

A night landscape featuring a winding asphalt road that curves through dark, forested mountains. The sky is filled with a dense field of stars, including the Milky Way galaxy. In the distance, some lights are visible on the mountain peaks, suggesting a town or village. The overall scene is dark and atmospheric, with a cool color palette dominated by blues and blacks.

# "THE FINAL BET" - TRACKING THE PROGRESSION OF ADDICTIVE GAMBLING BEHAVIORS

JOHN ACKLEY, CADC II, CGAC II, QMHA II

# Why this concept ?

- ▶ No clear or concrete explanation for increased suicide
- ▶ Brainstorm: What are some possible reasons why SI might be higher for gamblers than other addictions?

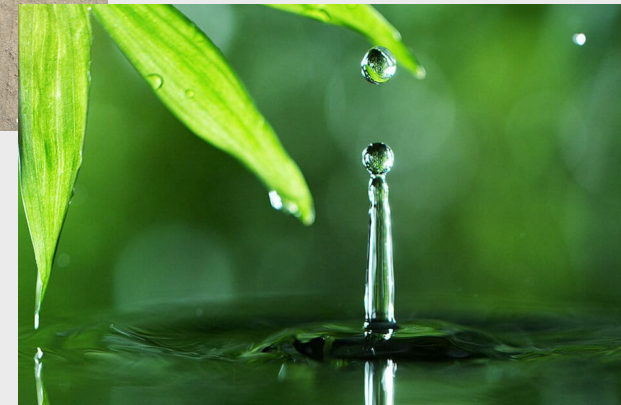
## Underlying concepts supporting progression:

- ▶ - Suicide rate is higher for gamblers than all other addictions
- ▶ - Risk as “drug of choice” for the gambler
- ▶ - 3-stage concept of addiction
  - ▶ Custer & Leseur; Durand Jacobs

Defining Risk as an  
underlying concept driving  
gambling addiction and its  
progression...

Risk as  
underlying  
tolerance  
factor for  
gambling  
behaviors.

- ▶ How do we define risk?
- ▶
- ▶ All resources are finite, and the scarcity of a resource directly impacts its value



# It's not about the money!



- ▶ Most Common resource/risk identified in gambling is money
- ▶ Money represents risk as a means of exchange in getting even the most basic of our needs met.

Risk as  
underlying  
tolerance  
factor for  
gambling  
behaviors.

- ▶ It is the threat of risk that stimulates a biological response in the brain
- ▶ As with substance use, initial use generally starts comparatively small

# Risk = actual drug of choice in gambling...

8



Stages of risk, from entry through to catastrophe



Money is just a representation of risk



Money is NOT the most important risk that can be wagered



The fantasy of the risk and fantasy of the win drive the entry into Dissociation/Dream World

# Risk as the real drug of choice in gambling... (Cont.)

The Gambler builds a tolerance for risk just as any other addict builds a tolerance for their drug of choice



The crucial difference here is that the gambler has put nothing into their body to engender this response



This is the key to all process addictions (Gambling, Sex, Internet)...

# General Theory of Addiction (Durand F. Jacobs (1989, 2001))

According to Jacobs, addiction is defined as:

*“A self-induced dependent state,  
acquired over a period of time  
by a predisposed person  
in an attempt to relieve a chronic stress condition.”*

THE FIVE  
BUILDING  
BLOCKS  
THAT  
SUPPORT  
THIS  
DEFINITION:

**1) There are Two identifiable factors that predispose a person to become an addict:**


**a. The person has an abnormal resting arousal state.**

**b. The person has suffered trauma in their life.**


**(Usually during, but not exclusive to, early childhood)**




**2: Addictive patterns of behavior represent an attempt by the person to reduce, to actually self-treat, the stresses caused by these pre-disposed conditions.**



**3: The addictive behaviors represent the means for escaping the internal and external stressors for which the person has no ready means of escape.**



**4: The chosen substance or activity serves as a “vehicle” that carries the person into a dissociated state. When in this dissociated state, the addict may create and act out a preferred identity, or by blocking out all thought, feeling, and memory, create a condition of welcome oblivion.**



**5: Relapse reveals that the person has not yet learned sufficient methods for coping with the historical and current (real life) stressors.**

Durand  
Jacobs  
three stages  
to addiction  
process:

- ▶ 1) STAGE OF DISCOVERY
- ▶ 2) STAGE OF RESISTANCE
- ▶ 3) STAGE OF EXHAUSTION

HENRY R. LESIEUR & Dr  
ROBERT L CUSTER

Stages to addictive  
Gambling process:

