



# Understanding Gambling- Motivated Crime

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# Talk Roadmap

1. My journey of hope
2. Understanding gambling-motivated crime
3. Advice/thoughts for clients facing legal consequences of gambling
4. Time for questions & answers



# My Story

# Research Focus

Applying Criminological Theories to  
Understanding Gambling-Related Harms

Gender & Gambling Disorder

LGBTQ+ & Gambling Behavior/Risk

&

Gambling-Motivated Crime

# So, what do I mean by “Gambling-Motivated Crime”?

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- Primarily **non-violent, financial crimes** that are committed in order to pay off gambling debts and/or continue gambling
  - While there may be some problem gamblers who commit other types of crimes, the prevailing type of offense by problem gamblers are **acquisitive (or monetary)** in nature (Adolphe et al., 2018)
- The most common types of gambling-motivated crimes are embezzlement, larceny, theft, robbery, and counterfeit currency
- Most often committed against **family, friends, or employers**
  - Are seen as crimes of **trust**
- **Gambling is the second most frequent motivation for serious fraud prosecutions**

## Why people with Gambling Disorder commit gambling-motivated crimes:

Gambling produces a cycle of addiction wherein gamblers acquire debt from gambling and must then gamble to earn money to pay off these debts while remaining stuck in this pattern and unable to desist

- this leads to a depletion of all legally available funds
- resulting in gambling-motivated crimes



# Prevalence of these crimes

- Among gamblers seeking help for their addiction, studies consistently reveal that **approximately half of gamblers seeking help** self-report commission of a crime to keep gambling and/or pay off gambling debts (Binde, 2016; Blaszczynski, McConaghy, & Frankova, 1989; Zorland et al., 2008)
- **The more severe the gambling addiction, the more likely the individual will commit a gambling-motivated crime (Zorland et al., 2008)**
- As many as **two-thirds of the most severe compulsive gamblers** commit crimes (Blaszczynski, McConaghy, & Frankova, 1989; Lesieur, 1998; Zorland et al., 2008)

- Majority of people committing gambling-motivated crimes face no **criminal sanctions**
- Significant changes regarding gambling motivated crime in the **DSM 5**
  - Removal of “commission of illegal activity in order to gamble or pay gambling debts” as diagnostic because it is **a natural progression of the disorder**



# Research Study on the Social, Economic and Criminal Consequences

- Surveys
  - Gambling behaviors and history
  - Consequences of gambling behaviors
  - Criminal history & behaviors
  - Demographics
- Gambler's Anonymous Members (N=195)

Gender	
87 Males	0.44
108 Females	0.55
Time in GA	
5-10 Years	No Difference in Gender

# Criminal Consequences of Gambling (N=195)

Criminal Consequences	%	Male %	Female %	Chi-Sq. (gender)
<b>Commit Crime</b>	56.92%	55.17	58.33	0.196
<b>Current Charges</b>	5.82%	3.61	7.55	3.803
<b>Arrested</b>	15.14%	17.28	13.46	0.518
<b>Guilty of Misdemeanor</b>	6.95%	8.54	5.71	0.567
<b>Guilty of Felony</b>	9.19%	8.64	9.62	0.052
<b>Incarcerated</b>	11.79%	10.34	12.96	0.318

There were no statistically significant differences by gender in the commission of crime or criminal consequences.

## Financial Crimes Considered:


1. Stealing
2. Forgery
3. Embezzlement
4. Taking out a credit card in another's name without permission (fraud)
5. Using someone else's credit card without permission (fraud)
6. Writing a check from someone else's account without permission (fraud)



Respondents who committed crimes averaged a significantly higher number ( $t=-5.99$ ,  $p<.05$ ) of social and economic gambling-related harms ( $\mu=5.23$ ) than those that reported not committed a crime ( $\mu=3.25$ )



Borrowing money to gamble was the largest predictor for commission of crime by a problem gambler - **borrowing money increases the likelihood of committing a crime by 21.6%**



Which Crimes are Most Likely to Lead to Conviction?

**Embezzlement** was the biggest predictors for arrest & convictions (over 5x more likely)

(Other types of gambling-motivated crimes are much less likely to result in arrest/conviction; however, that does not mean a client will not be accused, arrested or convicted for such crimes.)

