

The background of the slide features a photograph of a group of people in a meeting. A woman with curly hair, wearing a yellow cardigan and blue jeans, is seated and smiling. To her right, a man with curly hair, wearing a white shirt and a green vest, is seated and clapping his hands. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders are visible, looking towards the group. The setting appears to be a modern office or meeting room with large windows and indoor plants.

# Role of Cognitive Distortion in Disordered Gambling

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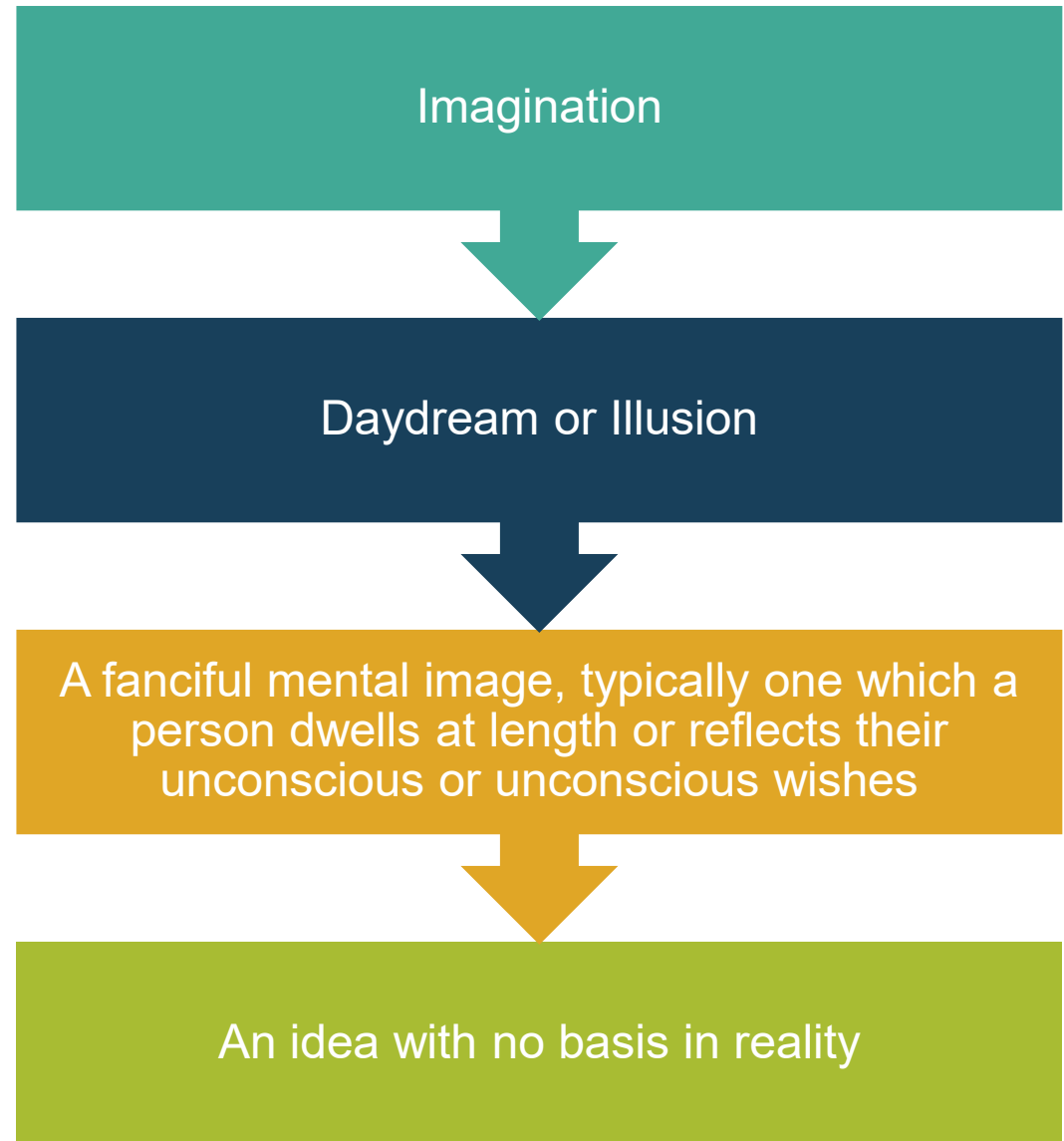
Health and  
Human Services