(writer's own paraphrasing)

- ▶ 1) Winning Stage
- ▶ 2) Losing Stage
- ▶ 3) Desperation Phase

# Threes stages of Gambling Progression

- ▶ Winning Stage
- ▶ Addictive Stage
- ▶ Chaos/Crash Stage

# Winning Stage

1<sup>st</sup> Big Win

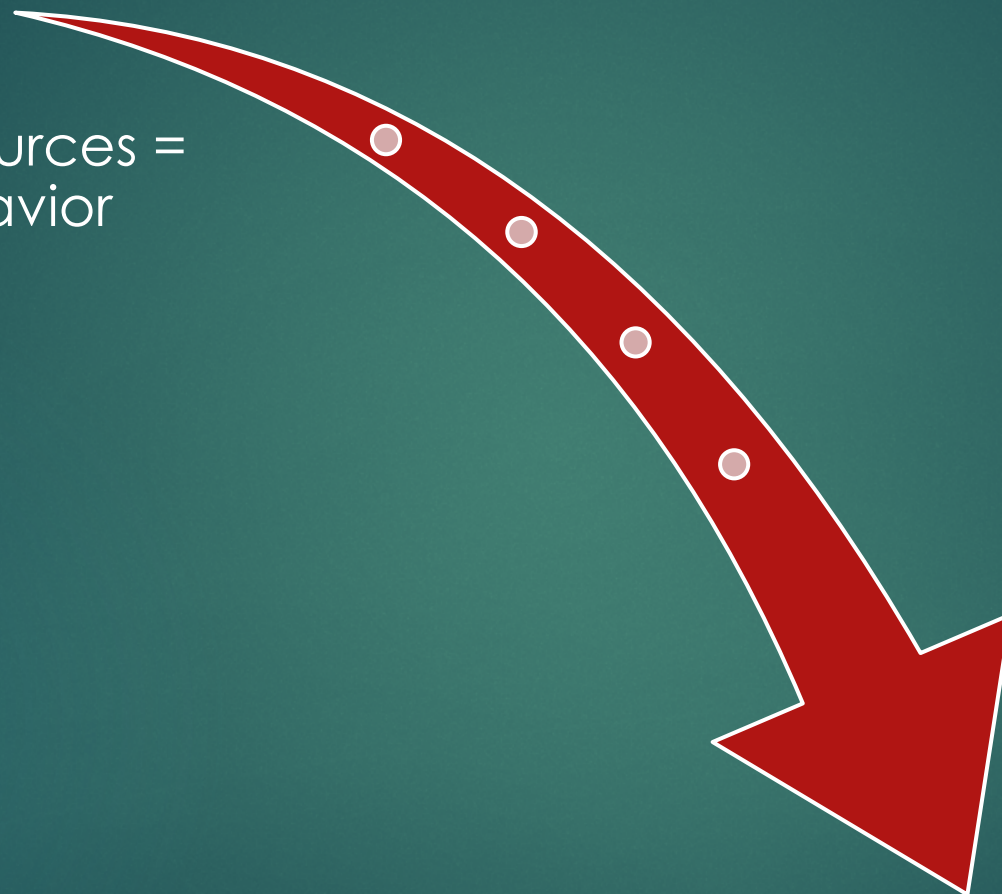


21

Winning  
Stage

# 1<sup>st</sup> Big Win

Increased resources =  
repeated behavior



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Increased resources =  
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\$\$ flows from Real to  
Gambling and back