# *A Few* of the Issues in the U.S. Criminal Justice System

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Understanding Gambling Disorder

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**Do not assess for gambling problems**

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Not treated like other addictions/lack of treatment

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**Lack of treatment diversion courts & programs**

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Lower chances of employment/paying restitution

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**Gambling within jails/prisons**

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Develop into problem gamblers in prison

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Criteria for eligibility for gambling treatment diversion programs/courts?



# Initial advice for clients facing legal consequences of problem gambling:

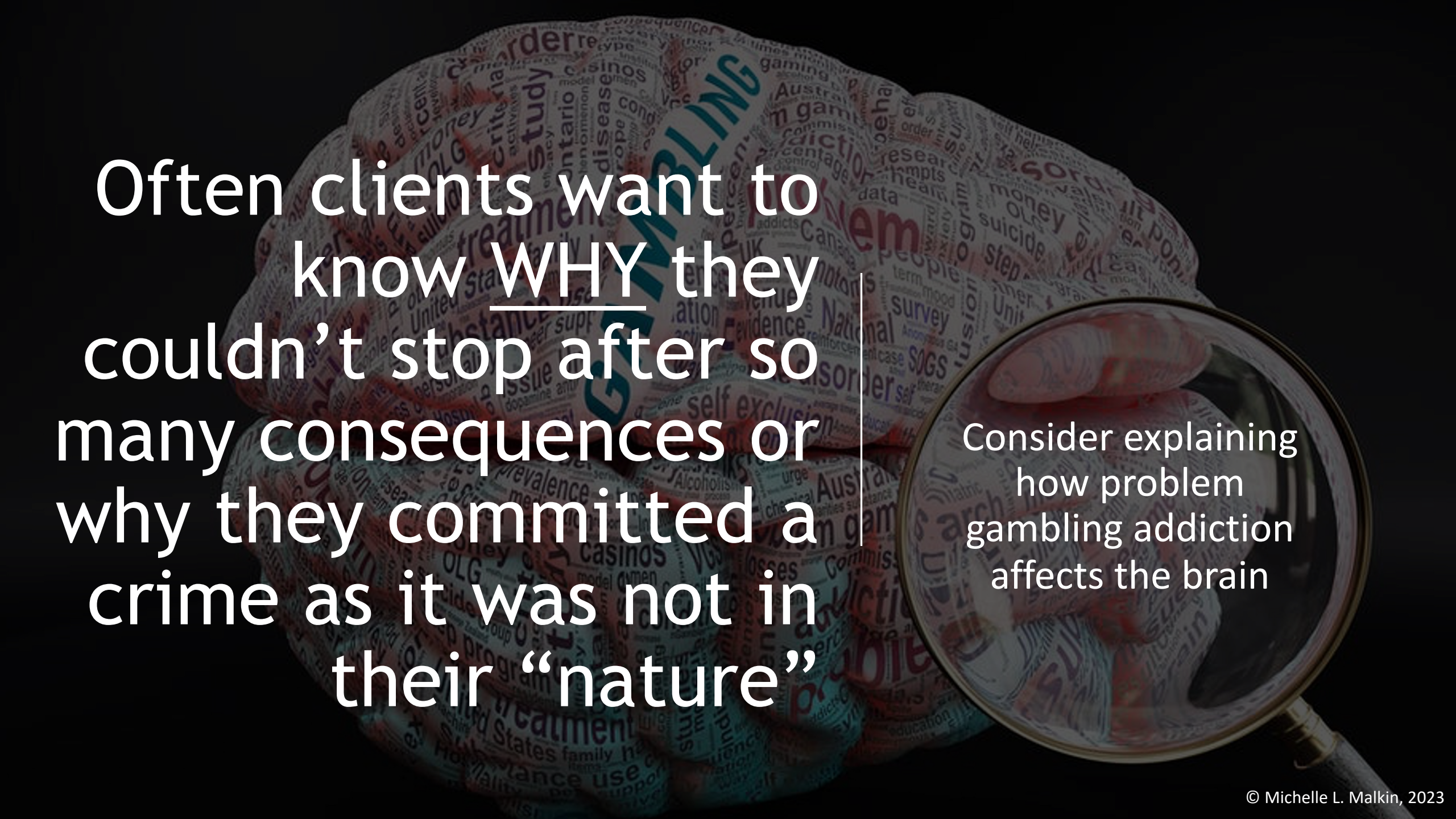
1. Are you facing civil and/or criminal charges?  
-clients may only be honest if you have gained their trust first; it is okay to ask more than once over time...
2. Get an attorney (even a public defender)
3. Don't answer any questions by former employer, family members, police, etc. without an attorney
4. Do not put anything in writing about what you've done without the advice of counsel
5. Do not talk about your offenses anywhere but in counseling (where there is confidentiality) and with an attorney (not in GA meetings)
6. **Do the next right thing** – go to GA meetings, counseling with a gambling-certified provider, get a new job, etc.
7. **YOU DESERVE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROTECTIONS OFFERED BY THE U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM** (regardless of the shame/guilt you feel)

