

Gambling Disorder & Common Comorbidities

The Prevalence of GD and Other
Psychological & Physical Illnesses

Presented By:

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LEARNING OBJECTIONS

- To identify the most common co-occurring conditions
- To examine the physical impact
- To examine the prevalence & clinical significance
- Explore treatment options

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

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I'm a Licensed Professional Counselor in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Florida. I've worked in behavioral health for 26 years.

I have been working with clients with compulsive gambling disorder for more than 10 years, using integrated methods to address not only gambling but the emotional issues that accompany the disordered gambling.

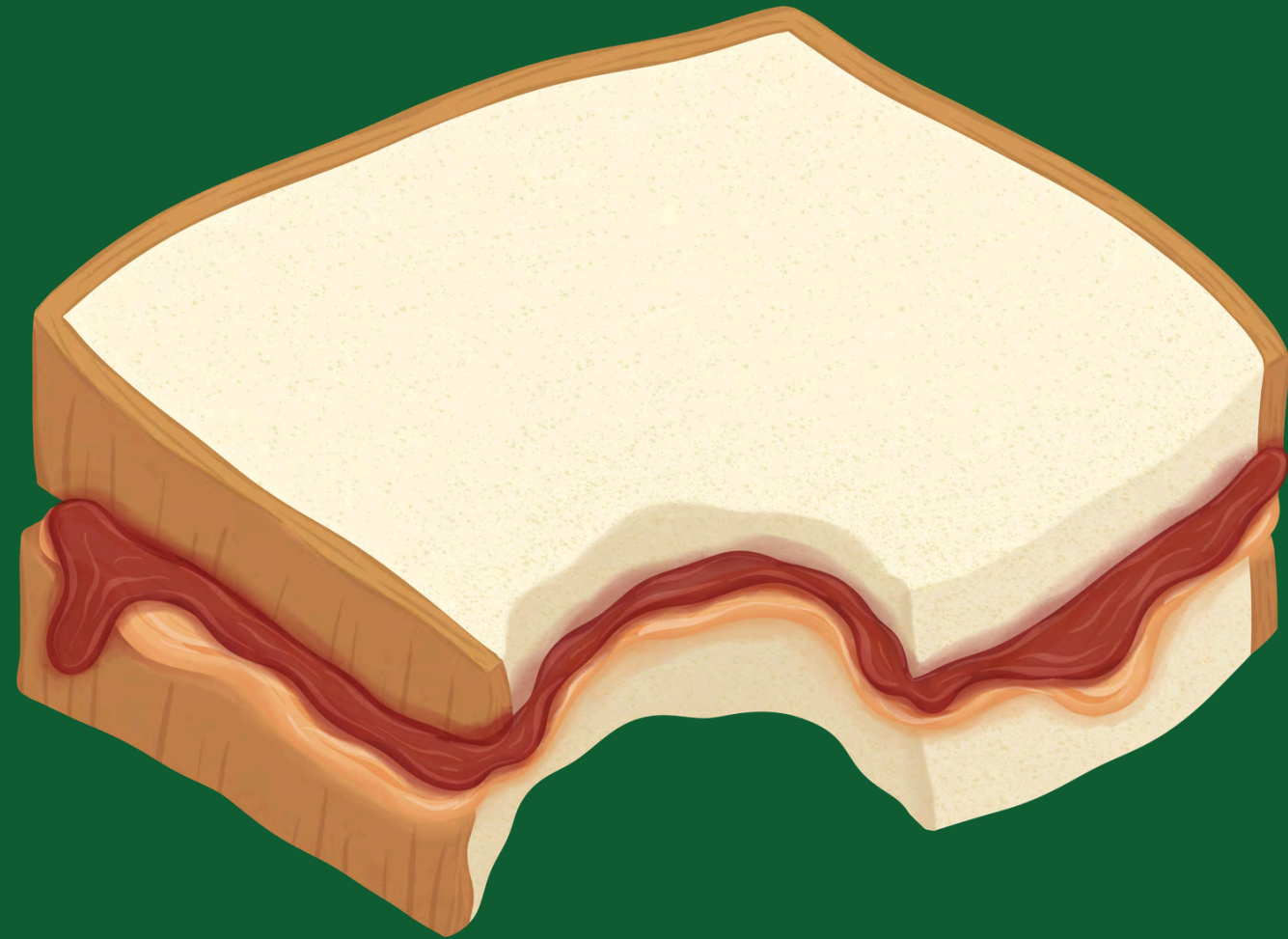
Things That Go Together



Things That Go Together



Things That Go Together



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Things That Go Together



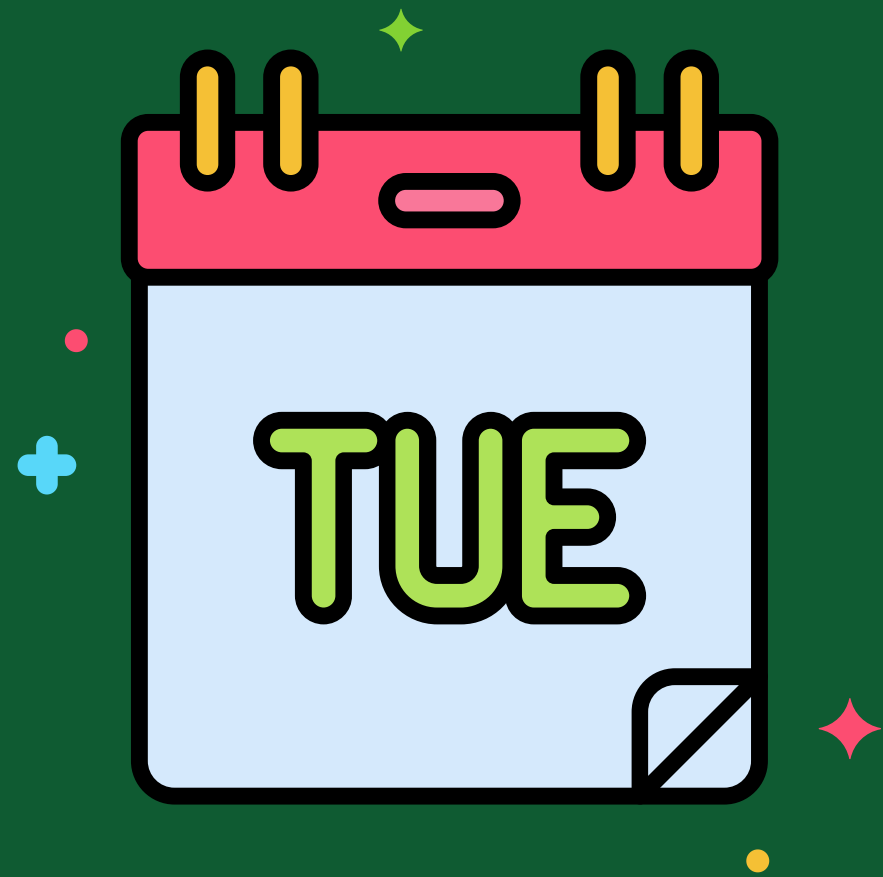
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**TACO
TUESDAY**



Things That Go Together



Things That Go Together



Things That Go Together



Things That Go Together

