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Brass Rings & Bologna: Gamblers' Delights, Delusions & Legacies

by Madeleine Parish

The summer before my father died, I traveled Upstate to visit him. After lunch in our town's arts district, we drove to Lake Ontario to watch the waves roll in. It was warm and pleasant, so out the pier we walked, Dad chatting on about all the fun we used to have, barbecuing and playing badminton there. I couldn't remember those happy outings. But, hey, Dad grinned and spoke with such conviction, his recollections must have been true. Right?

Back on land, we headed for the carousel, one of the city's finest treasures. Created in 1905 and recently restored, it's a magical wonder boasting fifty hand-carved, intricately painted horses, cats, ostriches, pigs, rabbits, deer, giraffes, lions and tigers - but no bears. (Oh my!)

It was early in the season. No one around but us. We couldn't resist. We had to ride the carousel!

My first thought, risk averse as I am, was to avoid "the painted ponies" going "up and down," as Joni Mitchell sang a few decades ago. I am, after all, a woman of a certain age. I couldn't ride a giraffe, or a zebra, or a lion, could I? No, I would take one of the stable, immobile bench seats. But when Dad, aged ninety-five, hopped on a horse on the carousel's outer perimeter, I climbed up on a tiger, giggling like a six-year-old.

Once the cranky calliope music came on, we started spinning, spinning, spinning. When I looked ahead a couple rows, there was Dad, hiking out from his palomino, trying to grab the brass ring from the dispenser, just out of reach from the carousel's circumference.

GAMBLERS' DELIGHTS to pg 6

JOHN H. DRIGGS, LICSW

Overcoming Grandiosity in Recovery

"He who loves himself too much
will have no rivals."

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Self-inflation is a major problem in our culture and an impediment to personal growth and recovery. It is the exaggerated belief in our own exceptionalism—that we are a cut above others with little or no evidence to support our belief. It involves unrealistic views and fantasies of ourselves, our successes and our social standing. It puts us on pedestals in an imaginary way despite the absence of actual supportive evidence. We may see ourselves as strong and deserving of leadership roles. But actually, just the opposite is true. People with grandiosity are in effect quite insecure, they are immature and cannot see strengths in others, which are so necessary for true leadership. They get misled by their own self-exaggeration and mistakenly think they can solve problems all on their own. Often, but not always, grandiosity remains hidden to ourselves but is so apparent to other people, who typically are put off by how we behave.

Normal grandiosity occurs in early childhood and adolescence but is problematic in later years. We are all expected to grow up and realize our limitations and how we are unique but not all that special.

OVERCOMING GRANDIOSITY to pg 15



The Faces of Gambling Recovery

by Bill Stein For Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance

Each person's addiction is unique, as is each story of renewed hope. Gambling disorder, also known as gambling addiction or compulsive gambling, continues to be misunderstood as being caused by a lack of willpower in which gamblers are blamed for their disorder. These myths need to be debunked.

To illustrate the insidious way that gambling disorder can take hold — as well as to show how recovery is possible — here are several stories from Minnesotans impacted by gambling:

Milestone birthdays are often a rite of passage. For "Eddie," about to turn the legal betting age of 18, this would be no exception.

It was late in the evening on July 16. Outside of the Mystic Lake Casino, Eddie and several friends waited anxiously for the clock to strike midnight. Eddie had already watched many of his friends celebrate their eighteenth birthdays at the casino, and he was excited that his day had finally come.

THE FACES OF GAMBLING RECOVERY to pg 8

BULLETIN BOARD

UPCOMING

37th Annual Gratitude Night

Sunday, March 28 from 7:30 to 11:00 pm at the Minneapolis Convention Center, 1301 Second Avenue South, Ballroom A, across from Dunn Bros. Look for greeters and blue/yellow balloons. Tickets: \$12 in advance. \$15 at the door. Available at Mpls Intergroup. 7:30 pm: Program and speakers. 10:00 pm: Dance and photo booth. AA Speaker: Grant P. Al-anon Speaker: Nancy H.

Dare to Be - A Documentary Film on Women's Rowing

Sunday, March 8 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at Creators Space, 218 7th Street East, St. Paul, 55101. Free screening (donations taken). US Rowing reports the fastest growing group of members are women over 27. A group of these women inspired the founding of Power Ten. Watch this documentary and discuss the joy, challenges, and grace of rowing.

Recovery Day at the Capitol

Tuesday, March 17 from 9:30 to 11:30 am in the Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda. Join Minnesota Recovery Connection to show Minnesota that recovery is possible and that people recover from substance use disorder every day! Whether you are someone in personal recovery, a family member, friend, professional in the field, a co-worker or an employer of a recovering person. More info at minnesotarecovery.org/events/2020-rdc.

Let's Talk About That: Laura McKowen and Nora McNerny

Friday, April 17 starting at 7:30 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm) at The Parkway Theater, 4814 Chicago Ave, Minneapolis. \$10: Advance general admission. \$15: At the door general admission. Ticket purchases are final and non-refundable. Join authors Laura McKowen and Nora McNerny for a night of candid conversation about their books, motherhood, grief, sobriety, and pretty much anything else. Register on Eventbrite.

75th Superior Roundup: Serenity, Courage and Wisdom

April 17 to 19 at Superior Fairgrounds Curling Club, Superior, Wisconsin. Tickets at \$20 (under one year sobriety: free). For more information visit, superiorroundup.com.

From Statistics to Solutions: Addressing Underlying Issues of Youth Substance Use

Thursday, April 23 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm at Minneapolis Marriott West. This year the conference will focus on the influence of vaping and other emerging drug trends. CEU registration includes: Up to 7 CEU credits and lunch: \$25. Lunch only: \$15. Register online at mntc.org/event/from-statistics-to-solutions-2020.

2020 Vision: A Fresh Look at Problem Gambling - Prevention to Aftercare

Thursday, April 30 to Friday, May 1 at Earle Brown Heritage Center, 6155 Earle Brown Drive, Minneapolis, 55430. Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling. First to follow a traditional conference agenda with sessions focused on two significant areas: treatment/research and responsible gambling. Second day will use the World Cafe model - a structured conversational process for knowledge sharing in which groups of people discuss topics at several tables. Conference discounts available to NPGA members. CEUs may be available. Register at NorthstarProblemGambling.org/Conference. Deadline is April 20.

ONGOING

Community Wellness Series

Second Friday of every month, from 6:00 to 8:00pm at 393 Dunlap St. N., 1st floor conference room. Free. More info: 651-222-9985.

All Recovery Meetings

Minnesota Recovery Connection is hosting All Recovery meetings throughout the Twin Cities. These meetings honor all pathways to recovery, acknowledging that each person's path is unique. Call 612-584-4158 for more info or go to minnesotarecovery.org.

Dissonance Presents: Story Well

Mondays from 6:00 to 7:00 pm at The Warming House, 4001 Bryant Ave S, Minneapolis. Held the first Monday of every month — is a time to share and discuss the various ways we can help and care for each other and others. Whether you have substance use or mental health concerns, feel depleted by everyday life, have a friend or loved one who is sick or suffering, or just want to connect with others around the idea of being well, this is a place for you. Everyone welcome.

Hazelden's Second Sunday Retreats

The second Sunday of each month everyone in recovery is invited to Hazelden in Center City, MN (Cork Center) for an inspirational day of workshops, fellowship, sharing and fun. Open to anyone 18 or older involved in a 12-Step program. \$15 if you register online, \$20 (in-person) includes a buffet lunch and information packet. 9 am to 2:30 pm.

9 am - Register at the Cork Center
9 am - Introductions and orientation
10-11 am - Lecture
10:30 -12:45 - Small group discussions
12:45 - 1:30 pm - Sunday buffet
1:45 pm - Small group discussions or Meditation group
2:30 pm - Relaxation group

March 8

Navigating Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health in Recovery

The Recovery Church

253 State St., St. Paul, 55107, offers worship services on Sunday at 9:30 am with fellowship, coffee and snacks following service. The mission is to provide a spiritual community for people in search of growth, healing, and recovery. For a list of recovery meetings, visit www.therecoverychurch.org or like [therecoverychurchstpaul](https://www.facebook.com/therecoverychurchstpaul) on Facebook.

To place a listing, email David Goldstein at david@thephoenixspirit.com to explore advertising or promotional offers.