“Do the next **right** thing”

“Do the **right** thing next”

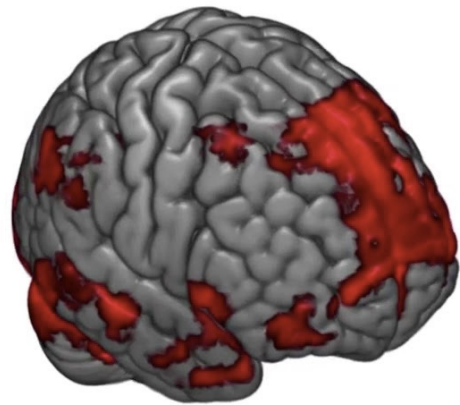
(**right** = healthy)



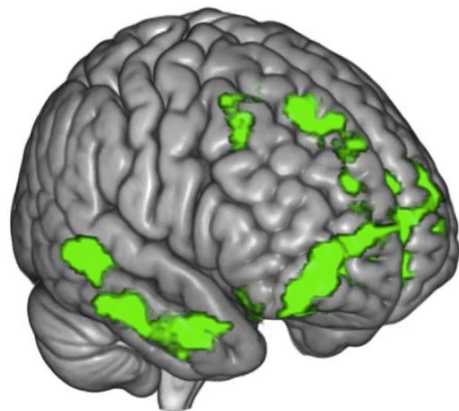
A human brain is shown in profile, facing right. The brain is covered in a dense word cloud of various terms related to addiction, gambling, and mental health. A magnifying glass is positioned over the right side of the brain, focusing on the word cloud. The background is dark, making the brain and the white text stand out.

Often clients want to know WHY they couldn't stop after so many consequences or why they committed a crime as it was not in their "nature"