**SOME THINGS THAT GO TOGETHER
SHOULDN'T. DURING OUR TIME TODAY,
WE WILL BE LOOKING AT THE LINKS
BETWEEN GAMBLING, MENTAL HEALTH,
AND PHYSICAL ILLNESSES.**





The Most Common Comorbidities



Substance Abuse Disorders

ALCOHOL DISORDER:

- **73% OF THE PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS HAD AN ALCOHOL DISORDER, 38% HAD A DRUG USE DISORDER, AND 60.4% HAD NICOTINE DEPENDENCE (PETRY ET AL., 2005).**

ALCOHOL DISORDER:

- **LIKE ADDICTIVE DRUGS SUCH AS COCAINE, HEROIN, NICOTINE, AND ALCOHOL, GAMBLING ACTIVATES THE BRAIN'S REWARD SYSTEM, WHICH IS POWERED BY DOPAMINE (UCLA HEALTH, 2021)**



ALCOHOL DISORDER:

- **A STRONG COMORBIDITY BETWEEN CURRENT PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING AND CURRENT ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE, WITH A VERY HIGH ODDS RATIO OF 23.1. WELTE ET AL. (2001)**

ALCOHOL DISORDER:

- **PROBLEMATIC GAMBLING IS MORE COMMON AMONG PEOPLE WITH ALCOHOL USE DISORDERS (AUDS) (I.E., EITHER ALCOHOL ABUSE OR DEPENDENCE) COMPARED WITH THOSE WITHOUT AUDS.**

ALCOHOL DISORDER:

- **SHARED BRAIN REWARD SYSTEM: BOTH ALCOHOL AND GAMBLING TRIGGER HIGH LEVELS OF DOPAMINE IN THE BRAIN'S REWARD CENTER, REINFORCING ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR.**