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Gambling

by Louise Elowen

"If you must play, decide upon three things at the start: The rules of the game, the stakes, and the quitting time." — CHINESE PROVERB

Gambling is one of the stealthier addictions, both to spot and to succumb to in all its glory. After all, everyone gambles – don't they?

Take, for example, that big ol' thing called "life." Every day we take a "gamble" on what we plan to do and keep the faith that it will turn out to our advantage one way or another. Each decision results in a consequence. In short, and as defined by Webster's New World™ College Dictionary (4th Edition) to gamble is "to take a risk in order to gain some advantage."

Consider the words *risk* and *advantage*. At what *cost* is risk? And how *big* is the advantage? We all have to take some kind of risk in order in order to keep moving ahead. We have to cross the road to get to the other side.

Yet, what happens if the risk is increased? But the advantage remains the same, or even less likely? Say, for example, the proverbial road is a five-line freeway instead of a single-track road; suddenly the risk of getting safely to the other side is increased. Yet the advantage is still the same, that is, we still want to be on the other side of the road (where the grass is said to be greener). Is the increased risk of safely making it to the other side of the road worth it? Or not? Is it time to quit when the single-lane road becomes a five-line highway because the advantage is not worth the higher risk?

I studied statistics and the law of probability in college. I soon concluded that most statistics can be "manipulated" to become the (perceived) outcome that you want it to be. And, so it is with gambling. The odds might be stacked against you, but we only see what we want to see, and convince ourselves that this time it really is "the big one." We take *that* big risk, take *those* high odds, because someone must win, right? And why shouldn't that *someone* be you?

Life is all about a calculated risk. We can't control everything that happens to us. But, if we take the time to assess some risks more closely, we may decide that the advantage is not worth taking the risk, and thus control the outcome. Our lives, our health, our family, our security – our *sanity* – is more important. Having someone



beside you to help you understand, and support you, when those risks become too much is often crucial.

My big gamble in life was moving from one continent to another. I thought that the "advantage" was worth it. And, it may have been for a while. But then my gamble went wrong – or the rules of the game changed, and I didn't realize it. Not through any particular action I took, but that it soon became clear to me that the initial advantage was no longer worth the *changing* risks. I needed to change my situation. In essence, call "quitting time." But, like many in emotionally abusive relationships (which can be likened to addiction), I needed support to both understand and have the strength to change my risk and advantage. It took me several years to "quit" – and even more in continued recovery.

In closing, as you read through the common threads in articles in this issue on gambling, and the brave, insightful stories of those who've shared, think about both the *risk* and the *advantage* next time you are faced with a gamble. Is it worth it? If you've taken a risk – is the advantage (or stake) still the same as it was? Or did the rules of the game change? And finally, is it quitting time?



The Phoenix Spirit

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find and face holds within it
the seeds of
healing, health, wisdom,
growth and prosperity.
We hope you find a
seed in every issue.*

THE PHOENIX NEWSPAPER is a bi-monthly publication for people actively working on their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. We are committed to providing articles, advertising, and information about recovery, renewal, and personal growth to help people experience life in a balanced, meaningful way.

The opinions and facts presented in this publication are intended to be diverse and represent those of the writers and/or contributors, and are not necessarily those of THE PHOENIX SPIRIT. We seek writers and interview subjects who are willing to gift you with their honestly held convictions and insights. We seek to attract advertisers who offer products and services of integrity. But we urge our readers to research, and trust their instincts.

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Can't find the paper near your house or apartment? Write to us and we'll do our best to get THE PHOENIX SPIRIT to a drop-off site near you.

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SUPPORT GROUPS

MONDAYS

1900 Mens Al-anon, Monday 5:45-7:15pm, 12-Step meeting, step presentation and small groups, fellowship. 1900 Nicollet Ave., Plymouth Congregational Church. Tom W, 612-281-5230. Enter at parking lot.

Overeaters Anonymous: Monday mornings, 10-11am. 3rd floor, handicapped accessible. Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 50th St Mpls 55407. For more info call Ana 651-592-7510

Online Gamers Anonymous and Olganon: Mondays at 6:30 at the Cavalier Club, 7179 Washington Ave. South, Edina. Cavalier Club is located on the corner of Valley View and HWY 169.. Plenty of free parking! If video games or other excessive tech use is making your life unmanageable or if someone you care about is gaming excessively, we'd love to meet you. More info on this emerging 12 Step Movement at www.olganon.org

Understanding Eating Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery: First Thursday, every other month, 6-7:30pm. The Emily Program staff provides answers to common questions and concerns of families and friends "new" to eating disorders, treatment and recovery. 2265 Como Ave, St. Paul, 55108. Free, drop in. Visit www.emilyprogram.com or call 651-645-5323.

Friends and Families of Suicide: a place of support and comfort where those that have lost a loved one to suicide will be comfortable talking about their own loss as well as hearing about the losses of others. Meets the 3rd Monday of every month 7-9pm, Twin Cities Friends Meeting, 1725 Grand Ave., St Paul, 55105. For info email fposmn@yahoo.com or call Tracy at 651-587-8006.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. Check website for locations and different dates and times.

Richfield Codependents Anonymous: 7pm, men & women Richfield Lutheran Church, 60th and Nicollet or call 952-649-9514.

TUESDAYS

Recovering Couples Anonymous, 7pm. We are a 12 Step Group for couples wanting to find new ways to communicate. We provide strong couple support and model healthy couple-ship. Unity Church, 733 Portland Ave, St Paul, 55104. Enter the building through the parking lot door and take the elevator to the basement. Please check us out! Contact Dave at 651-214-5747 or Connie at 651-307-7964 for more information.

Families Anonymous (FA): First and third Tuesday evening of each month, 7pm. Support group for families and friends of those dealing with drug, alcohol or other behavioral issues. Is someone you love destroying family harmony by using drugs or alcohol? Free help exists! Join us at St. Timothy Lutheran Church: 1465 N. Victoria Street, St. Paul, MN 55117, or contact Dave E: 612-701-5575.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. Tues, 7-8 pm, Unity Church Unitarian (H), 732 Holly Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104.

Recovery International Meeting at Mary Mother of the Church, 3333 Cliff Road, Burnsville, rm 9 at 3pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Contact Rita at 952-890-7623.

Emotions Anonymous: For those dealing with emotional stress, depression, etc. 7:30pm at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Room 106, 8600 Fremont Ave., Bloomington. Take Penn Ave. south to 86th. Turn left and go to Fremont, just east of 35W. Brian at 952-888-6029.

Nicotine Anonymous: 7-8pm at St. Columbia Church/School, 1330 Blair Ave., St. Paul, 55104. For more info call 952-404-1488. More locations.

Overeaters Anonymous Roseville: Meetings are held from 10-11am (and Saturday's from 8-9) at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville, Room 218 Call Janie 651-639-4246 for more info.

A.C.A., 5:30-7 pm, Dakota Alano House, 3920 Rahn Rd, Eagan (Hwy 13 & Cedarvale Shop Ctr). 651-452-2921.www.dasinc.org/

A.C.A. 7pm, Saint Michael's Lutheran Church 1660 W City Rd B (at Fry). Roseville. Open to all. Step and Traditions meeting.

Get a Fresh Start! 12-Step AA group, open meeting Tues., 7pm, at Kingswill Church, 1264 109th Ave NE, Blaine. Denny, 763-757-6512.

WEDNESDAYS

AA Meeting, 6:30 - 8:30pm St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville. Call 651-639-4246 for more info.

Women's 12-Step Program: 7pm, Peace Presbyterian Church, 7624 Cedar Lake Road, St Louis Park. For women of all ages who find any part of life chaotic or out of control. Through reading *A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps* by Stephanie S. Covington, members explore how the Steps help us overcome addictions and work to heal ourselves. Peace Presbyterian Church has a community dinner at 6pm on Wednesdays and provides free supervised childcare for 12-Step participants. Reclamation-Ministries.org, 952-545-2586.

Overeaters Anonymous: St. Paul Midway: Wednesdays 7-8 PM, Hamline United Methodist Church. Two blocks east of Snelling & Minnehaha. Park in south parking lot, use south entrance to education building. Press buzzer. For more info contact Susan at 651-295-7854.

Adult Children of Alcoholics: Wednesdays @ 7-8:30pm. St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1895 Laurel Ave, St. Paul. Meets downstairs, sign in the lobby. For more information call Mary at 612-747-0709.