# Gambling & Fantasies

# Special Thanks

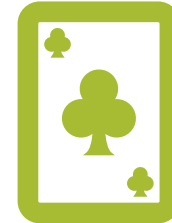
- ▶ Thank you to: Katie Bee and the staff at Iowa Health and Human Services for their contribution to this presentation.
- ▶ Thank you to: Choices Treatment Center, Lincoln NE for allowing me to interview and provide counseling services to patients with Gambling Issues

# The Dictionary Defines Fantasy As...

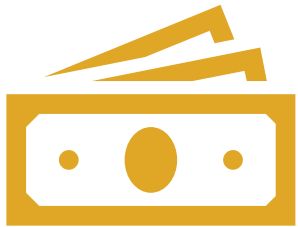


# Everyone lives with unrealized fantasies

- An unrequited love?
- A plan than didn't materialize?
- Trying to pass a test without studying?
- Always wanting that trip or that car or that... but knowing it cannot happen?



# Lottery Win



Let's say you won \$200,000,000  
(after taxes \$100,000,000)



Take five minutes and write down  
everything you would buy after  
winning the Powerball.

Recovering Gamblers **DO NOT DO THIS EXERCISE.**

# A World We All Live In



Each of us takes mini vacations.



Therapeutic assignment for many stressed clients (happy place).



Embraced in all phases of our education work and entertainment life.

# A Gambling World We All Live In



Gambling is a mini vacation.



For many it takes them to their happy place.

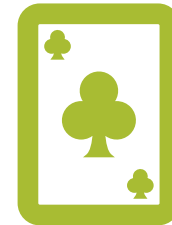


Embraced in all area of our lives .



# People with Gambling Issues Live in Their Own World of Fantasy

- If gambling is fantasy and they live in a gambling world, they live in a fantasy world.
- Getting a glimpse into their world requires time figuring out what they liked about that world and how gambling kept them satisfied. Even at the end when more and more pain is experienced.



# Counselors Live their Fantasies too

## Excuses for not addressing gambling:

**Fantasy has  
built-in  
cognitive  
distortions.**





# Let's talk: Cognitive Distortions

# Exaggerated and Irrational Thoughts

## All or nothing thinking

- Win or lose mentality.
- Even close is like winning.

## Overgeneralization

- “A lot is due” and “I am a winner” thinking.

## Jumping to conclusions

- Drawing conclusions with little evidence (1-180,000,000 lottery odds)
- Mind reading - assuming special knowledge.
  - **Example:** “This machine is getting hot!”
- Fortune telling - exaggerating how things will turn out before they happen
  - **Example:** They buy a Cadillac before they win money for the car.

## Minimization

- Redirecting impact on self or others
  - “They always have food on the table”

# Exaggerated and Irrational Thoughts

## Emotional Reasoning

- Make decisions based on intuition rather than evidence/rationale.
- **Example:** “I can feel the win!”

## Labeling

- Explaining behaviors and/or events merely by naming them.
- Changing reality to perception of event.
- **Example:** Only a fluke kept me from winning, my system works!

## Personalization

- Attribution of personal responsibility for events for which no control.
- **Example:** Lucky charms around bingo cards.

# Exaggerated and Irrational Thoughts



## Rationalization

Defense mechanism; may be subconscious to create a block against internal feelings of guilt.

**Example:** My stash is just in case this treatment doesn't work.



## Cognitive Bias

Pattern of deviation in judgment.

**Example:** "Everyone gambles like me."



## Evolved Mental Behavior

Adaptations of misapplication of a successful behavior.

**Example:** Slots successful against pain becomes a painful euphoria.

# Cognitive Distortions: Exaggerated and Irrational Thoughts



## Decision Making Biases

**Anchoring:** Common human tendency to rely too heavily on one trait or piece of information in decision-making.

**Example:** Gambling will get me out of this mess.



## Biases in Probability and Belief

**Band wagon effect:** Tendency to believe things because many other people believe the same (myopic).

# Cognitive Distortions: Exaggerated and Irrational Thoughts

## **Gamblers Fallacy**

- Tendency to think that future probabilities are altered by past events when they are unchanged.
- Example: “This machine is due to hit... No way the dice crap out again.”





# Suicide and Irrational Thoughts

## Cognitive distortion goes lethal

- All in mentality.
  - I am out of options as I see it.

## Overgeneralization

- I finally admit I'm a loser.

