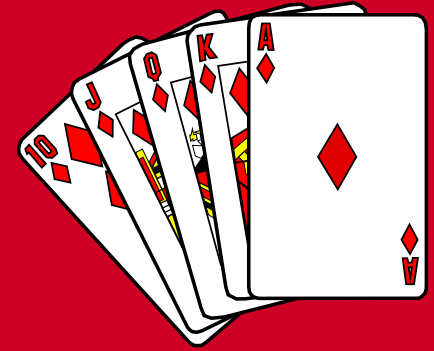


RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW JERSEY

Center for Gambling Studies



Informed Decision Making and Responsible Gaming

Lia Nower, JD, PhD
Associate Professor and Director,
Center for Gambling Studies
Rutgers University



Key Elements of Informed Choice (IPART, 2004)

- The promotion of informed choice for the community
- Improved measures to protect gamblers
- More effective and efficient counseling services

Requirements for Informed Choice

- **Competence**

- Individual is able and competent to make a reasons decision based on information provided.

- **Disclosure/Understanding**

- Awareness of characteristics, operations and nature of products.
- Awareness of risks, implications, and/or consequences of consuming products.

(Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, Nower & Shaffer, 2008; IPART, 1999)

Characteristics of Information

- Relevant to the product
- Accurate in content
- Not misleading or deceitful
- Accessible to all potential participants
- Provided in understandable form
- Provided in full (no missing info)
- Delivered in a timely manner

Information Influencing Attitudes

- Warns of **potential risks and harms** associated with gambling.
- Informs players of **operation and characteristics** of games, **probabilities** of winning, and the **role**, if any **of skill** where outcome is determined by chance.

Information Influencing Attitudes

- Fosters responsible gambling practices.
- Assists gamblers in **monitoring levels of expenditure** in terms of time and money.

Decision-Making Models



Models in Health

- Do costs outweigh benefits?
- Sense of personal efficacy? Do you believe you are capable of performing behavior despite obstacles?
- Are positive by-products of discontinuing the behavior significant enough?
- What are the attitudes and/or social norms that determine intentions which, in turn, guide behavior?

(Anzen & Fishbein, 1980; Bandura, 1986, 1997; Janz & Becker, 1984; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982, 1983)

Cognitive Models

- Psychological distress results from dysfunctional belief schemas or structures.
- An individual's interpretation of events determine how she or he will feel & behave.
- Identifying & modifying dysfunctional belief structures will change behaviours & emotions.

(Echeburua et al., 1996; Sylvain, Ladouceur & Boisvert, 1997; Sharpe, 2002)

Core Dysfunctional Beliefs in Gambling

- Illusions of control (Langer, 1975)
- Superstitious beliefs (Joukhador, Mccallum & Blaszczyński, 2003)
- Biased evaluation (Gilovich, 1983)
- Erroneous perceptions of randomness (Coulombe et al., 1992; Walker, 1992)