Transitions: 7:30.9:30pm Support to men and women who are transitioning from incarceration to living in the community. Trained facilitators and peers provide emotional support in a safe, openly honest environment to discuss discouragements, frustrations, temptations. One of the trained facilitators is a woman. The Men's Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S. Minneapolis, 612-822-5892. TCM.org

Women's CoDA Group: Women's Only Codependents Anonymous Group. Meets every Wednesday at noon at Colonial Church of Edina, 6200 Colonial Way (Fireside room, S. end of bldg). For more information, call Valerie at 612.741.5281

Workaholics Anonymous: A 12-Step program of recovery for people addicted to non-stop work or continuous activity. Meetings every Wednesday, 12:30 p.m., Brooklyn United Methodist Church, Brooklyn Center. Call Pat with questions: 763-560-5199, or visit www.workaholics-anonymous.org.

Marijuana Anonymous, Bloomington, 6-7pm, Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 10715 Zenith Ave S. (2 Blocks south of Old Shakopee Rd, on the East side of Zenith) Contact: bloomingtonma@hotmail.com

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous, 3249 Hennepin Ave S., #55 (Men's Center, in the basement) Mpls, 7-8 pm., Open to Men and Women. For more info write tcAgnostic@gmail.com

THURSDAYS

Workaholics Anonymous: 12 step group for finding balance between work, activity and fun. Meets every Thurs. 6-7:15 p.m. Christ Presbyterian Church, 6901 Normandale Rd. Room 210 North entrance, enter door on left. Call before attending for any schedule or location updates. Liz 612-229-8930, Gretchen 615-423-9444 email: wafindingbalance@gmail.com

New CoDa East Metro Group: Rasmussen College, 8565 Eagle Point Circle N, Lake Elmo (exit north to Radio Dr. on I-94 E). 6:30-7:30pm. Joseph H. at 715-497-6227 or La'Tosia 651-319-2554.

Red Book ACA/ACOA: Recovery Church, 253 State, St. Paul, 7-8:30pm. For more info call Jacob at 612.819.9370 or Bruce at 651-407-6336.

Recovery International Meeting, St Phillip Lutheran Church, 6180 Highway 65 N, Fridley at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Ken, 763-571-5199.

Adults with ADHD Support Groups: (first time free) Every Thursday morning 10am-noon and every Thursday evening (except last Thurs of the month) 7pm 8:30pm. LDA Minnesota, 6100 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422. Tel. 952-582-6000 or www.ldaminnnesota.org.

FRIDAYS

Food Addicts Anonymous: a 12-step program dedicated to food addiction. Fridays 8-9pm, Living Table United Church of Christ, 3805 E 40th St., Mpls, 55406. LGBT friendly. For more info call Shea at 612-722-5064 or sheahnsn@gmail.com or www.foodaddictsanonymous.org.

Recovering Couples Anonymous: Friday Night @ Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 E 50th St, Mpls, 55417, 6:30 - 8pm. 12-Step couples group meets as couples in recovery from any addiction. The only requirement is the desire to remain committed to each other, and find better ways to communicate and develop intimacy. Call Kathy 612-545-6200 or Allan 612-309-5632.

Recovery International Meeting at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 4100 Lyndale Ave S., Mpls at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Ruth 612-825-4779.

SATURDAYS

Overeaters Anonymous Meeting: 9am at Macalester-Plymouth United Church, St. Paul. For those still suffering from compulsive overeating, bulimia and anorexia.

Nicotine Anonymous: Sat. 10am at Linden Hills Congregational Church, 4200 Upton Ave South, Mpls. Enter at the back door. 952-404-1488. Call for locations.

Spenders Anonymous: Our purpose is to stop spending compulsively and work toward serenity in our relationship with money. 1-2 pm at Bethany Lutheran Church, 2511 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55406; street parking or in the church lot; enter through the gate on Franklin and ring the bell; www.spenders.org

Northeast Minneapolis CoDependents Anonymous (CoDA) Group: East Side Neighborhood Services, 1700 2nd Street NE, Mpls, 55413 (corner of 2nd Street NE & 17th Ave NE). Park in lot behind building, use rear entry door. Saturdays: 1-2pm. Contact Ralph W. at rrwink@aol.com or 612-382-0674.

CoDA Group: Saturdays 12pm-1:30pm, Suburban North Alano at 15486 Territorial Rd. Maple Grove 55369. Open to men and women. For more info contact Janine 763-458-0812; <http://www.MinnCoDA.org>

Overeaters Anonymous Newcomer Meeting: Third Saturday of the month, 1pm.2pm. Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd., Mpls, 55411. For more info contact Allison @ 612-499-0280, Gene @ 952-835-0789 or visit www.overeaters.org.

Overeaters Anonymous Courage to Change Meeting: Saturday mornings 8-9am at St Christopher's Episcopal Church, 2300 Hamline Ave N. Roseville. Contact Donna with questions at 651-633-3144.

Clutterers Anonymous: St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., (Hwy 36) room 220, Roseville. 12 step support group meets the first, third and fifth Sat. of the month, 10-11:15am. www.clutterersanonymous.org

Debtors Anonymous: men and women using the 12-Steps to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnnesota.org 952-953-8438. 9-10am, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4120 17th Ave. S., Mpls, 55407 (rooms 7 & 8, enter sliding glass door facing parking lot.)

Overeaters Anonymous: 8-9 am, Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Heights. Lisa 651-428-3484.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group: 1st and 3rd Sat. of the month, 11am -1pm at Faith Mennonite Church, 2720 E. 22nd St, Minneapolis. Website: tinyurl.com/tccodsg. Call before coming for direction. Burt at 612-547-6388.

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families: Saturday, 10am, ACA Club Fridley, Moon Plaza, Boardroom in the lower level of Unity Hospital, 550 Osborne Road, Fridley. Please see www.acafridley.com for info.

Men's & Women's Support Group: Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance.) Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & positive change to meet the challenges of our lives. Call 763-443-4290.

South Side Men's Group: Saturdays, 8:20 to 10am Support for men working toward positive personal change. Creekside Community Center, 9801 Penn Ave. S. Bloomington. Visit www.southsidedemensgroup.org.

SUNDAYS

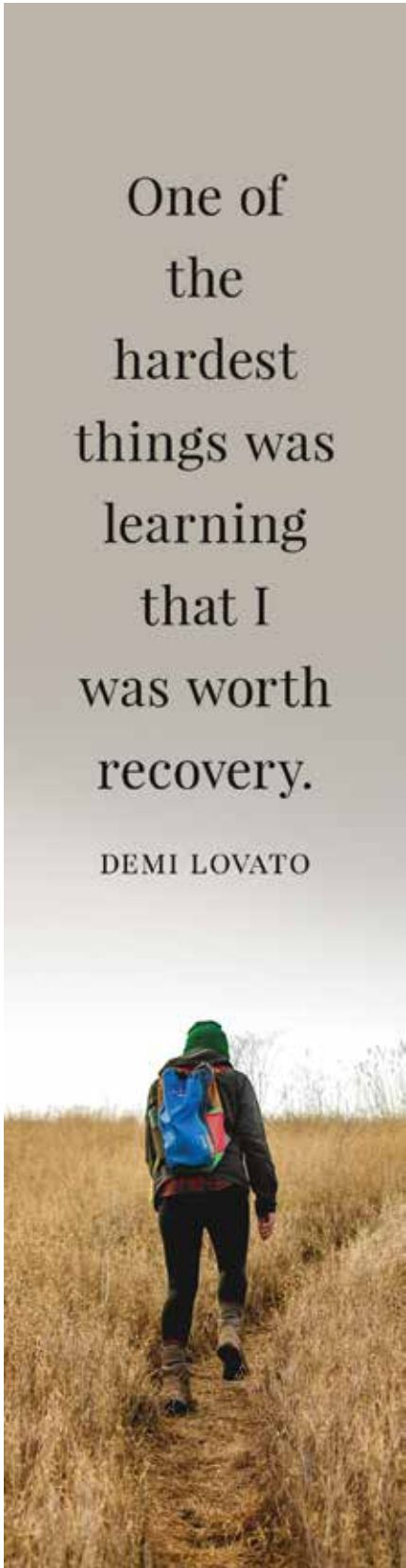
Big Red Book ACA, 11:15am at the Cavalier Club, 6123 Wooddale Ave., Edina, MN 55424. Call Therese S. at 952-927-6761 for more info.