ALCOHOL DISORDER

- **IMPULSIVITY AND PERSONALITY TRAITS:
INDIVIDUALS WITH HIGH IMPULSIVITY OFTEN
LACK BEHAVIORAL CONTROL, MAKING THEM
PRONE TO BOTH COMPULSIVE GAMBLING AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE.**

ALCOHOL DISORDER

- **IMPAIRED DECISION-MAKING: ALCOHOL REDUCES INHIBITION AND IMPAIRS THE FRONTAL LOBE, CAUSING DRINKERS TO TAKE GREATER RISKS, IGNORE WARNING SIGNS, AND PLACE LARGER BETS.**

ALCOHOL DISORDER

- **SELF-MEDICATION AND COPING: PEOPLE OFTEN USE ALCOHOL TO MANAGE THE STRESS, ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, OR EMOTIONAL LOMS RESULTING FROM GAMBLING LOSSES.**



ALCOHOL DISORDER

ENVIRONMENTAL PROXIMITY: CASINOS AND GAMBLING VENUES OFTEN PROVIDE EASY ACCESS TO ALCOHOL, MAKING IT EASY TO ENGAGE IN BOTH CONCURRENTLY.



ALCOHOL DISORDER

- **GENETIC FACTORS: THERE IS EVIDENCE OF SHARED GENETIC VULNERABILITIES THAT PREDISPOSE INDIVIDUALS TO BOTH ADDICTION TYPES.**

NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

- **NICOTINE IS COMMONLY ABUSED, WITH HIGH PREVALENCE RATES (60%+) FREQUENTLY REPORTED AMONG THIS POPULATION.**

NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

- **SHARED BRAIN REWARD SYSTEMS: BOTH NICOTINE AND GAMBLING TRIGGER DOPAMINE RELEASE, CREATING A COMPOUND EFFECT THAT DRIVES ADDICTION.**

NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

- **ENHANCED REWARD AND FOCUS:
NICOTINE MAY ACT AS A COGNITIVE
ENHANCER, HELPING GAMBLERS STAY
FOCUSED AND ENHANCING THE "HIGH"
OF WINNING.**



NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

- **CHEMICAL INTERACTIONS: TOBACCO SMOKE CONTAINS COMPOUNDS THAT INHIBIT MONOAMINE OXIDASE (MAO), AN ENZYME THAT BREAKS DOWN DOPAMINE**
- **PROLONGING DOPAMINE ACTIVITY AND LEADING TO A MORE INTENSE DOPAMINE RESPONSE.**

NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

- **BEHAVIORAL PAIRING: GAMBLING OFTEN TRIGGERS CRAVINGS FOR CIGARETTES, MAKING SMOKING A COMMON HABIT WHILE PLAYING.**

NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

- **SHARED PERSONALITY TRAITS: BOTH BEHAVIORS ARE LINKED TO HIGH IMPULSIVITY, SENSATION-SEEKING, AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRUGGLES**



**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON COMORBIDITIES**

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DRUG USE DISORDERS

**OTHER FREQUENTLY CO-OCCURRING
SUBSTANCES INCLUDE COCAINE, OPIOIDS,
AND CANNABIS**



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Mood Disorders

**GAMBLING DISORDER
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**PROBLEM AND PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS ARE
SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE MOOD
DISORDERS, COMPARED WITH THE GENERAL POPULATION.**

**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

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Anxiety Disorders



ANXIETY DISORDERS

**GAMBLING ADDICTION AND ANXIETY
OFTEN COEXIST, WITH ANXIETY ACTING
AS BOTH A DRIVER AND A
CONSEQUENCE OF THE ASSOCIATED
FINANCIAL STRESS AND SECRECY**

ANXIETY DISORDERS

**AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY FOUND A
LIFETIME PREVALENCE OF ANXIETY
DISORDERS OF 41.3% AMONG
DISORDERED GAMBLERS (PETRY ET AL.,
2005)**

ANXIETY DISORDERS

**AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY FOUND A
LIFETIME PREVALENCE OF ANXIETY
DISORDERS OF 41.3% AMONG DISORDERED
GAMBLERS (PETRY ET AL., 2005)**

ANXIETY DISORDERS

- **IN SOME CASES, ANXIETY MAY BE A WAY TO COPE WITH ANXIETY (SHER, TRULL, BARTHOLOW, & VIETH, 1999).**

ANXIETY DISORDERS

- **HOWEVER, THE BENEFITS CAN BE SHORT-LIVED, AND THE SYMPTOMS MAY REAPPEAR, BECOMING MORE INTENSE**

**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

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Depressive Disorders

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

- **PROBLEM AND PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS ARE 2 TO 3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE DIAGNOSED WITH MDD OR PDD, THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION**