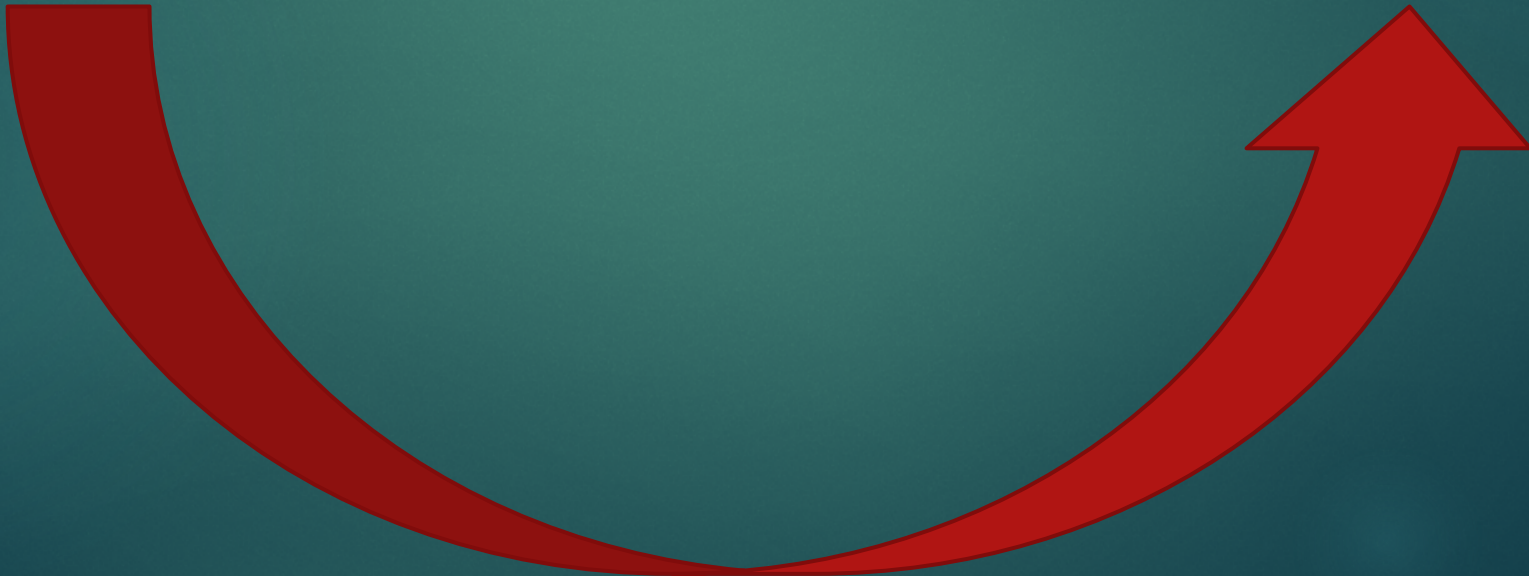
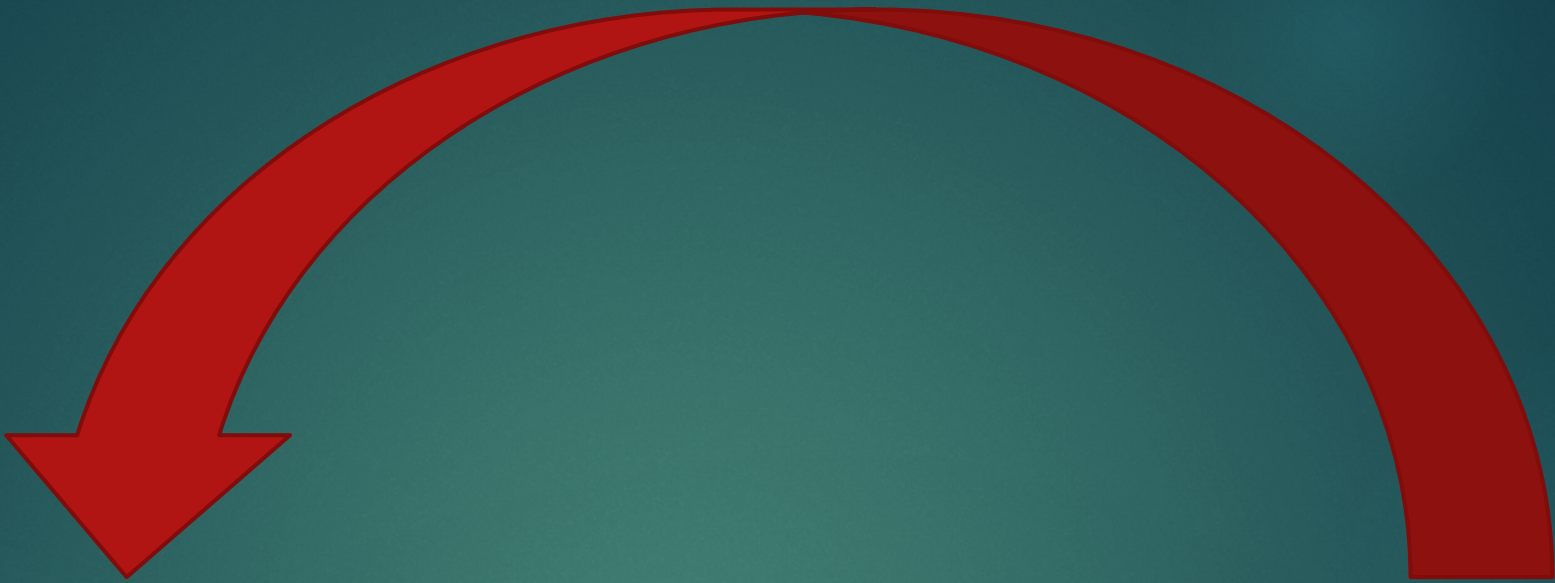