Consider explaining how problem gambling addiction affects the brain

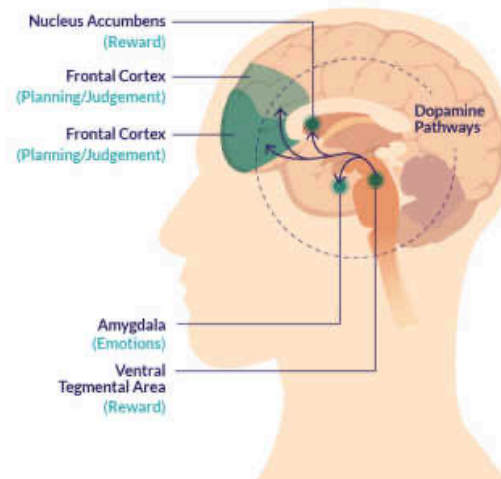


**Problem gamblers' brain response to gambling photos**

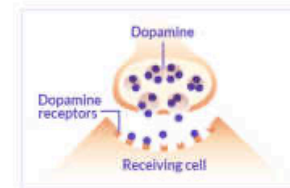


**Healthy control participants' brain response to gambling photos**

## The role of the prefrontal cortex in decision making and gambling addiction



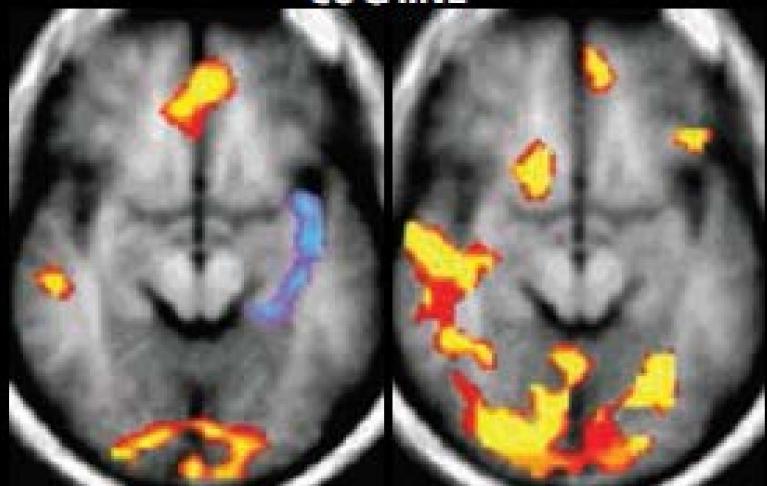
1 Dopamine is a feel-good biochemical that helps govern motivation. Exhilarating action such as gambling, where rewards can be instant and unexpected, triggers its release.



2 Once dopamine is released, it fits into the specialized receptors located on other nerve cells...

3 ...creating a rush of pleasure.