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

- **CO-OCCURRING MOOD DISORDERS AMONG GAMBLERS HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES**

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

- **HIGHER GAMBLING SEVERITY IS ASSOCIATED WITH A GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF RELAPSE FOLLOWING TREATMENT AND NEEDING MORE TIME TO REACH ABSTINENCE**

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

- **BEING MORE LIKELY TO SPEND A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF PERSONAL INCOME ON GAMBLING ACTIVITIES**

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

- **A HEIGHTENED RISK OF
SUICIDAL IDEATION AND
ATTEMPT**




Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER
(OCD)**

**OCD AND GAMBLING ADDICTION
OFTEN CO-OCCUR, SUGGESTING THEY
SHARE GENETIC, NEUROLOGICAL, AND
BEHAVIORAL LINKS, SUCH AS IMPULSIVITY
AND COMPULSIVE, REPETITIVE
BEHAVIORS**


**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE
DISORDER (OCD)**

**OCD-DRIVEN ANXIETY CAN
FUEL GAMBLING AS A
COPING MECHANISM, WHILE
THE URGE TO CHASE LOSSES
MIRRORS OCD RITUALS.**



**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER
(OCD)**

**COMPULSIVE BEHAVIORS: BOTH
DISORDERS INVOLVE AN INABILITY TO
RESIST IMPULSES, WHETHER IT'S
CHECKING LOCKS (OCD) OR BETTING
MONEY (GAMBLING)**



**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER
(OCD)**

**ANXIETY AND ESCAPISM:
INDIVIDUALS WITH OCD MAY USE
GAMBLING TO NUMB NEGATIVE
FEELINGS, ESCAPE DISTRESS, OR DEAL
WITH ISOLATION**

**GAMBLING DISORDER
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**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER
(OCD)**

**BRAIN CHEMISTRY: BOTH
CONDITIONS AFFECT THE BRAIN'S
REWARD AND HABIT-FORMING
SYSTEMS, OFTEN LEADING TO A
"HIGH" OR ADRENALINE RUSH**

**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER
(OCD)**

**COMMON SYMPTOMS: BOTH CAN
INVOLVE OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS
(RUMINATING ON GAMBLING) AND,
IN SOME CASES, COMPULSIVE
COUNTING**



Attention-
deficit/hyperactivity
disorder (ADHD)

**ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY
DISORDER (ADHD)**

**ADULTS WITH ADHD ARE
SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY, NEARLY
10 TO 20 PERCENT, WILL DEVELOP
GAMBLING PROBLEMS COMPARED
TO THE GENERAL POPULATION**

**ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY
DISORDER (ADHD)**

**CORE TRAITS LIKE IMPULSIVITY, RISK-
TAKING, AND A SEARCH FOR
DOPAMINE STIMULATION MAKE
GAMBLING, PARTICULARLY ONLINE,
A HIGH-RISK ACTIVITY**

**ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY
DISORDER (ADHD)**

**MORE PREVALENT IN YOUNGER
ADULTS WITH ADHD, POTENTIALLY
LINKED TO UNDERDEVELOPED RISK-
ASSESSMENT SKILLS**

ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

- **IMPULSIVITY & DOPAMINE**
- **CHASING LOSSES**
- **SELF-MEDICATION**
- **24/7 ACCESSIBILITY**

GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES

The Physical Impact



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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

HYPERTENSION

- **GA IS STRONGLY LINKED TO HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) AND CARDIOVASCULAR ISSUES, DRIVEN BY CHRONIC STRESS, ANXIETY, AND THE ADRENALINE-FUELED "FIGHT OR FLIGHT" RESPONSE TO FINANCIAL RISK.**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

HYPERTENSION

- **LIFESTYLE FACTORS: PROBLEM GAMBLERS OFTEN HAVE SEDENTARY LIFESTYLES, POOR DIET, AND HIGHER EXPOSURE TO SECOND-HAND SMOKE, CONTRIBUTING TO HYPERTENSION**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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HYPERTENSION

- **NEUROBIOLOGICAL FACTORS: GAMBLING ADDICTION INVOLVES DOPAMINE DYSREGULATION AND INCREASED CORTISOL, WHICH CAN INFLUENCE HEART RATE AND STRESS LEVELS**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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HYPERTENSION

