



Spring; is a time to greet warmer days, the season of growth and renewal, lengthening of daylight hours, blooming buds and the smell of jasmine wafting on the breeze. It brings new life and a feeling of contentment, spring equinox, taking care of unfinished business, house cleaning, making way for the new. Lambing season. Flora, Roman goddess of spring urges us to plant, preen, tidy, clean and prepare for the new season. The sun feels warmer, healing, soothing away winter chills.

We farewell our CEO Michael Nesbitt, who has worked tirelessly and achieved a great deal during his time on the Central Coast. We thank him for his support and wish him well. Andrew Tuck is our new CEO, we trust he enjoys his new position. Also Robert Rus outreach counsellor has now moved on to a new position with Mission Australia with best wishes. A big welcome to Deb Rhoades our new counsellor, great to have you on board.

The accreditation process with QMS has now moved to the next stage and we can breathe a sigh of relief and relax. It was and continues to be a huge learning experience and we are thrilled with the outcome. The service attaining 'exceptional' for our service delivery. This is a wonderful response, making the whole process worthwhile. Thank you to our clients & stakeholders who participated and to the assessors who made the whole experience as stress free as possible!

**Inside this issue:**

- **Women and Gambling**
- **Is gambling an issue?**
- **Compassion**
- **Client Story**



## Women & Problem Gambling

Most women begin gambling for fun, company or to escape the daily grind. Winning can create an urge to win more, chasing losses, often withdrawing from the key or credit card to keep playing in case the 'big one' comes up. Atmosphere within a venue can create a false sense of comfort with staff at the 'beck and call' with drinks, coffee etc; the jackpot looming as anxious fingers press buttons endlessly, always hoping for that magic combination. Clocks and daylight not always in full view, so time spent in a venue can pass rapidly.

Problem gambling can affect any woman. It impacts on as many women as men, yet unlike men, gambling usually starts later. Women may present for mental health, legal or financial assistance without disclosing the gambling. It can threaten relationships and work exhausting time, energy, emotions and the spiritual self. Feelings of unworthiness are common. There may be a history of abuse, trauma, loss, mental illness, drug and alcohol issues. It is the invisible habit. A woman struggling to control her urges/ gambling can withdraw, becoming increasingly isolated through shame. Women sometimes don't recognize 'bingo' as gambling, this can become compulsive, therefore a problem, often leading one to the pokies, as most bingo games are held within a club venue.

Lying to family, friends, colleagues, creditors becomes a way of life, desperate to keep the secret especially when there is mounting debt. Fear becomes a heavy burden when credit cards become due. Keeping the secret from her spouse is a juggling act. Staying one step in front of the mail, phone calls, bank statements is time consuming as well as emotionally shattering.

Some turn to illegal activity to alleviate the debt by theft, fraud, shoplifting. The burden seems greater when an employer is involved, often pushing one toward suicidal thoughts and at times acting on these when there seems no hope.

Women nurture and care for others whilst ignoring their own needs. Living a false life; trying to be the perfect wife and mother often supporting the household as well by working outside of the home; pushing themselves toward unrealistic goals. She fears being judged or rejected and retreats inward to hide. Feeling stupid to be in such a dilemma, she often lacks the support to make changes.

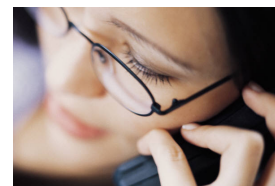
CGROWTH, a committee on gambling resources in Ontario report 'Bisexual and lesbian women's potential life factors that render some vulnerable to problematic gambling are 'Coming out' process, homophobia & biphobia, internalized homophobia & biphobia, loss of family support, social isolation and alienation, body image issues'. (Barbara, Chaim & Doctor, 2002).

### Some warning signs:

- Gambling more often and with more money than intended.
- Chase losses.
- Borrow money to gamble.
- Conflicts over money or gambling/ mood swings because of gambling.
- Continue to gamble despite negative consequences.
- Neglect family, friends, self or work in order to gamble.

### What to do:

- Counselling with nonjudgmental support and treatment.
- Ring G line 1800 633 635 (NSW)
- Ring Life line 131114
- Ring family or friend.





## VISION

### Is gambling an issue?

How would you know, when a client presents if they have a gambling issue?

- The effects of gambling can be subtle or misread.

#### Some signs:

- Preoccupation/restlessness.
- Irritability/feeling 'down'.
- No money.
- Debt.
- Relationship issues.
- Anxiety.
- Suicidal thoughts.
  
- Gambling carries a stigma, some people may not admit to having a problem.
  
- Simply asking about gambling at intake, this can illuminate the problem.
  
- Doing an assessment can be beneficial.
  
- DSM IV is a great assessment tool, [www.stopgamblingnow.com](http://www.stopgamblingnow.com)
  
- Refer client/s to a problem gambling counsellor on 43 447992 our service offers four easy accessible locations on the Central Coast and provide FREE counselling to the problem gambler, family and friends.

Gambling is an important issue we would be pleased to chat with you about including this on your assessment or do a presentation to your service.



#### **Before you withdraw money**

- **Stop**
- Take a Break
- Organise priorities



## VISION

# Compassion

What is compassion? According to Buddhism 'co' meaning together and 'passion' meaning a strong feeling. Also Yourcenar cited in [www.seedsofunfolding.org](http://www.seedsofunfolding.org), states "compassion has nothing to do with a sentimental conception of life". Soldad Traverso adds, "in order to be compassionate one needs courage and inner strength". So is compassion; to be with someone in their suffering, without becoming a part of their suffering. Yes, I suppose that is the way it is for me. To understand another's emotional state as well as my own. It is a difficult space to hold without falling victim to it. Having compassion can often lead to empathy, to be in another's shoes, giving rise to a deeper understanding and connection.