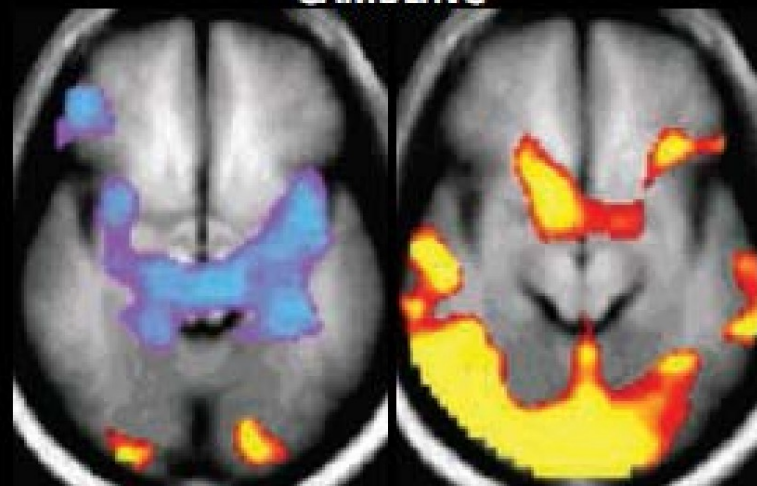
### COCAINE



**Addict**

**Control**

### GAMBLING



**Addict**

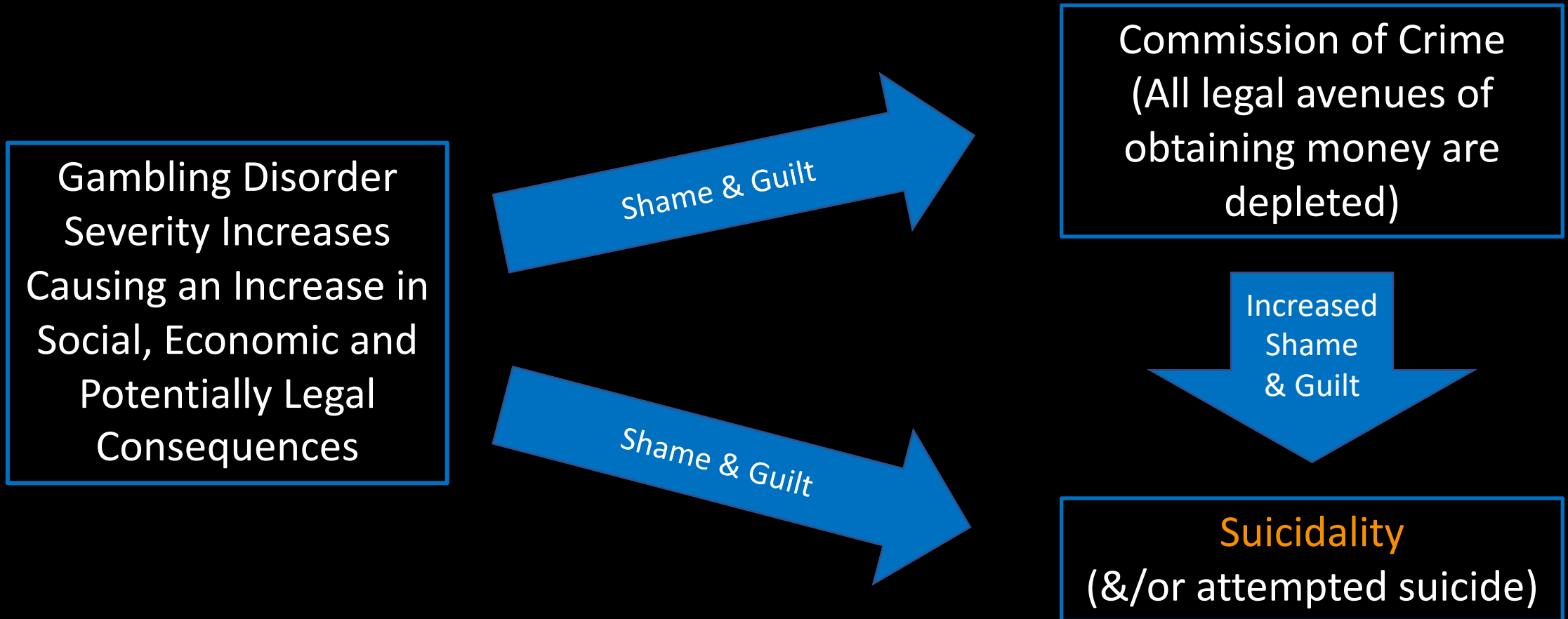
**Control**

**Hooked.** Brains of pathological gamblers watching a gambling video resemble those of cocaine addicts watching a cocaine video, with relatively less activation in regions implicated in judgment and motivation. Differences may reflect the toxic effects of cocaine exposure.

Featuring research/images by:

Centre for Gambling Research at UBC, 2017; Holden, 2010; Reuter et al., 2005

# One of my hypotheses in current research:



~20 percent of gambling addicts attempt suicide, the highest percentage of all addictions

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Always assess for suicidality, as it is likely that those that commit a gambling-motivated crime are also more likely to be considering suicide...



# Some Potential Resources for Clients

Inpatient and outpatient therapy

Gambler's Anonymous

Zoom meetings

**Social media support pages, such as:**

Facebook: Gambling Addiction and Recovery

Facebook: Problem Gambling Hope & Recovery

**Facebook: Women Gamblers in Recovery**

National Helpline (call/text/chat): 1-800-GAMBLER

Iowa Concern Hotline: 1-800-447-1985;