Calix Society: A group of Catholic Recovering Alcoholics and their family/significant others who desire to strengthen their spiritual growth, meets the 3rd Sun. of the month at Cathedral of St. Paul. Mass at 8am., breakfast/speaker meeting at 9am. 651-773-3117.

Opiates Anonymous: Sunday Evenings at 7 pm at Unity of the Valley Spiritual Center, 4011 West Hwy 13, Savage, MN. OA is the first 12-step-based group in the state of Minnesota offering help and support for anyone with a desire to stop using opiates and all other mind altering substances. If you think that you may have a problem with opiates or other mind altering substances, attending one of our meetings may help you decide if you are an addict. If you want to tap into help and support from people and a program with proven success, this is the place for you. No sign up or registration is needed. Just show up at 7 pm on Sunday evenings. If questions contact Ron Benner at 952-657-9119

ABOUT THE LISTINGS

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the support groups on this page. However, we recommend that you contact the group before attending. If you have a listing and need to make a change OR you would like your group included (and on our website), please reach out to us at phoenix@thephoenix-spirit.com. Thank you.



Welcome to Recovery From Codependency

by *Roxanne M.*

I had difficulty in my love relationships, friendships and relationships with co-workers and my family. Everything felt so difficult. Why did I keep getting fired from jobs, even from my own business? Why couldn't men love me the way I needed to be loved? I know how to fix everyone else's problems, why can't I seem to make my life work? If only he would change, I could finally be happy...

For me, the answers began to unfold when I entered the CoDA program six years ago after hitting my emotional bottom. After a traumatic four-year relationship with an emotionally unavailable narcissist drove me into therapy, I learned that the term codependent might apply to me.

In the Welcome, read at every meeting of Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA), I heard that "Most of us have been searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas of the conflicts in our relationships and our childhoods. Many of us were raised in families where addictions existed - some of us were not. In either case, we have found in each of our lives that codependence is a most deeply rooted compulsive behavior and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family systems. We have each experienced in our own ways the painful trauma of the emptiness of our childhood and relationships throughout our lives. We attempted to use others - our mates, friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value and well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods."

This was an eye opener for me. I grew up in a family with mental illness. My mom had schizophrenia. Chaotic and unpredictable behavior was my normal. Caretaking behavior was taught to me from an early age. I took responsibility for other people's feelings and behavior. If I was a better daughter, this wouldn't be happening. If she would just change, everything would be better.

I grew up and spent many years married to an older man with physical and emotional health issues. I stayed with him because he needed me. I did everything I could to heal him with my love in a vain effort to find someone who would love me unconditionally and never leave me. I tried to change him into the person I wanted him to be so my needs could be met. All the while, I was setting my needs aside to take care of him. My controlling behavior increased as quickly as my self-worth dropped.

The Welcome goes on to say, "Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence."

For some people this may mean an alcohol, food, work or gaming addiction. I realized recently that if I had grown up with the technology that is available today, I would have been considered a media addict. I grew up in the 70's and 80's so I remember escaping into the TV to be part of the Cunninghams, the Keatons, even the Huxtables. I wanted to be



in the mountains with Grizzly Adams or become super human like the Bionic Woman. As a kid, I watched an endless stream of shows in order to numb out or fantasize about a life where my mom didn't have mental illness and I wasn't afraid. Even now, I can still find myself avoiding feelings by binging on YouTube or Netflix. The thing is that while this may have helped me survive in my childhood, these and other dysfunctional tools now act to destroy my relationships. My co-dependent behaviors like control and avoidance, people-pleasing, manipulation, caretaking, fantasizing and more stop me from being my authentic self. They keep me isolated when what I really want is to connect. They invite others to reject, shame or express anger towards me.

As I have continued to grow and change in the program, I know a new freedom. The tools I have gained in CoDA have helped me understand the need for awareness, willingness and acceptance. The Twelve Steps in CoDA give me a path to follow when I am struggling with painful or confusing circumstances. I get to process what false beliefs lie under my feelings when I am triggered and work to replace those old beliefs with the truth. I have developed a trusting relationship with a power greater than myself so I can truly turn my will and life over. In CoDA, I practice with relationship tools like boundaries and have learned to trust those who are trustworthy. I can detach with love rather than seek to change the other person. I know that my power lies in managing my own thoughts, choices, behaviors and feelings. I get to be responsible for my stuff and let others be responsible for theirs. Instead of caretaking, I can be content to see others take care of themselves.

I find as I continue to attend meetings, work with co-sponsors and recovery friends and use the tools of the program, I see the promises manifesting in my life. The Welcome closes with this phrase, "No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. No longer do you need to rely on others as a power greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free."

To find a Co-Dependents Anonymous group near you in Minnesota, visit MinnCoDA.org. Submit your 1st Person story to phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com.

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from page 1

Brass Rings & Bologna: Gamblers' Delights, Delusions & Legacies

"Dad, stop!" I shouted. "Careful, sir," the attendants called, though their smiles hinted that they, like almost everyone who first met Dad, were taken in by his *joie de vivre*, his confidence that the next time a brass ring was held out, he would grab it. Then everything would be fine forever after.

But . . .

A tarnished underbelly belied Dad's charm. It was his absolute certainty that, this time, despite past evidence to the contrary, his gambling, his overreaching, his chasing would pay off. This time he'd hit the big one.

When I was growing up, this meant that, as he *promised*, our family would move from our declining, inner-city neighborhood to a four-bedroom colonial in the 'burbs. When he "borrowed" money I earned from babysitting or lawn-mowing, he would pay it back. When my mother challenged him for coming in late, smelling of stale cigar smoke from the gambling joints he frequented, he would refrain from threatening to "put her out on the street."

In other words, I was as delusional as he was.

I was in my forties before I could confront him about the effects of his gambling. That was long after I walked away from that house, that neighborhood, that city, though I was, and sometimes still am, hobbled by the shifting financial and emotional sands on which I was raised.

"I just hope you can forgive me," he said. The crack in his voice told me, for the first time—the only time, really—that he acknowledged there was something wrong with his gambling. I did forgive him, of course, at least enough so that, eventually, I was able to ask him how his gambling started. He was a kid, he said. A paper boy, with his first money of his own. What did he bet on back then? "Anything. Stickball. Cards. Dice. Anything."

His memories sounded innocent, recollections of simpler times. He was a boy, around age twelve, hanging out with his buddies, rolling dice and playing twenty-one on safe, tree-lined streets. Except that, as the stakes grew higher, he got stuck in a web of broken promises, fragmented relationships, and eventual destitution, all the while remaining confident that the next time the carousel spun around, he would reach out and, yes, that life-changing brass ring would be his.

"Get help." I didn't ask; I implored. "Go to Gamblers Anonymous."

He scoffed. "The fellas I know who go there? A few weeks later, they're back on the streets."

I remembered those streets, and the suspect storefronts on them, the ones in shady neighborhoods, with men in sunglasses out front, chomping on cigars, on the lookout left and right. Not unlike the "fellas" on *The Sopranos*. I also remember how, after telling my mother he was taking me to lunch on Saturday afternoons, Dad parked me in our unreliable Ford, alone, across the street from those places. ("Don't tell your mother!") "I was a little girl when you took me there. I was scared! You made me lie for you." There. I said it. Even though it took four decades, all those years of anger stuck in my throat spilled out. "I just hope you can forgive me."

For a time, releasing that anger—being honest—set me free. But sometimes that

scared little girl inside still searches for, and wants to be protected by, her Daddy.

○

A couple years ago, I went to a spiritual study group that planned to reflect on what's known as The Lord's Prayer. The first week, the first clause, was simply "Our Father." I sat in my chair, perplexed when each of the women before me talked about the bountiful provision of a loving God and how their earthly fathers (their Daddies) were proxies for that divine reliability and protection. When it came time for me to speak, I couldn't. I left the group and never went back.

Now I sometimes find myself wondering if the gambling and its effects really were that bad. After all, thanks to Mom, there was always nourishing food on the table. My sisters and I each went to college, something no one else on our street did. Am I grateful for those gifts? Yes! Still there are those nagging suspicions: *There isn't enough; you're not safe; you're not cared for; you're vulnerable, unprotected.* Am I the only one, even as an adult, who still sometimes limps around after being raised by a gambling addict? Am I crazy?