- **WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS: WHEN NOT GAMBLING, INDIVIDUALS MAY EXPERIENCE HEART PALPITATIONS AND RACING HEART, WHICH ARE STRESS-RELATED RESPONSES TO WITHDRAWAL**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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COMMON
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MIGRAINES

- **GA CAUSES INTENSE STRESS, ANXIETY, AND WORRY, WHICH ARE COMMON TRIGGERS FOR MIGRAINES**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

MIGRAINES

- **GAMBLING FOR LONG PERIODS LEADS TO FATIGUE, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, AND INSOMNIA, CONTRIBUTING TO HEADACHE DEVELOPMENT**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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COMORBIDITIES**

MIGRAINES

CASINOS, OR EVEN ONLINE GAMBLING, CAN INVOLVE BRIGHT, FLICKERING LIGHTS, NOISE, AND EYE STRAIN, CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT CAN TRIGGER OR WORSEN MIGRAINE HEADACHES

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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COMORBIDITIES**

MIGRAINES

**GAMBLING DISORDER OFTEN EXISTS ALONGSIDE
DEPRESSION OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE, INCREASING
OVERALL RISK FOR PAIN-RELATED CONDITIONS**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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INSOMNIA

GA IS STRONGLY LINKED TO INSOMNIA AND POOR SLEEP QUALITY, CREATING A SELF-PERPETUATING CYCLE OF ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, AND THE STRESS OF FINANCIAL LOSS, WHICH PREVENTS RESTFUL SLEEP

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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COMORBIDITIES**

INSOMNIA

- **HIGH PREVALENCE**
- **EMOTIONAL & MENTAL IMPACT**
- **PHYSICAL EFFECTS**
- **SEVERITY**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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INSOMNIA

- **FREQUENTLY CO-OCCURS WITH MOOD DISORDERS**
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**
- **DISRUPTS CIRCADIAN RHYTHM**

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GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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Treatment Options



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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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COMORBIDITIES**

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- **SCREENING: ROUTINE SCREENING FOR GAMBLING PROBLEMS SHOULD BE PART OF ALL SUD TREATMENT PROGRAMS**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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TREATMENT OPTIONS

- **INTEGRATED CARE: SIMULTANEOUS TREATMENT FOR BOTH GAMBLING AND SUBSTANCE USE IS MORE EFFECTIVE**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

- **EFFECTIVE BECAUSE IT ADDRESSES
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND GAMBLING-
RELATED TRIGGERS**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)

- **GOOD AT MANAGING AMBIVALENCE
TOWARDS REDUCING OR STOPPING BOTH
SUBSTANCE USE AND GAMBLING**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)

- **GOOD AT MANAGING AMBIVALENCE
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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

EXPOSURE & RESPONSE PREVENTION THERAPY (ERP)

- **USED FOR OCD, THIS APPROACH HELPS PATIENTS FACE THEIR TRIGGERS (LIKE THE URGE TO GAMBLE) WITHOUT ENGAGING IN THE COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR.**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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EXPOSURE & RESPONSE PREVENTION THERAPY (ERP)

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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MEDICATIONS:

- **SSRIS (ANTIDEPRESSANTS): OFTEN USED FOR OCD, THESE CAN HELP TREAT UNDERLYING ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION THAT MAY DRIVE GAMBLING BEHAVIORS**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
COMMON
COMORBIDITIES**

MEDICATIONS:

- **OPIOID ANTAGONISTS (NALTREXONE): USED TO REDUCE CRAVINGS AND THE "HIGH" ASSOCIATED WITH GAMBLING**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES

- **BLOCKING AND SELF-EXCLUSION: USE SOFTWARE TO BLOCK GAMBLING WEBSITES AND UTILIZE SELF-EXCLUSION PROGRAMS.**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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COMORBIDITIES**

MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES

- **FINANCIAL RESTRICTIONS: GIVE CONTROL OF FINANCES OR CREDIT CARDS TO A TRUSTED PERSON TO REDUCE IMPULSIVE SPENDING.**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
&
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COMORBIDITIES**

MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES

- **ALTERNATIVE DOPAMINE SOURCES: REPLACING THE THRILL OF GAMBLING WITH HEALTHIER, STIMULATING ACTIVITIES LIKE EXERCISE, HOBBIES, OR MUSIC.**

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**GAMBLING DISORDER
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MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES

- **PROGRAMS LIKE GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS PROVIDE A 12-STEP STRUCTURE TO HELP INDIVIDUALS BREAK THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION**

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Thank You!

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