulnerable. Perhaps...in time.

Chris Davidson





## Before Withdrawing Money.

**STOP**

**TAKE A BREAK**

**ORGANISE PRIORITIES**

**PUT INTO ACTION.**

### **Central Coast Problem Gambling Service**

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**Multicultural Problem  
Gambling Service**

**1800 856 800**

**Lifeline**

**13 11 14**

**Mental Health  
Central Intake**

**43 2203500**