I asked a friend whose father was a lawyer, but whose repeated gambling losses caused him to move his family (without furniture) into "the projects" in a large northeastern city. "My mother," he told me, "used to send me to the corner deli to beg for food. I'd come home with enough bologna for her to fry for dinner, our one meal of the day." He remembered looking out his apartment window one day, seeing a man driving off with the family car. "Dad!" When he yelled out, his father's response was, "Don't tell your mother." Another secret and more shame, both of which contributed to my friend's eventual addictions to alcohol and cocaine.

He said he only gambled once, in a casino, on vacation. "I played 24, then 10. I won both times." He eventually lost all the money; but that brief brush with winning kicked off addiction's siren song: *I want more, more, more.* "I felt the same rush I used to get from coke."

That taught him two things. For the first time, he empathized with his father. "If he felt the way I did from gambling, I couldn't judge him anymore. We were both addicts. Same disease, different 'drugs.'" Second, he learned he could never gamble again. "I can't go there," he said. "Not if I want to stay alive." Still, those realizations didn't take away the shame of being bullied on the playground because his family didn't have enough to eat; nor did it tamp down the fear that things (like cars or furniture or hope) could literally disappear at any time.

I understood the shame and secrecy he lived with as a kid. As the paint on our house peeled and went unrepaired, I no longer invited friends over. And because I learned I couldn't tell my mother about my Saturday "lunches" with my father, I certainly couldn't tell anyone outside the house that what was going on inside was even more shameful.

○

Psychotherapist Alexandra Lonc, LCSW, MAC, CGAC, NBCCH, practices in Deerfield Beach, FL. She isn't surprised that my friend and I were similarly affected as children by our fathers' gambling, and that, as adults, vestiges of our experiences continue to influence us.



The only thing certain about life with a gambler, she says, is that it's "predictably unpredictable." That unreliability often fosters Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and potentially a host of fear-driven behaviors and attitudes. "It's not uncommon for those affected by another's gambling to doubt themselves and to ask questions like 'What did I do wrong? Am I crazy? Why didn't I see this coming?'"

In regard to that last question, Lonc says gambling is often more difficult to diagnose than other addictions. Unlike with, say, alcoholism, no glassy eyes, or word-slurring, or stumbling down stairs signals a problem. It's often not until drained savings accounts or missed mortgage payments or over-extended credit card statements arrive in the mail that the addiction becomes apparent. By then it's often not just a simple matter of recognizing

the issue and changing behavior on one's own; it's time to get help.

Dr. Ann Crawford, Professor of Psychology at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida, agrees that those suffering from gambling addiction experience the same shame and guilt as those with alcohol or drug addictions. "Living with the fear of loss and need for secrecy," she says, "can further lead the gambler to states of depression and anxiety; loss of trust of family and friends; and the additional stress of income and monetary loss."

So why do gamblers continue to risk losing life savings, college tuition, home equity, not to mention love and respect? The science that underlies gambling addiction, Crawford says, tells us that, "The human brain produces several neurotransmitters such as endorphins, epinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin when a person

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That faith, though, comes not from chasing seductive brass rings, but from claiming and maintaining connection to the Higher Father, the one who speaks in moments I least expect.

experiences either pain or pleasure. As the gambler's heart rate and blood pressure increase, alertness and wellbeing do too. The physical sensation as these chemicals course through the body can replicate the experience of a cocaine rush, or the calming effect of alcohol or sedatives."

In other words, Crawford says, "the gambler, through the continual experience of winning and losing, will eventually become addicted to the sensations produced by his own brain chemicals."

What types of help work best for addicted gamblers and those affected by them? Alexandra Lonc requests that all her patients who are gamblers go to Gamblers Anonymous. She encourages their significant others to try Gam-Anon. In conjunction with Twelve Step work, she frequently utilizes narrative therapy, which requires clients to write their histories in five-year increments, allowing them to see behavior and circumstantial changes over time. She also finds a combination Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Neuro Linguistic Programming and other trauma modalities to be helpful. "There's no one-size-fits-all treatment plan. The important thing is to provide a safe place for honest dialogue to begin and continue," she says.

Family members, as well as gamblers, may need to learn that access to money is the same thing as access to gambling. This means learning new ways of thinking about and spending money. "Most gam-

blers suffer from extreme cases of narcissistic 'big-shot-ism.' They balk at first at being given, say, a weekly allowance of twenty or fifty dollars. But over time, as their behavior changes, they learn the value of money and how to use it."

One day, not long after my experience with my spiritual studies group, I had a conversation with my father that didn't go the way I wanted. Despite his pension and social security, he was once again waiting for the first of the month to come so he could buy groceries. I spun into silent rage, dumbfounded that a man as smart and with-it as he was, even in his nineties, could end up in such a fix. When I hung up, still shaking, I prayed a few minutes to center myself. Then I turned from the phone to go to the kitchen. In that brief moment, I heard The Voice. The one deep inside. The one I heard on the day I was granted my own reprieve from addiction. "He's not your father," The Voice said. Of course, he's my father, I thought, until I realized that the messenger was the same provident father the women in my spiritual studies had spoken of, trusted, and relied on.

I knew that, as Dr. Crawford says, my father's addiction resulted from brain chemicals gone awry. But I hadn't yet surrendered to the fact that I continued to rely on my own ill-founded attitudes, behaviors and fears. Finally, I accepted that I couldn't change my father or our past, but I could change our present, *my* present, by

listening to and putting faith in The Voice of truth, forgiveness and provision.

Getting back to Joni Mitchell. She wrote that "we're captive on the carousel of time," that we can't return to the past, "... we can only look behind from where we came/And go round and round and round" in the circle game.

It's true that, even if we experience PTSD as a result of our reactions to gambling addiction, whether our own or someone else's, and feel as if we've fallen back in time, we can't actually return to and alter our childhoods, no matter how intensely our early experiences influence our adult perceptions and behavior. But we can get off the merry-go-round, memories that can spin thoughts like: *Am I crazy? What did I do wrong? There isn't enough.*

Indeed, to move ahead, we must look back—maybe using a form of narrative therapy Ms. Lonc employs, maybe sharing with a friend, as I did with mine. But we can't stay stuck there. And that means, for me at least, looking beyond the disease and reaching, stretching, confident that, yes, this time everything will be fine, in fact everything is fine, right here, right now, whatever distractions or delusions may try to shake that belief. That faith, though, comes not from chasing seductive brass rings, but from claiming and maintaining connection to the Higher Father, the one who speaks in moments I least expect.

Madeleine Parish writes frequently about health, wellness and spirituality. She also helps emerging and established writers bring their power to the page. Contact her at mppwriter@gmail.com.

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from page 1

The Faces of Gambling Recovery

When midnight arrived, Eddie entered the casino, driver's license in hand. Once inside, he went straight to the blackjack tables. As he placed his first bet on the table – two \$1 chips – he immediately felt the excitement. The thrill was instantaneous – and lasting. Eddie played blackjack through the night, not leaving the casino until after sunrise.

"I fell in love when I got there and fell deeper in love with every bet," says Eddie. "I won \$97 that first night and thought I could come back and win \$100 every night."

Eddie visited the casino throughout the summer, as well as the next summer, "winning more money than I'd ever made in my life." He later dropped out of college so he could resume gambling, thinking it was the way for him to make money.

Instead, he began to lose money consistently. "I was financially destroyed," recalls Eddie, now 27. "I began to write bad checks, lie and steal ... I'd do anything I could do to get gambling money."

Still, he was able to conceal the extent of his gambling. "While everyone knew that I gambled," says Eddie, "they had no idea how much I bet, how long I spent at the casino, and how often I went." Eddie would gamble for two days nonstop, go home to sleep, and then return to the casino for another day or two. "I binge gambled very frequently," says Eddie.

Eventually, Eddie's family staged an intervention and he ultimately received inpatient treatment. "The concept of an illness called compulsive gambling – let alone that it was something I had – was something I'd never heard of."

"I kept trying to convince myself that I was not a compulsive gambler even though I had all the symptoms. Eventually though, I began to gradually accept that gambling was causing so many of the problems in my life."

Eddie has not gambled since beginning treatment and considers the three crazed years of gambling as "back then" – almost a lifetime ago. He is immensely grateful that he learned about his illness – and began to deal with it – at such an early age. "A lot of people I see in the 12-step programs are in their 40s and 50s. If I were dealing with this for 20 years, I'm pretty sure it would have killed me."