Core belief

I can control the gambling outcome

Beliefs

I must feel powerful

I need to feel important

I don't want to be a loser

Behaviors

Develop superstitions around gambling

Overestimate likelihood of winning

Trigger

Stress at work

Symptoms

Anxiety

Heart racing

Thoughts

I am incompetent/weak

I am a loser

I'll never be good enough

Mood

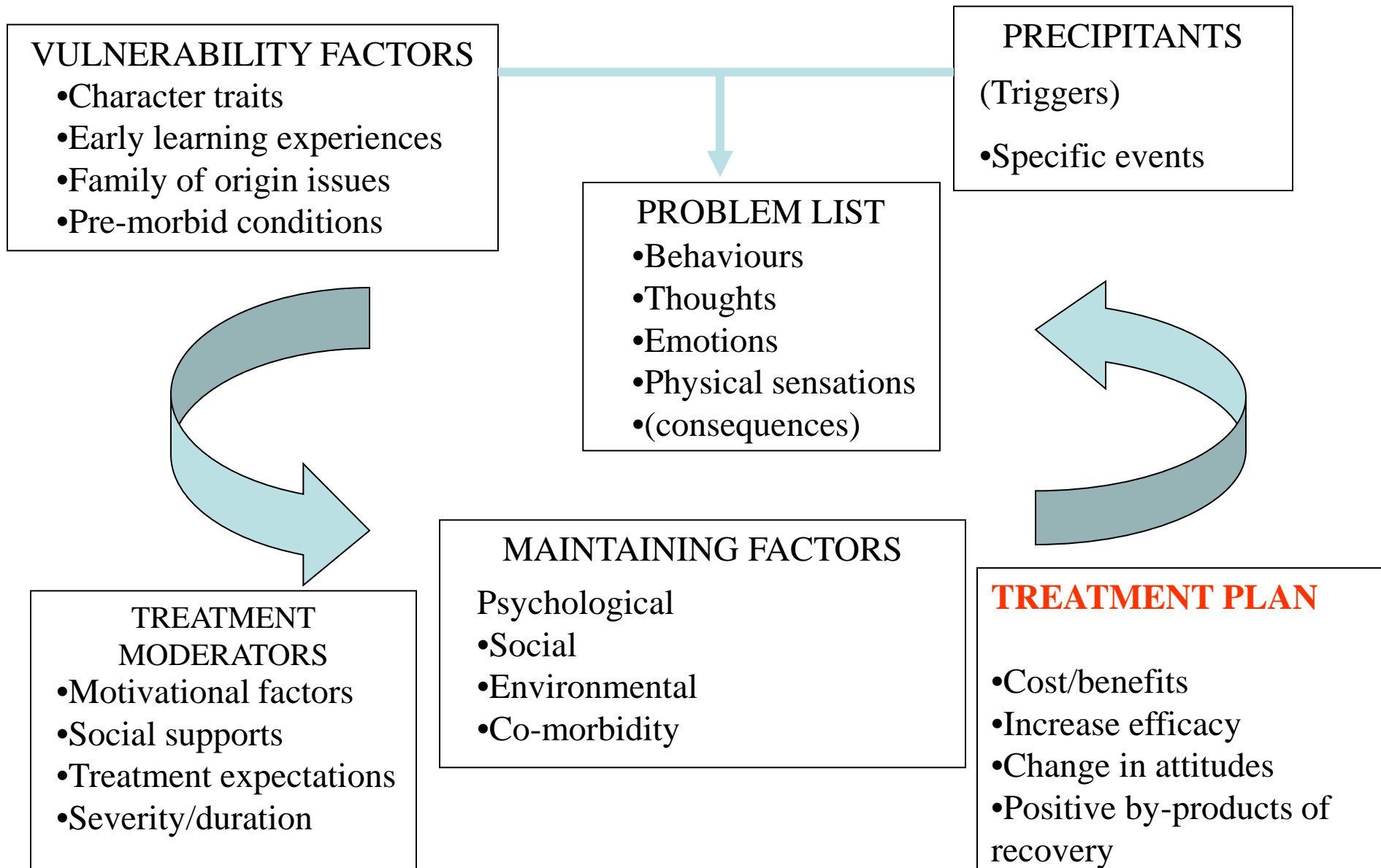
Depressed/anxious

Behavior

Gamble

Cognitive Models

- Is there any evidence **for** this belief?
- What is the evidence **against** this belief?
- What is the **worst thing** that can happen if you abandon this belief?
- What is the **best thing** that can happen if you abandon this belief?



Goals of Informed Choice



Primary Goals of Informed Choice in Gambling

To provide:

- relevant educational information necessary to...
- objectively evaluate gambling options and...
- modify erroneous cognitions (e.g., income-generating activity).

Primary Goals of Informed Choice in Gambling

- To detail the **benefits** of responsible gambling + potential social and personal **costs** of excessive gambling.
- To provide **sufficient guidelines** to assist individuals in identifying their current level of responsible gambling.

Primary Goals of Informed Choice in Gambling

- To target **specific** gambling activities, socio-demographic groups, and stages of change to promote optimal information dissemination.
- To use **several mediums** for wide dissemination of information.

Relevant Questions



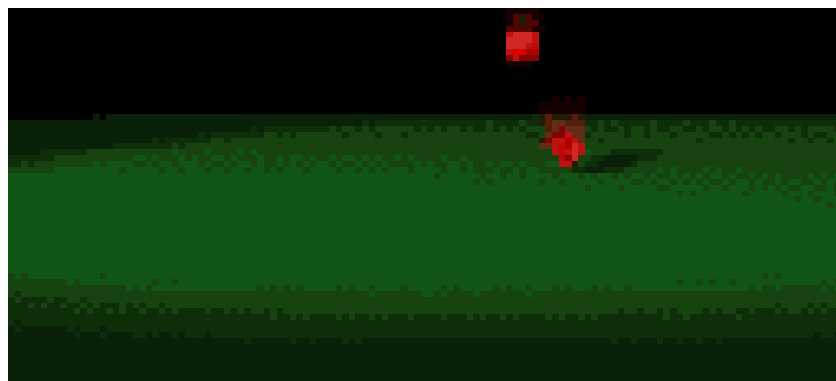
Industry and Marketing Promotion

- What, if any, **game-related information** would best contribute to gamblers making better informed choices?
- What is the effect of **general industry marketing and promotion** on the initiation of youth gambling? Can this effect be minimized by harm reduction prevention programs?

Promotion of Informed Choice

- What **elements** of information are necessary for individuals to make healthy and responsible gambling choices?
- What **impact**, if any, do casino-sponsored responsible gambling policies have on individual gambling choices (i.e. setting limits, avoiding cash machines etc.)?

Guidelines for Promoting Informed Choice



Provide Universal Gambling-Related Information

- Educate on the **nature of gambling as entertainment.**
- **Dispel myths** that gamblers can “beat the house”: explain probability, odds, hit rate, return-to-player etc.
- Provide sufficient **information** on individual games to promote limit-setting.
- Increase **awareness of risk** associated with excessive gambling.

Gambler-Specific Information

- Provide **detailed and interactive information** regarding specific games (e.g. player return rates, “real” reels versus virtual reels, server based gaming).
- Create **promotional materials, resources and referrals** for those who gamble for non-entertainment purposes (e.g. loneliness, loss, social isolation etc.).
- Develop **educational materials** that identify gambling-related erroneous cognitions and counter beliefs with information (e.g. illusion of control, Gambler’s Fallacy).

Gambler-Specific Information

- Develop **user-friendly screens** to promote identification of the signs and symptoms of problem gambling behaviors.
- Provide **concise, repetitive messages** to heighten self-awareness regarding expenditures and patterns of play.

Problem Gambler Specific Information

- Provide **assessment guidelines** for determining the relative “health” of one’s gambling behavior and one’s relative position along the spectrum of gambling behavior.
- Offer **resources and referrals** for counseling, hotline, self-exclusion and self-help services.
- Provide **cost-related information**, designed to educate problem gamblers on the financial and legal risks of excessive gambling.
- Develop **strategies for adopting gambling limits** and increasing responsible gambling behavior.



<http://www.lianower.com>

lianower@rutgers.edu