



THE BRIDGE

Fall 2009

Family-centered recovery for co-occurring mental illness & substance use disorders

WestBridge values

WestBridge strives to be collaborative, person-centered and recovery-oriented. We have developed the following set of values that we want to be reflective of our relationships with our participants, families, co-workers and colleagues.

- Hope, respect, teamwork and direct communication are the core elements of our culture.
- We want everyone we interact with to experience our compassion, thoughtfulness, integrity and responsiveness.
- Everything we do is driven by a desire to develop authentic relationships.

We encourage you to let us know when we are living up to these values and when we are falling short. By working together, we can make treatment a positive, hopeful experience. ■

WESTBRIDGE

COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Gambling: gateway to substance abuse relapse

Gambling has become a mainstream activity that our society relies on for fund raising, to balance state and federal budget deficits, for social activity and for stimulation. Gambling takes on many forms, including lottery tickets, scratch tickets, raffles, bingo, casino games, off-track betting, investment gambling and online gambling. While the initial decision to gamble is voluntary, once a person’s brain develops the physiological changes that create addiction, the person loses his or her ability to exert control over the obsessive and compulsive behavior.

Going to a casino or even buying a scratch ticket is risky behavior for people with co-occurring disorders.

Mary Woods, WestBridge CEO

Problem gambling can lead to gambling abuse or dependence, which creates the over activation and stimulation of the reward center in the brain. New neuro pathways are created that lead to preoccupation with gambling, gambling to escape other emotional problems, lying to significant others, and spending monies beyond one’s means.

People who experience co-occurring disorders can be negatively affected by the dopamine surge that occurs when they decide to gamble. Gambling becomes the quick “high” that stimulates the brain, which does not differentiate which behavior created the effect.

In short, the behavior creates the same neurocellular changes as the person’s drug of choice.

At WestBridge we see folks who are mildly to profoundly affected by choosing to gamble, and gambling often becomes the gateway to relapse of their substance use disorder. “Going to a casino or even buying a scratch ticket is risky behavior for people with co-occurring disorders,” says WestBridge CEO Mary Woods. “We encourage everyone to engage in balanced, healthy behaviors and to avoid risky behavior, including gambling.” ■



inside

Warning signs of problem gambling

Warning signs at work

- The suspected gambler is missing work, arriving late or leaving early
- He or she is organizing or taking an excessive interest in office pools
- The individual is borrowing money from co-workers
- The office manager notes heavy telephone use not related to work
- The suspected gambler frequently asks for advances in pay

Warning signs at home

- Overdue or unpaid household bills are mounting, or suspected gambler suddenly wants to take over paying the bills
- The individual is secretive about money
- The suspected gambler's loved one finds high cell phone/pager bills
- The suspected gambler has large amounts of unexplained cash, especially if household bills are going unpaid
- Bill collectors are calling, or property is being repossessed ■

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Diagnosis and stages of problem gambling

Have you or someone you know ever lost time from work or school due to gambling? Sold items or borrowed money to gamble? Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy? These are some of the Twenty Questions used by Gamblers Anonymous to identify problem gamblers.

People whose gambling is causing psychological, financial, emotional, marital and legal issues are considered problem gamblers. They typically demonstrate other addictive behaviors—alcohol abuse, drug abuse or sex addictions—which may contribute to their gambling preoccupation. Those with a history of depression, mood swings and hyperactivity may be more prone to gambling. Clinical research suggests that some problem gamblers may inherit their gambling addiction. The genetic impulse to gamble is similar to that of binge shopping, uncontrolled Web surfing and craving anonymous sex.

Most people view money as a means of exchange to purchase items, but as problem gamblers becoming more deeply involved in gambling, their view of money tends to change. They see money's only value as a way to keep gambling.

Problem gamblers typically move through stages of behavior as they are drawn into compulsive gambling. Their progression may not follow a set order but often includes the following stages:

Winning Stage

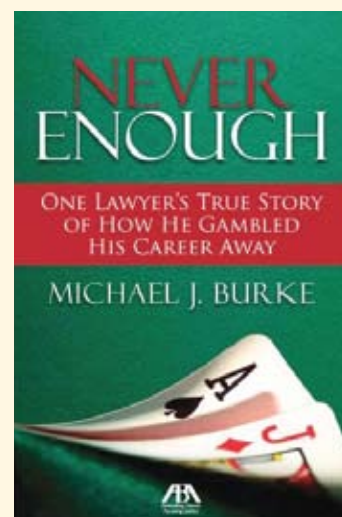
When gamblers are winning, gambling is exciting and can be an escape from life's stresses. Winning increases the sense of pleasure and feelings of control. Gamblers at this stage may celebrate by showering themselves and others with the spoils of their winnings.

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did you know?