Like many other gambling addicts, I was literally on the brink of suicide before I was ready for change.

If I wasn't gambling, I was drinking. My addiction had taken total control of my life. One night after being in the bar, I came home to find that I just couldn't live this way any longer. I called a friend, told her I didn't want to live any more, and said I was going to take my own life. She told me to hold on, and within five minutes she arrived at my house. She took me to a friend's house and let me cry all night.

The next day I made a call to my old counselor from an outpatient treatment group. She asked me a single question: "Have you had enough?" I had. She told me that I had to call Vanguard. They wouldn't take me unless I went for a Rule 25 alcohol assessment and agreed to inpatient CD treatment as well. I went in on September 18, 2002, and have not gambled or drank since.

Of course it was a long road that took me to that fateful day. My mother took me to play Bingo at age 12. In fact, both of my parents were gamblers and alcoholics, so I learned early.

After a time, I began to play Bingo three to four times a week and knew I had a problem. I lied to a credit union to get money I couldn't pay back, borrowed money from friends and couldn't pay my bills. I did this over and over.

When I wasn't gambling, I was drinking. I went to outpatient treatment off and on for both my addictions for several years, but that never worked for me. I stayed clean and sober for months at a time but relapsed. After winning a \$2,500 jackpot, the first big money I'd ever won, I spent every penny to continue gambling. This started an endless search for money that eventually led to the day I was ready to end my life.

It's been more than 10 years since I've been in a better place. I've been a keynote speaker at the Minnesota Gamblers Anonymous (GA) conference. I am the trustee of my area and represent some of the finest people I know. I talk about gambling issues and how they affect our area. This is something I could never have dreamed of. I started my own business in 2007 and it is thriving. I got remarried and have a wonderful relationship with my children.

I can't believe how different my life is now. It is so much better. I never want to go back to the way things were. I don't have to, as long as I choose not to gamble, one day at a time.

Looking back on it, I guess it's not surprising that I developed a gambling problem.

I had a risk-taking personality and was exposed to various forms of gambling as early as age 9. My father was a bookie and sold football tickets. I'd spend my allowance and purchase tickets from him.

I became insanely addicted to gambling in my early twenties. I was working at a charity bingo hall when casinos opened in the '80s, and a lot of us would go to the casinos after work.

One night in the mid '90s, I had a dream that I put \$20 in a slot machine and won a huge jackpot. Shortly after that dream, I went to the casino, put \$20 in the slot machine and won \$15,000.

Compared to blackjack, it was a bigger, faster win, and I liked that I could isolate myself more. I kept chasing that feeling of the huge win.

Although I had a business that was financially successful, I still ran out of money. After selling stolen goods to cover losses, I ended up in prison.

After prison, I was released to a halfway house, where I stayed for six weeks before I had to move out. I had nothing but a car. I'd lost a beautiful home, a great marriage, and had never previously want-



ed for anything. But I was angry, and the first thing I did was drive straight to Mystic Lake Casino.

Less than nine months later, I was back in prison for violating probation by gambling at casinos. I was sentenced to 15 months in a higher security prison. But this time it was different.

Something clicked the day I was shackled off to jail and I had a spiritual shift. I decided that I would never gamble again, no matter what.

My life is so much better and calmer now. I meditate every morning and am very involved in GA meetings. I listen to others and share my story whenever I can. I am available to my family and my friends, some of whom have gone through recovery with me.

It means a lot to me to be very honest about this disease and what it's done to me. A lot of things about gambling made me feel like the scum of the earth. It was much worse than anything I felt as an alcohol and drug addict.

I focus on my recovery at every opportunity. I hope to make a difference to others who similarly never expected they would go through the horrible things we do as gambling addicts.

These are just a few stories of gambling addiction. While each situation and personal struggle is different, the common thread is that treatment works and recovery is possible. In Minnesota, gambling treatment is provided at no cost by state-certified counselors.

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month. If you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, please contact the Minnesota Problem Gambling Helpline at (800) 333-4673 or visit NorthstarProblemGambling.org. Gambling treatment works and is available at no cost for individuals and families in Minnesota.

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GAMBLING ADDICTION

Finally Out of the Shadows

by Molly B. Gilbert

When we talk about co-occurring disorders, we usually have some sort of mental health issue to consider with those of us in recovery. After all, many of us were “out there” self-medicating; for undiagnosed (or diagnosed) depression, trauma, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and a myriad of other maladies that we either didn’t have the knowledge of or were in denial over. Many of us thought this was “just the way we were.” Didn’t everyone dread waking up and facing the next day? Didn’t everyone have a family system with alcoholism running back generations? (I know, Mom, except for your side. It was all Dad’s fault! ☺) Didn’t everyone struggle with performing the most basic of tasks and carrying through with responsibilities?

“When I was in treatment for compulsive gambling, I remember my counselor stopping me in my tracks one day with the questions: “When are you going to stop running?” It is a question of deep importance for a compulsive gambler.” RECOVERING GAMBLER

Many addicts/alcoholics in early recovery find themselves transferring addictions - to food, exercise, relationships, shopping and... gambling; the latter being one of the well-kept secrets of many in recovery from drug/alcohol addiction. Most treatment centers have clients who come in with a co-occurring gambling problem, but clinicians often find that clients need to get stable medically and emotionally before they can start working on their addictions. After all, as alluded to previously, that’s partly or wholly WHY they are addicted – self-medicating – the street version. As a result, most treatment centers don’t tend to address problem gambling, as they are understandably focused on stabilization and sobriety – with the thought being once they get their addiction to substances under control, other addictions can then be addressed. But then the client runs out of time and/or funding. So maybe they will deal with it in their aftercare program? Most likely not.

Problem gambling, or a gambling disorder, is defined as “persistent and recurrent gambling behavior that disrupts personal, family, or vocational pursuits.”* People with a gambling disorder can’t seem to quit even though they want to – and even when they’re experiencing significant, negative consequences. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, three to four percent of the adult population in the U.S. struggle with varying degrees of problem gambling.

“Gambling has changed significantly over the past several years. It’s more accessible than ever, including online, and comes in an almost limitless number of forms. It continues to be extensively marketed and attracts a wide range of par-

ticipants. It’s a proven fact that addiction causes a rewiring of the neural circuits of the brain. This occurs whether the addiction is related to alcohol, drugs, gambling or something else. Because each of these addictions creates a similar effect on the brain, it’s not uncommon for one in recovery to ‘switch’ addictions. For this reason, people recovering from alcohol or drug addictions are at great risk for developing an addiction to gambling.” *

“I didn’t think I could get addicted to gambling. I’m a recovering alcoholic, and I thought I would recognize the signs.” A 38-YEAR-OLD HELPLINE CALLER**

WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES AN ADDICTION

While gambling provides a source of enjoyable entertainment for many people in recovery, one in three experience problems that significantly affect their lives. Problem gambling, or addictive gambling, is similar to other addictions in that:

- It is a preoccupation with obtaining money or experiencing the “high” of winning.
- Withdrawal, restlessness or irritability are characteristics of someone attempting to stop.
- Repeated efforts to cut down or stop are unsuccessful, and
- It continues despite social, legal or occupational consequences.”*


PROBLEM GAMBLING IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER ADDICTIONS IN THAT

- It is much more difficult to detect than alcoholism or drug use.
- The addiction progresses very quickly after a big win.
- Gamblers tend to feel significantly more shame, guilt or depression, and are more likely to attempt suicide than those with other addictions.

“This is an addictive disorder that can destroy lives, threaten family relationships and cause financial devastation. It’s not always well understood and is often kept hidden as a family secret. Thousands of individuals and families struggle with it daily. A gambling addiction, like an addiction to drugs and alcohol, is a very real disease. A professional evaluation or assessment is needed to make a formal diagnosis of the addiction.” **

*Above quotes from Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance
**Above quotes from Project Turnabout

Molly B. Gilbert, M.Ed, is the Director of Business Development at Vinland National Center in Loretto, MN.



Resources for Problem Gambling

1-800-333-HOPE	Call or text 1.800.333.HOPE, a 24 hour Problem Gambling helpline that is answered 7 days per week. You can also chat at ncpgambling.org/chat
MN Department of Human Services (DHS)	getgamblinghelp.com
Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance	northstarproblemgambling.org or info@northstarproblemgambling.org
Project Turnabout Vanguard	Residential gambling addiction program: 320.564.4011 in Granite Falls, MN. projectturnabout.org
Vinland National Center's Outpatient Problem Gambling Program	763.479.4881 675 Stinson Blvd. Minneapolis, MN. vinlandcenter.org
National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG)	The national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families: ncpgambling.org
Gamblers Anonymous	gamblersanonymous.org
Gambler Healing	12-step online treatment program gamblerhealing.com



Tuesday, March 17, 2020 is...