24

Winning  
Stage

Real Money

Gambling Money



# 1<sup>st</sup> Big Win

Increased resources = repeated behavior

\$\$ flows from Real to Gambling and back

Increased resources occur in the NOW



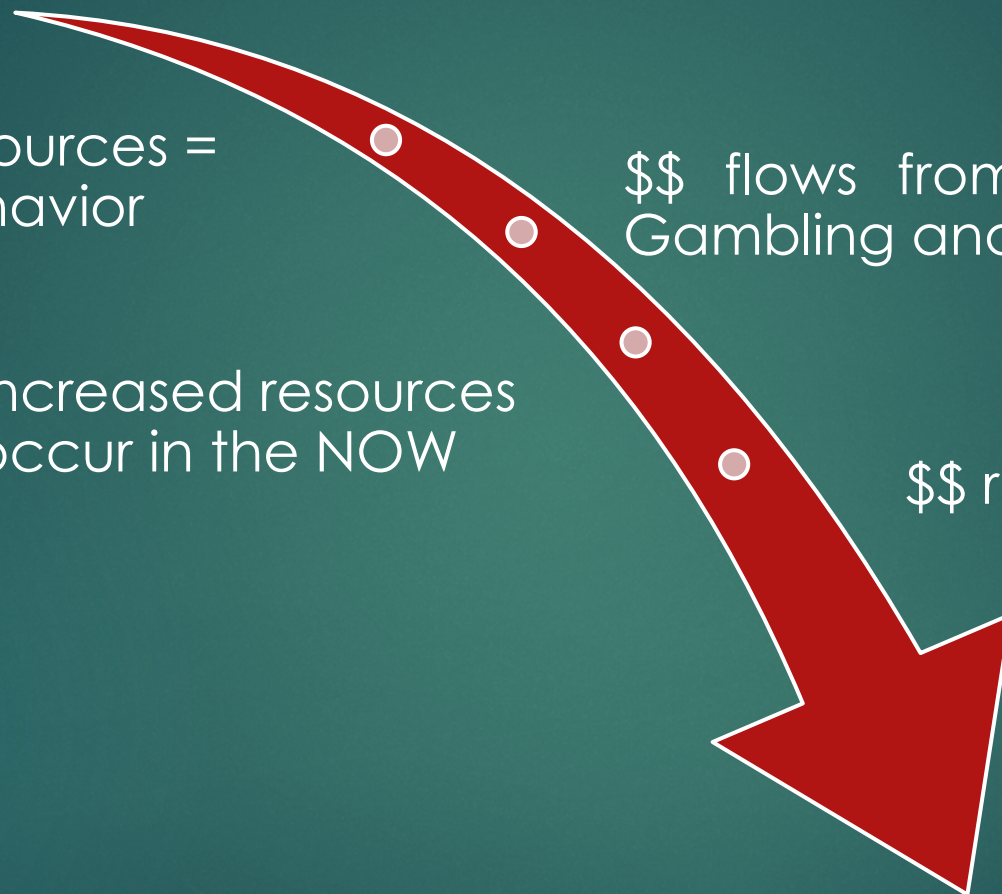
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Subconscious recognition of escape