## The decision is for the best

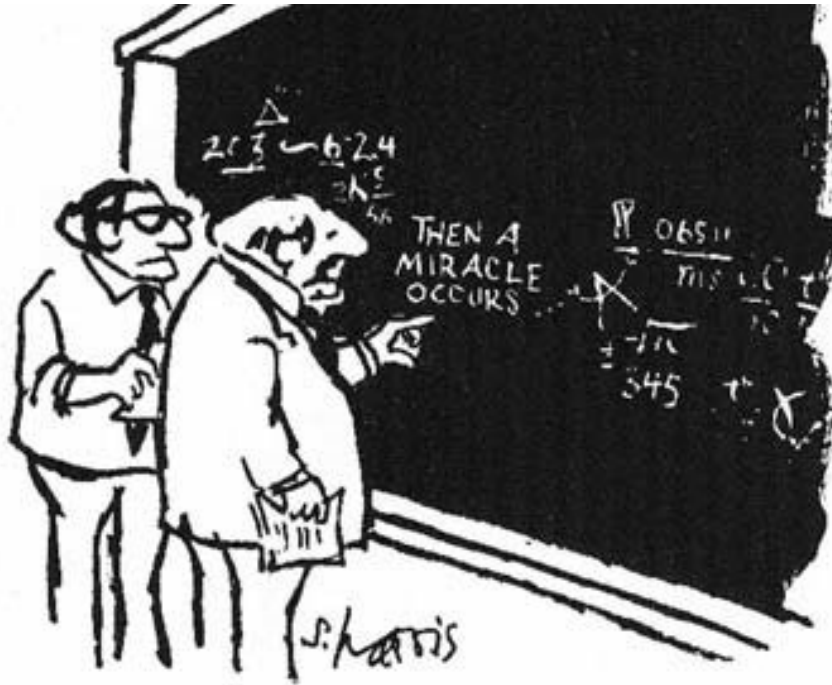
- Suicide: I have no way out of this mess and everyone will see me for what I am
- This is best for everyone
- No one will miss me
  - I am helping everyone .

## I am the better person for this

- My death will ease everyone's pain



# Recovery from Gambling Disorder



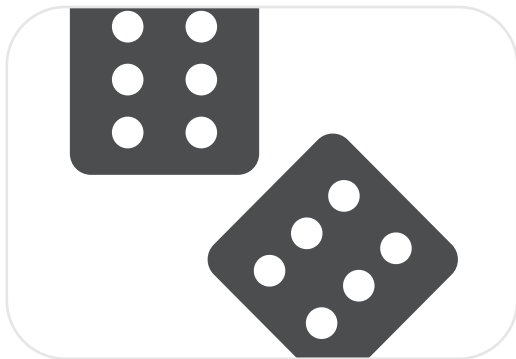
"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