Never Enough: *One Lawyer's True Story of How He Gambled His Career Away* is the shocking story of Michael J. Burke, a successful lawyer who became a closet alcoholic and gambling addict who used \$1.6 million of his clients' trust funds. On the Nov. 2, 2009 episode of "One Hour at a Time," Burke talked with WestBridge CEO Mary Woods about gambling addiction, its effects on his family and prison. Log on to voiceamerica.com and search the Health and Wellness Channel for the show. "One Hour at a Time" airs Mondays, 3-4 p.m. EST and covers issues related to the treatment of substance use disorders and mental illness. ■



Diagnosis and stages of problem gambling *cont. from page 2*

Losing Stage

Winning can quickly change to losing. Increasing losses can intensify a gambler's focus on betting more money more often to recoup lost money. Problem gamblers may max out their credit cards, sell items, take funds from their retirement or investment accounts or borrow money. Family members and friends often see evidence of gambling problems at this stage, as late payment notices arrive and bill collectors start calling.



Desperation Stage

As debts increase and relationships fall apart, problem gamblers often feel hopeless and depressed and may experience insomnia. Some may run away to escape their debt and family issues, or they may turn to crime or consider suicide. Others may finally seek help, including financial assistance.

As an organization that treats people with co-occurring disorders, WestBridge understands the issues underlying gambling addiction and its connection to relapses of substance use disorders.

For information on gambling treatment and financial education resources, visit westbridge.org. ■

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Family perspective

Our son Carl* had done well for nearly 10 years after he was treated for schizoaffective disorder in college. But he got overconfident, stopped taking his medication and had a breakdown. After he was hospitalized, we found WestBridge, whose staff welcomed him to The Commons after he was stabilized.

Being away from everything familiar, Carl had to rely on The Commons staff for help. He got into a good routine, exercised and ate well. He liked The Commons and gained self-confidence living in a new community and realized he could make his way around.

During his two-month stay, the weekly family counseling sessions on the phone proved helpful. WestBridge staff asked the tough questions and kept discussion on track. If any of us got angry, staff brought us back to being more civil. The sessions allowed us to discuss issues we were reluctant to raise directly with each other. We made good progress.

These family sessions were very helpful in Carl making the transition back to independent living. We have continued the calls as Carl settles back into his prior community. He has been doing pretty well these last few months. He is taking his medication, appears to be compliant and is taking responsibility for what he needs to do. He is also working part time with friends.

Perhaps the most important thing we all learned during Carl's stay at The Commons is that being respectful with each other goes a long way toward stimulating discussion and respecting another's perspective. This is a long-lasting and valuable lesson. ■

**not his real name*

wellness

How to avoid colds

With cold and flu season approaching, try these tips for staying healthy:

- Wash your hands often, especially after shaking hands
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes, which are common areas for germs to enter
- Cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow
- Avoid contact with people with colds, including friends and family
- Stay rested to keep your immune system strong
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of fluids
- Exercise often to boost your immune system ■



Source: health.com



ask the nurse

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Lisa Williams, ARNP

Quit smoking group

To introduce participants and staff to quitting strategies and provide support, WestBridge has started a quit smoking group that meets weekly at The Commons. Participants are in every stage of change, from pre-contemplative to ready to quit, and are assisted in creating a quitting plan and seeing it through. Information for this group has been collected from the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, Joseph Cruse's book "I Don't Smoke!" and smoking cessation protocols from a Dartmouth study.

The average smoker tries to quit eight times before succeeding. The health benefits are worth the effort. Twenty-four hours after quitting, the odds of having a heart attack decrease. Two weeks to three months after quitting, circulation and lung function increase up to 30 percent. One year after quitting, the risk of coronary heart disease is half of that of a smoker*.

Reformed smokers are welcome to join our group to share how they succeeded. Learn more at westbridge.org. ■

**Source: US Surgeon General report*

in the news

- WestBridge hosted its inaugural Summer Networking Luncheon on Aug. 12. Guests from all over New England included special guest David Fine of Solution News.
- Mary Woods, WestBridge CEO, and Reid Slavin presented "Co-occurring Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders: A Strength's Perspective" at the Aug. 21 NAADAC conference.
- Dr. Mark Green presented "Engaging and Prescribing to Clients Who Do Not Want to Change" at the Cape Cod Symposium on Addictive Disorders and Massachusetts General Hospital Grand Rounds.
- Kevin Keefe, LICSW, WestBridge Project Manager, presented "Working with Families Utilizing Cognitive Behavioral Interventions" at the Annual Community Mental Health Conference on Sept. 24.
- John McAndrew returns for his "I Am Home" New Horizons NH benefit on Feb. 19, 2010, at The Derryfield School Auditorium in Manchester. Call WestBridge for tickets. ■

creative corner

We invite our readers to share their artwork, essays, photos and poems.

The Night and the Ocean

*Night crashes down
In the ocean's mouth
The sky drops without a sound
The waves break as the stars breathe fire*

*Down in the ocean with no sound
I hold my breath as the stars burn out
It's useless now to believe in a dream
When just that dream is all I can see*

by Theo Baars

Comments

We welcome your comments about this issue of *The Bridge* and invite you to submit ideas for future stories.

To contact us and for more information on our services, visit

WESTBRIDGE.ORG

or call us at

800.889.7871

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