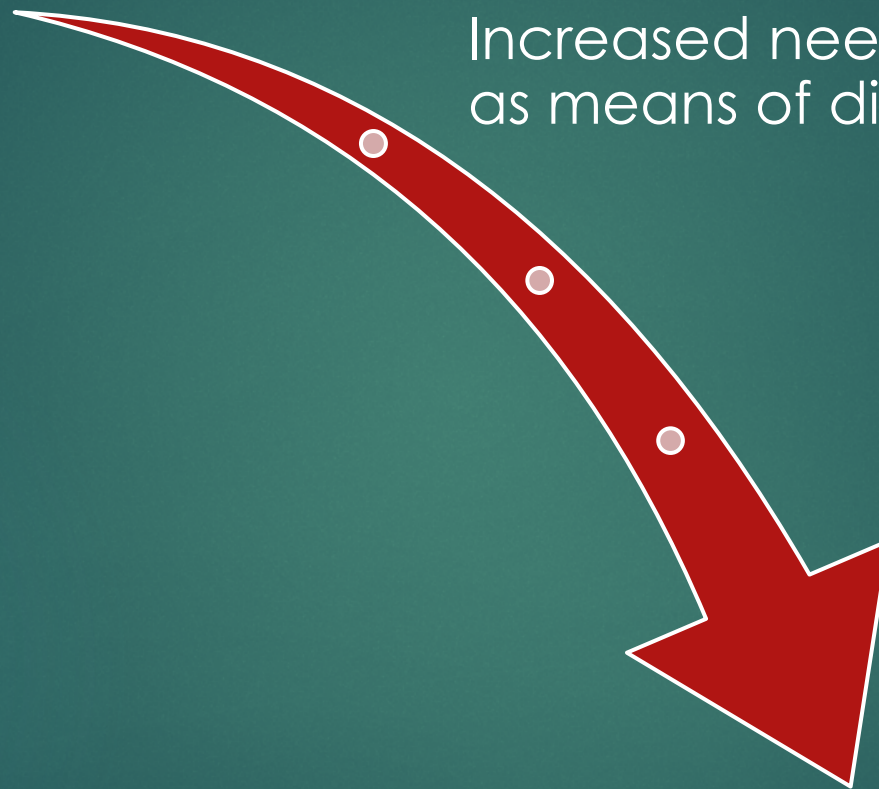
# Addiction Stage

Shift from entertainment to distress regulation



Shift from entertainment to distress regulation

Increased need for dissociation  
as means of distress regulation



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Shift from “Now-based” wagering and  
reward to Future-Fantasy Dissociation



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Dissociation facilitated by future-  
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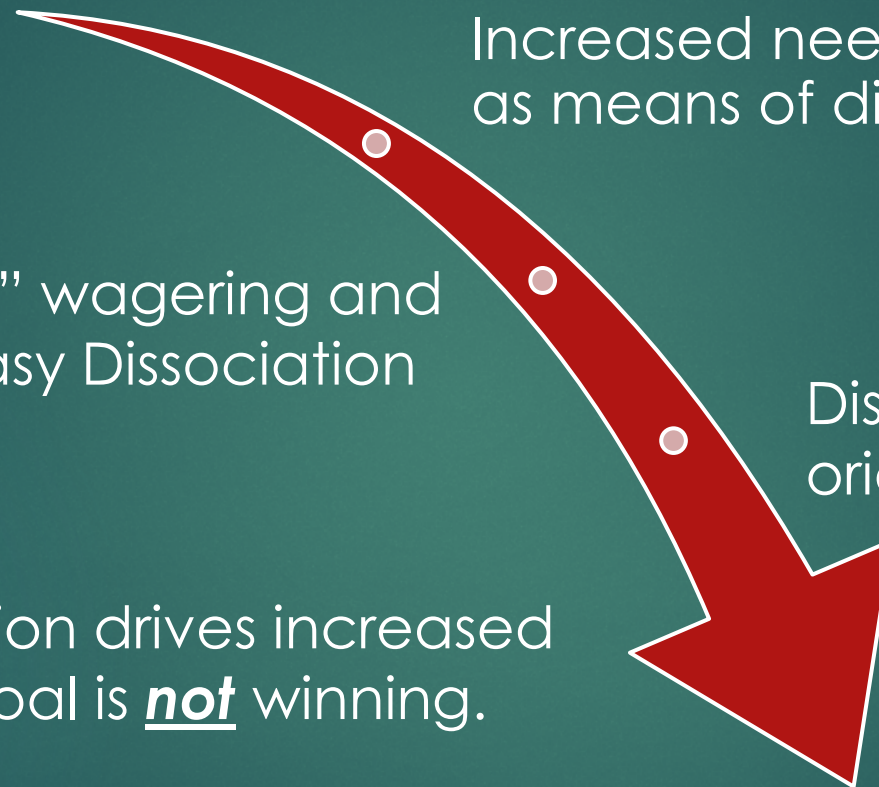
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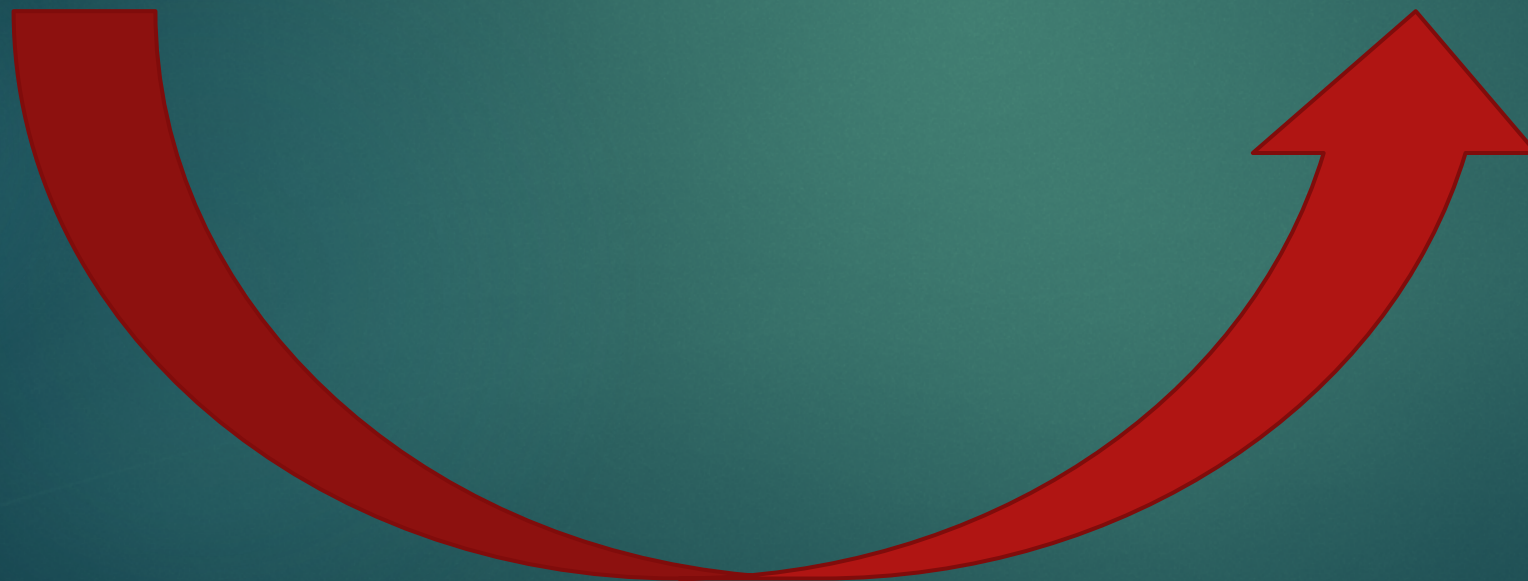
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Real  
Money