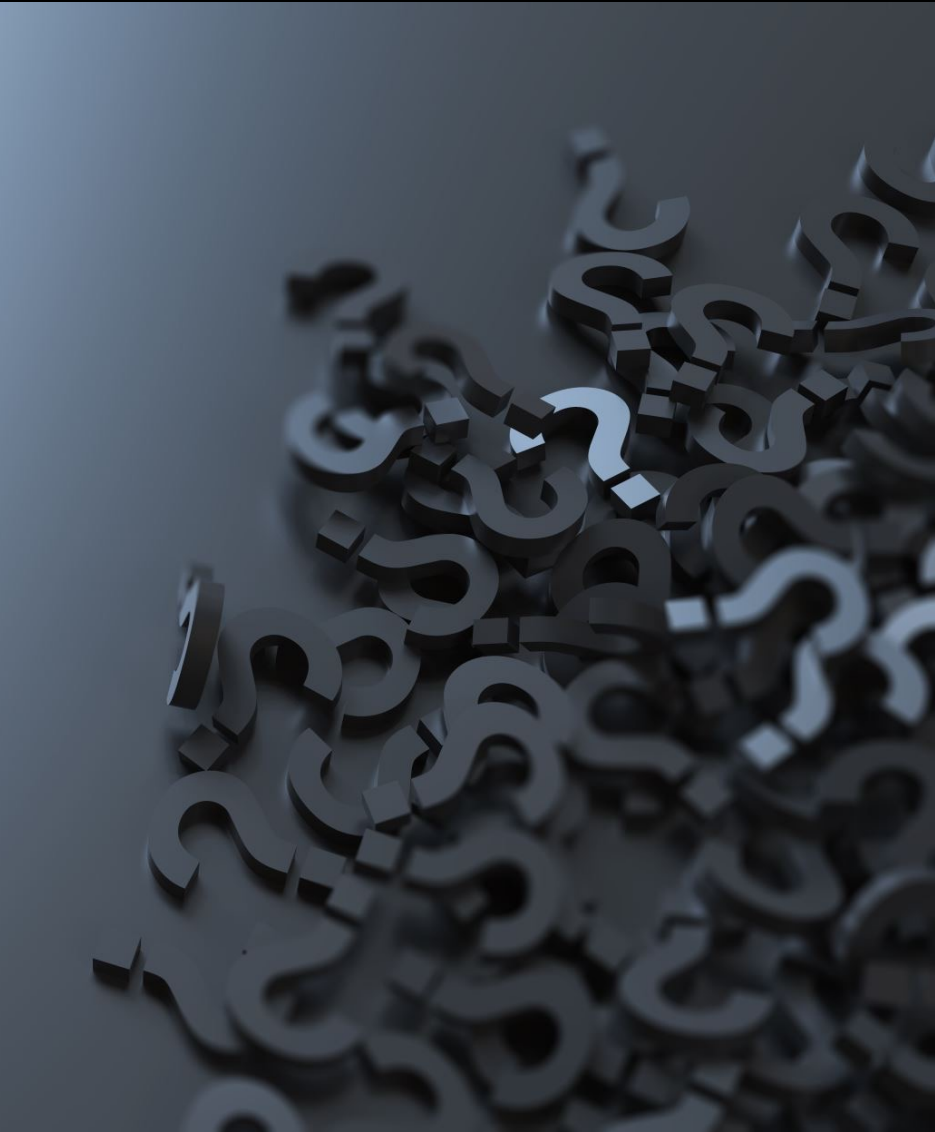
IA/MO: 1-800-Bets OFF

KS: [www.ksgamblinghelp.com](http://www.ksgamblinghelp.com)

NE: 1-800-BETOVER

Zoom Meetings	Time	Room number
Monday Morning Reflections	9:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Monday Morning Topic	10:00 AM EST	567 129 271
Monday Afternoon Speaker	2:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Monday late Full Format	10:00 PM EST	481 495 445
Tuesday Morning Reflections	9:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Tuesday Morning Ask it Basket	10:00 AM EST	567 129 271
Tuesday Afternoon Full Format	2:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Tuesday Evening Full Format	8:30 PM EST	Messenger invite
Wednesday Morning Reflections	9:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Wednesday Morning Topic	10:00 AM EST	567 129 271
Wednesday Afternoon Ice Breaker	2:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Wednesday Evening Steps 1,2,3	8:00 PM EST	481 495 445
Thursday Morning Reflections	9:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Thursday Morning 20 Questions	10:00 AM EST	567 129 271
Thursday Afternoon Step	2:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Thursday Evening Ladies Preferred	8:00 PM EST	675 861 352
Friday Morning Reflections	9:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Friday Morning Ice Breaker	10:00 AM EST	567 129 271
Friday Afternoon Full Format	2:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Friday Evening Meditations	7:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Friday Evening "Chicago Style"	8:00 PM EST	481 495 445
Saturday Morning Reflections	10:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Saturday Afternoon Step	2:00 PM EST	567 129 271
Saturday Evening Full Format	8:00 PM EST	481 495 445
Sunday Morning Reflections	10:00 AM EST	481 495 445
Sunday Afternoon Big Book Studay	3:00 PM EST	675 861 352
Sunday Evening Reflections	7:00 PM EST	567 129 271

\*\*\*\*Formats May Vary\*\*\*\*



## Questions & Answers

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