



Problem Gambling Awareness Week

March 4-10, 2012

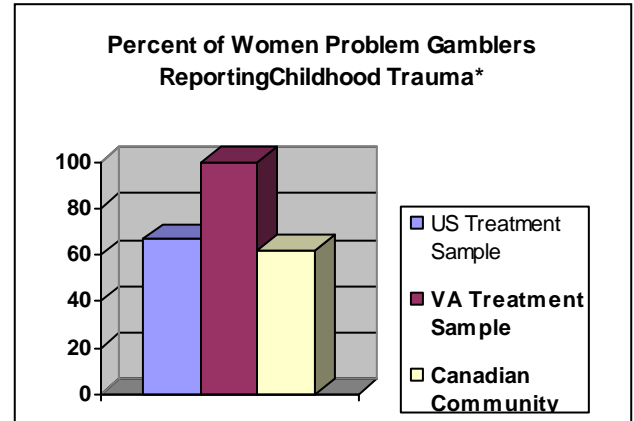
Bulletin 5

Trauma, Women and Gambling Problems

Over the past 20 years, Connecticut has seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of problem gamblers who are women. Quickly, it was clear, clinically as well as in research studies, that many of the women who were coming for help had serious trauma issues.

In addition, there were the women who ignored or denied the gambling problems of a loved one. Why would a woman ignore her finances and the family finances to the point disaster? Digging deeper, it was evident that many of the family members of problem gamblers had trauma histories as well that often had never been revealed.

There is undoubtedly a connection between the three: trauma, women, and problem gambling.



How does gambling interact with trauma issues?

- Gambling venues feel safe and welcoming.
- They provide escape from intolerable affect and mood regulation
- Paradoxically gambling provides a place to hide and be invisible while at the same time providing a chance to receive positive recognition and validation through winning
- Gambling also provides the fantasy of undoing not only the pain of trauma but of undoing the trauma itself

However, losses trigger the old shame and feelings of being “not good enough”, and eventually the gambling cycle becomes traumatic in and of itself.

What is done about that connection is the next challenge. The following are some recommendations:

- Recognize women who have experienced trauma are at higher risk for developing gambling problems
- Trauma informed care should be provided for women coping with gambling problems.
- Gender specific groups and counseling can be extremely helpful.
- Providing a safe and welcoming counseling environment for trauma survivors is essential.
- Removing barriers to care such as offering flexible hours, telephone counseling or home visits to address lack of transportation or childcare needs should be a priority.

Sources: Boughton & Falenchuk (2007). Vulnerability and Comorbidity Factor of Female Problem Gambling. *J Gambl Stud.* 23.
Petry, Steinberg et al. (2005). Childhood Maltreatment in Male and Female Path. Gamblers. *Psychol Addict Behav.*, 19.
Kausch, Ruggle, Rowland (2006). Lifetime histories of trauma among pathological gamblers. *American J on Addictions*, 15.

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**Toll Free Problem Gambling Helpline: 800-346-6238 or
PG Chat: problemgambling.org**