It is part of being human that we respond to another's suffering. But why do we respond? Is it because we have some family/friend connection or can we reach out to another even if we dislike them to the point of hatred as we witness their struggle. This can be extremely challenging, to offer compassion to our adversaries. What if he/she was a murderer or bully, pedophile, what then?

If we allow ourselves to fully explore compassion, we must challenge our inner demons and ask ourselves the hard questions. Can we give compassion unconditionally to another regardless of who they are, their situation, colour, creed? Or do we have limits? Cited in [www.aboutdharma.org](http://www.aboutdharma.org), it is stated 'we need to increase the scope of our compassion until it embraces all living beings without exception...although we have some degree of compassion, it is biased and limited. True compassion is necessarily based on cherishing others'.

Sometimes we may see a friend suffering and give them compassion hoping they will recover quickly, as we miss their company. This is not compassion but self centeredness.

Compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress disorder is common resulting when a person is caring for and helping traumatized or suffering people or animals. (Figley 1993, cited [www.humanesocietyu.org](http://www.humanesocietyu.org)). It happens when professionals who are exposed to trauma by individuals in their care become so overwhelmed, that they in turn experience fear, pain and suffering. Intrusive thoughts, nightmares and fears of what may occur. Go to [www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org) to learn more.

Jane Lampman writer for the Christian Science Monitor tells us about the Indian Guru, Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, dubbed the hugging saint by the international media. "The small, smiling woman in a white sari, drawing thousands. People sit in line for hours just to be enfolded in that motherly embrace.' She wishes to comfort wounded hearts through an expression of unconditional love, 'but also to awaken in people what she calls the "healing qualities of universal motherhood. Both men and women can express these qualities. The love of awakened motherhood is a love and compassion felt not only towards one's own children, but towards all people...to all of nature," she says.

Showing compassion is not a test of how good a person is, but rather an expression of the deep felt connectedness from human to human, human to animal or human to nature. It is part of one's intrinsic makeup, given to another for no reward or condition. One ethical standard set by the Australian Medical Association regarding patient care states 'treat your patient with compassion and respect'. "The key to developing compassion in your life, is to make it a daily practice", Dalai Lama.

According to [www.zenhabits.net](http://www.zenhabits.net), people who practice compassion produce 100% more DHEA, which is a hormone that counteracts the aging process and 23% less cortisol — the stress hormone. Is this a condition we choose in order to give compassion or is this a gift for doing so?

Finally the last words go to George Burns, after all he once played GOD!

**"When you stop giving and offering something to the rest of the world, its time to turn out the lights".**

B. Schwetz

**You can not make yourself feel something you do not feel, but you can make yourself do right in spite of your feelings' Pearl S. Buck.**



## Client Story

I am 34 years old and a recovering gambler. It has been 81 days since I last made a bet and today I am a much happier and better person. I grew up in a normal happy family. Dad used to place a couple of bets most Saturdays just the norm for the average person. I placed my first bet when I was 18 years old at the TAB. It was exciting. My brother later became a jockey, so I was heavily interested in the industry. Through the years from 18-24 I used to bet maybe a couple of times a week at the TAB, by the age of 25 I was starting to bet almost every day. In my eyes it was a hobby, even when I lost I knew I would be back tomorrow.

I got married age 28 and my gambling had slowed down, I thought I was taking responsibility. My marriage ended 17 months later and I was shattered. I blocked myself out from the outside world and pushed people away who cared for me. The only time I felt happy was when I was gambling and drinking. I discovered internet sports betting. At first I thought all my Christmas' had come at once. I was betting on more sports than at the TAB. I was betting every day and well and truly beyond my means. I could not bet \$5, \$10, \$70, they were not exciting enough. I was betting in hundreds and sometimes thousands, betting was making me feel safe.

I almost lost my house two and a half years ago. I was heavily in debt and sometimes I could not pay the mortgage, due to betting. I attended counselling a few times but I was not ready to give up the punt. I used to bet before my appointment and sit through the session thinking, 'when is it going to be over'.

Eighteen months ago I met a wonderful woman and her son. It was the happiest I had been for a long time. I knew she adored me but I was keeping a secret from her. I had a gambling problem. On the 26th May I owned up, I was broke because of my gambling. She screamed the roof off the house; she was entitled to. Gambling was my dirty affair. My partner has been supportive since that day and has encouraged me throughout. I attend GA and have continued to go to counselling. I made a decision for myself on the 26th May; I had placed my last bet.

It has not been easy, but I have been honest with myself and others close to me. I will one day regain their trust.

My advise to anyone who gambles on poker machines, TAB and internet and who knows they have a problem, is to seek help. Today I can remember the times I went to the TAB at lunch and was always the last to leave, usually at 8-9pm. I remember the sleepless nights, the worry, the sweating on my financial situation.

We as gamblers are self destructive. It affects our health. The hard part is seeking help. My first GA meeting, I changed my mind twenty times that day, I was still undecided about whether to go as I sat in my car outside the meeting. I made the right decision and went inside. The people there were welcoming and made no judgments about me.

My one mistake since I stopped gambling was; I was with a mate who gambled for about one and a half hours. After we left the club I went to the TAB, checked the prices for the footy that weekend; suddenly a voice inside me said 'get out of here', I did. The experience scared me, but I did not gamble and more importantly I learnt the lesson; do not hang around people or venues that involve gambling.

Finally, it is not easy to stay off the punt. But GA, counselling, the G line, my loved ones have helped me greatly, also my will to change and be a better person has helped also.

24 hour emergency contact  
G-Line 1800 633 635  
Lifeline 13 11 14

[www.problemgambling.net.au](http://www.problemgambling.net.au)