RECOVERY DAY at the CAPITOL

INFORMATION:
www.MinnesotaRecovery.org/Events/2020-RDC/

9:30-11:30 A.M. AT THE MINNESOTA STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA

Our message is simple:
RECOVERY WORKS!

Join as we rally to show Minnesota that recovery is possible and that people do recover from substance use disorder every day!

MINNESOTA RECOVERY CONNECTION
www.minnesotarecovery.org

Addiction Trusts by Rachel T. Schromen

My path in recovery began when I was starting my third year in law school. As luck (and my higher power) would have it, I was at William Mitchell College of Law, which sits in the center of a thriving recovery community in St. Paul. I was fortunate to find myself in a setting and community supportive of my recovery and, subsequently, I have remained here. Being in a community where recovery is prevalent allows me to open up about being a woman in long-term recovery – both personally and professionally.

As an estate planning attorney who is very open about being in long-term recovery, I frequently meet with families impacted by substance use disorder. Like many of us in recovery, they want to work with a professional who understands recovery – the family dynamic that often exists, the ups and downs of recovery, and the unique concerns and challenges that accompany substance use disorder. It has become a passion of mine to work with these families and serve them in a manner in which they often do not find with other estate planning attorneys.

Over the last 10 years, awareness of substance abuse has been amplified. In 2018, 19.3 million people of ages 18 and older had a substance use disorder, with 7.4 million using illicit drugs, and 14.4 million struggling with alcohol abuse. While there is still work to be done to reduce stigma, our society is becoming more conscious that addiction is a chronic disease. Like many other chronic illnesses, it is not uncommon for relapse to be a part of recovery among those with substance use disorder. About 40-60% of individuals in recovery experience relapse, which is similar to the relapse rate of asthma and hypertension.

When I work with clients who have a loved one impacted by substance use disorder, a common concern is if the individual has unlimited access to their inheritance. Not only could these assets support their addiction, but it could lead them down an even darker path. A colleague of mine experienced this firsthand. Her mother passed away and left assets to her and her brother. Her brother was active in his disease when his mother passed away and was found deceased in a hotel room a few months after receiving his inheritance.

With intentional and well-drafted estate planning, it is entirely possible to leave assets to an individual in a manner that supports their recovery and does not enable their use. One way to ensure that a child or family member is still taken care of in this manner, is to create an incentive trust, or in this context, an addiction trust. What individuals and families are able to do is encapsulate the boundaries and support systems they have in place and pass it on to continue when they pass away, and to continue in future generations. When creating an addiction trust, one has the ability to construct a limiting inheritance, without completely disinheriting the child.

When creating an addiction trust, those contributing should think about the end goal. Does the trust want to focus on rehabilitation of the individual and/or their continued recovery? Does the trust want to fund treatment and medical bills, or distribute a monthly allowance to provide basic necessities for the individual so long as they are active in their recovery?

I generally start by asking clients about the ways which they support (financially or otherwise) their loved one when they are active in their recovery and/or when they are active in their disease. For example, some families allow the trust to pay for items or make distributions generously when the beneficiary is active in re-

Not only could these assets support their addiction, but it could lead them down an even darker path.

covery, but only want the trust to pay directly for recovery services should the individual experience a relapse.

There are many options that exist for this type of planning. Such examples of trust provisions, or goals, could be (but are not limited to) any of the following:

- Outright distribution of the assets once the individual has been sober/in recovery for a certain period of time.
- Requiring or allowing random drug tests and/or UA's to determine their status in recovery prior to making distribution.
- Requiring or encouraging continuous therapy or support groups (such as AA or NA).
- Limiting amount to be distributed to support/encourage the beneficiary in employment and recovery.
- Holding the assets in trust for the lifetime of the beneficiary.

With this type of trust planning, it is important that the planning is thorough and well drafted. The trust document should not only lay out the requirements and guidelines but should also include powers and processes for the Trustee(s) to ensure it is possible to administer. It is also important to choose who will act as Trustee carefully. It may be ideal to name a professional/corporate Trustee, rather than a family member. Working with an experienced estate planning attorney, who also understand substance use disorder and recovery, can empower families to take this intentional and beneficial approach to planning.

I was recently speaking to a fellow traveler in recovery and explaining the trust planning that I do in this regard and he said, "My recovery is strong right now, but I can't imagine how hard it will be when I lose a parent. I hope I would lean into my program, but you just never know. I am going to tell my parents about some of this!" I was impressed by his level of self-awareness and delighted to realize that individuals personally impacted by substance use disorder also appreciate the value of this type of planning.

Along with serving families directly in my practice, I also work diligently to share this information within the recovery community. It is not uncommon that when I mentioned or discuss addiction trust planning, whether it be to potential clients or other attorneys, they have not heard about this comprehensive approach to planning for families impacted by substances use disorder. I hope this information will help support individuals, and their families, on their path in recovery.

Rachel T. Schromen is an estate planning attorney and owner of Schromen Law, LLC in St. Paul, MN (www.schromenlaw.com). She has been named a Top Three Best Rated Estate Planning Attorney in St. Paul annually since 2018 and voted Favorite Estate Planner by Women's Press Magazine annually since 2017. Ms. Schromen speaks frequently on the topic of Addiction Trust Planning, including providing training on the topic to attorneys in the Metro Area.



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Mathew Meyers, MA, LMFT

Mathew is a Therapist and Owner of Traverse Counseling & Consulting in St. Louis Park, MN.

Mathew has a background in youth and family ministry and is also a trainer and associate with Peer Ministry Leadership training faith communities all over the nation in "Good Samaritan Leadership".

Mathew is passionate about relationships and has a desire to help couples redesign their relationship so it suits both partners, improve communication and understanding for parents and children, and support parents in reasserting their parental authority when feeling as though they have lost control of their family.

Mathew also writes a blog, Relationships that Heal, for professional and non-professional helpers and caregivers.

Additional Specialties: Video Gaming Addiction, Discernment Counseling, Marriage Counseling, Reunification, Co-Parenting, Parent Coaching

COMPULSIVE TECHNOLOGY USE

Ask the Expert

We'll feature an expert in the mental health and/or substance use disorder fields to answer questions

Q What is "Compulsive Technology Use?"

Think of Compulsive Technology Use like an itch that doesn't go away. You know that scratching and scratching will only make things worse, but it feels like you have to scratch. For people who use technology compulsively, they can feel like they have no power to stop. This can occur in the car, at bedtime, in social situations, in ways that prevent them from engaging in other real-world activities.

Q What are some signs that digital behaviors (such as being on social media, gaming, or internet use) have become problematic?

An early sign of problematic usage is staying up late at night scrolling, gaming, and/or texting. This is a good indication of an unhealthy relationship.

Another clear sign of problematic usage is when people get behind with real-world obligations (work and school) and continue to prioritize video games, Netflix, and social media over making a plan to get caught up.

Q Is Compulsive Technology Use considered to be a recognized disorder or an addiction?

Korea, Japan and China all recognize internet gaming addiction as a disorder. The World Health Organization also has designated it as such. In the United States, our mental health community has not yet officially recognized this as a disorder. However, there are some treatment centers and providers that have been working to develop ways to support and treat people that struggle with this issue.

Q Are some people at a higher risk for developing compulsive behaviors when using technology? (i.e. previously diagnosed mental health and/or substance use disorders, someone who works with technology/media all day, etc.?)

I believe people with anxiety, especially social anxiety, are at risk for leaning on technology in ways that can become very problematic. Because the digital world is so ordered and predictable in many respects, I believe people on the Autism Spectrum are vulnerable to excessive use.

If we don't have myriad ways to express and manage stress/discomfort, sadness, anger, feeling discouraged, fearful, inadequate, unloved, embarrassed and lonely we are susceptible to using anything that helps comfort us when we feel these difficult feelings. Technology is a very easy tool to "medicate" many of these difficult feelings.

Q What are some of the current interventions and treatments available for people who identify as having problems with Compulsive Technology Use?

Find a therapist. Find a group, (Olganon.org or CGAA.info). Talk to your family.