# How Can Gamblers Recover?

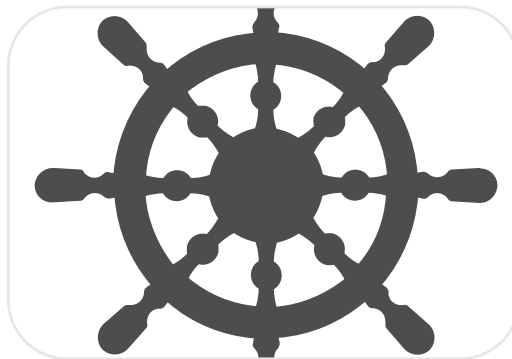


Quality of Life Outcomes

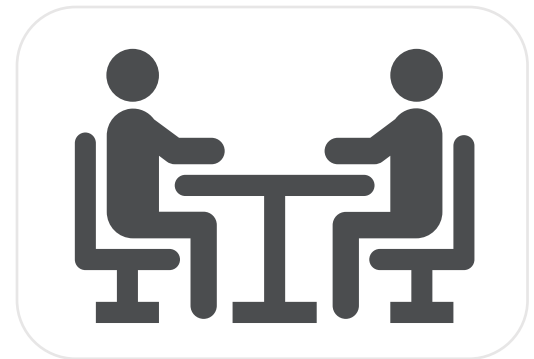
# Confronting Fantasy



No better high than  
gambling to a  
gambler

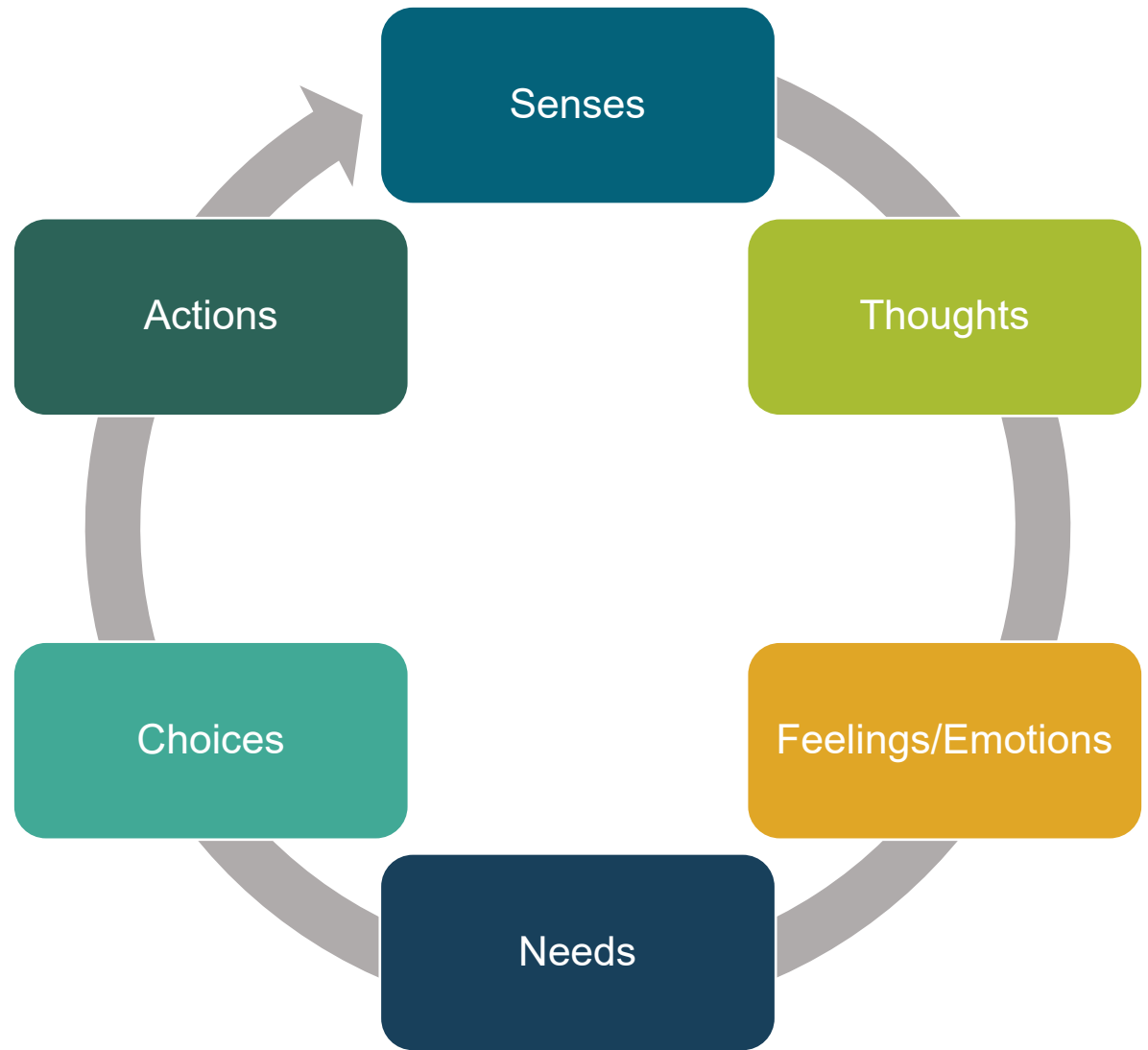


Utilization of  
thought wheel



Cognitive  
behavioral therapy  
(Ladouceur)

# Thought Process Wheel



# Treating Cognitive Distortions



Remember the higher brain functions are reduced due to gambling.



Patients are used to fight or flight and pleasure-centered thinking.



Patients may express the desire to quit or change but the brain will be rebelling early on.

# Treating Cognitive Distortions



Develop a communications plan with patients that allow you to correct distortions.



Ask patients why they think the distortions are real so you can better understand how to dispel the distortion.



Allow the patient to explain their rationale so they hear themselves. This helps to dispel the distortion.



# Cognitive Distortions Contribute to Urgent Thinking

1

Work through decisions with the patient starting with the simplest decisions.

2

Point out how the distortions can be based on less-than accurate information.

# Cognitive Distortions Contribute to Urgent Thinking Continued

1

Patience and more patience is required.

2

Judge the behavior not the person. Be an advocate for recovery

# Questions

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- ▶ [ScienceDirect - Cognitive and Behavioral Practice : Cognitive therapy for problem gambling](#)
  - Ladouceur, Stella Lachance