Gambling Money



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***Risk Tolerance grows, requiring more and more resources***

# Chaos/Crash Stage

As financial strain increases, life resources start to become stressed

39

Crash  
Stage



As financial strain increases, life resources start to become stressed

40

- Relationships
- Safety/Security
- Integrity
- Freedom
- Life

Crash  
Stage



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41

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Crash  
Stage

Risk to these life resources now becomes the wager being placed



As financial strain increases, life resources start to become stressed

42

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Crash  
Stage

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Losing is now REQUIRED to place wagers, accelerating conflict win vs. loss (dissociation vs. reality)



As financial strain increases, life resources start to become stressed

43

- Relationships
- Safety/Security
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Crash Stage

Risk to these life resources now becomes the wager being placed

Based on life structure there is no order to these, and can overlap with others

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Gambler has "risked" their life once: ultimate tolerance has been attained. There is no risk beyond this



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Crash Stage

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All gambling now is in service of generating sufficient distress to risk life, **every time.**

In Summary, as the gambler's behaviors escalate, their tolerance out-strips their available finances, despite the fact that their dream world/dissociation continues to be focused on money and its perceived value to rescue them. They usually are largely, or completely unconscious of the shift in resources being gambled, as well as being largely unconscious of the shift to having to lose at their gambling in order to place the larger bet on their life resources.

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# Citations

- ▶ - (1) Blaszczynski, A., & Farrell, E. (1998). A case series of 44 completed gambling-related suicides. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 14, 93–109.
- ▶ - (2) Jacobs, D. F. (1986). A general theory of Addictions: A new theoretical model. *Journal of Gambling Behavior*, 2(1), 15-31. <https://doi-org.scroll.lib.westfield.ma.edu/10.1007.BF1019931>
- ▶ - (3) Custer, R. L. (1984). Profile of the pathological gambler. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 45(12, Sect 2), 35–38.