What I find is that most of the time it is loved ones who notice the problematic use. The first intervention is often getting family members, significant others, and close friends, aligned around how to support and challenge their loved one. Without loved ones being aligned change can be very difficult. Recovery with this issue is like many issues; it impacts, and has impacted, the family. Often, the family

has organized itself around this behavior. For loved ones, find a therapist that can assist you in understanding this issue and support you in knowing how to respond to support and challenge your loved one to consider a way of being in the world that could be more life-giving.

Q What are some actions that a family member or friend can take if they are concerned about their loved one's social media, gaming, or internet use?

Go to Olganon.org. Share your concerns with your loved one (but not by telling them that they are "addicted"). Let them know that you care about them and you miss them. You are sad that you are not able to connect with them and feel as though the screen is an impediment to connecting with them more deeply. Do NOT wait for them to get treatment! You can take action, even if they are not ready to do so. Find a therapist. Make sure to contact one who understands this particular issue.

Thank you to Carolyn Boroughs for helping to fasciliate this Q&A.

If you have a question for the experts, or you are interested in being featured, please email phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. Experts have not been compensated for their advice.

Road to Forgiveness *by Connie Anderson*

*My conscience and I
Are taking a road trip
To visit my past,
Face to face.*

*During my many years
Of drinking and more drinking
My diluted brain
Said and did horrible things.*

*Now I am off to say,
"I am so, so, so sorry..."
for what I did and didn't do,
and did and didn't say."*

*I cannot count the many tears
I've made others shed...
But the scenes still bounce around
In my now-clear and embarrassed head.*

*First stop on the road trip
To seeking true forgiveness
Is the mother of our children,
My patient and tolerant ex-wife.*

*She received me warmly,
Updated me on her new life,
Listened to my apology
And smiled and waved as I drove away.*

*Day Two is my older son,
Now grown and a dad himself.
I had so very much to say...
And I said it this day.*

*Tears rolled down our faces—
Both father and son—
As he accepted my apologies
And never pushed the "guilt" button.*

*Several hours' drive later,
I reached my brother's home.
Expecting me, his open-arm welcome
Said, "I know..." and I was forgiven.*

*Each night I look in the mirror
And wonder why I am so lucky...
To be alive
To be loved,
To be forgiven,
To be clean and sober,
And to be happy in my new life.*

John H. Driggs LICSW Psychotherapist

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- Parent/Child Consultation
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- Men's Therapy Groups

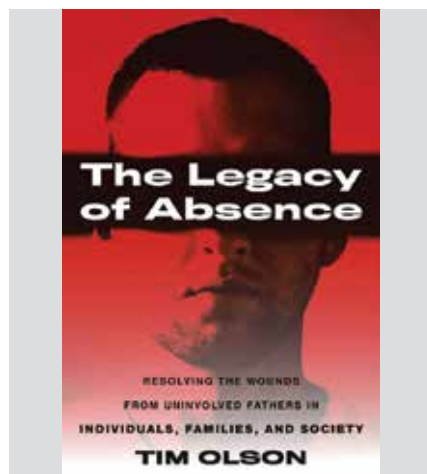
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Books



The Legacy of Absence

Resolving the Wounds From Uninvolved Fathers in Individuals, Families, and Society

By Tim Olson

SELF-PUBLISHED / BOOKBABY

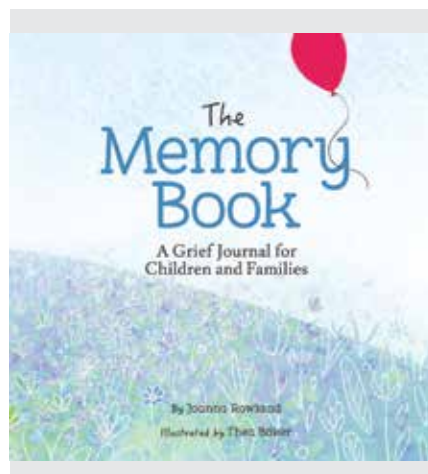
Imagine a son or daughter who realizes dad has chosen work, sports, or other addictions instead of them. This is abandonment—and the consequences will leave a negative life-long legacy. But there is a solution but it's not an easy road.

The Legacy of Absence explores the ways in which involvement and reconciliation can heal the wounds created by an absent father, and turn even a physically absent father into one who is involved with all aspects of his child's life.

Olson will help readers discover:

- the sources of anger, not just how to manage it
- the 4 types of fathers
- how a home without an involved father typically results in poorer education, health, financial security, and many more affecting the spouse and children
- how good or bad fathering is learned primarily by observing our own fathers
- what the father wound is and how everyone who has a father gets it

An uninvolved father may not have chosen his child, but it is never too late for change. *The Legacy of Absence* can help.



The Memory Book

A Grief Journal for Children and Families

By Joanna Rowland

BEAMING BOOKS

In a follow-up to her book, *The Memory Box: A Book About Grief*, kindergarten teacher and author, Joanna Rowland, is offering another resource to help kids heal while honoring a loved one. With *The Memory Book: A Grief Journal for Children and Families*, Rowland has created a grief journal to help readers put her methods into practice.

The Memory Book helps grieving families process their emotions together by remembering their lost loved one and creating their own memory album full of photos and keepsakes of the person they lost. With gentle prompts and ideas for journaling, drawing, and talking through grief, this journal will bring comfort in the midst of loss and be a keepsake for families for years to come.

"Grief is hard. Everyone has his or her journey with it. Allow yourself to grieve however you need to. There is no right or wrong way. There are support groups out there and other resources to help. Grief can be hard to communicate," says Rowland.

For ages 3.-8, 64 pages.



Start Here

A Parent's Guide to Helping Children and Teens Through Mental Health Challenges

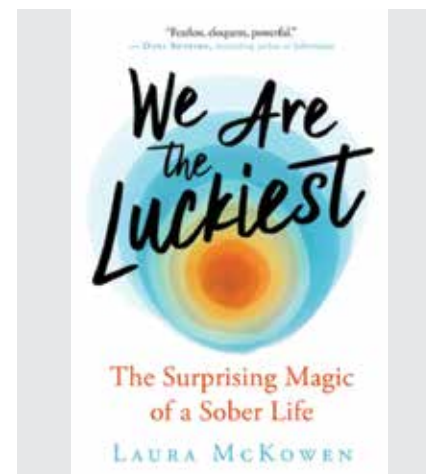
By Pier Bryden, M.D. and Peter Szatmari, M.D.

SIMON & SCHUSTER

From two of the top child and adolescent psychiatrists at The Hospital for Sick Children comes an accessible guide to common mental health struggles, such as anxiety and depression, for any parent wondering how to help their child.

Is my child okay? Is she eating and sleeping enough? Is he hanging out with the right people? Should I be worried that she spends all her time in her room? Is this just a phase? Or a sign of something serious?

As parents, we worry about our children—about their physical health, performance at school, the types of friends they have, and, of course, their mental health. Every day seems to bring new and expanding issues and disorders and troubling statistics about the rise of mental illness in children and teens. It's usually obvious what to do for physical injuries like broken bones, but when it comes to our children's mental health, the answers are much less clear, and sometimes even contradictory.



We Are the Luckiest

The Surprising Magic of a Sober Life

By Laura McKowen


NEW WORLD LIBRARY

What could possibly be "lucky" about addiction? Absolutely nothing, thought Laura McKowen when drinking brought her to her knees. As she puts it, she "kicked and screamed . . . wishing for something — anything — else" to be her issue. The people who got to drink normally, she thought, were so lucky.


But in the midst of early sobriety, when no longer able to anesthetize her pain and anxiety, she realized that she was actually the lucky one. Lucky to feel her feelings, live honestly, really be with her daughter, change her legacy. She recognized that "those of us who answer the invitation to wake up, whatever our invitation, are really the luckiest of all."

Here, in straight-talking chapters filled with personal stories, McKowen addresses issues such as facing facts, the question of AA, and other people's drinking. Without sugarcoating the struggles of sobriety, she relentlessly emphasizes the many blessings of an honest life, one without secrets and debilitating shame.

The synopsis of these books were taken from the publishers or authors. If you have a book you'd like featured or have an old favorite you'd like to share with others, please contact us at phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com.



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FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA



New MN Study Reveals Just How Common Problem Gambling Is

Keith was gambling every night. He pulled away from his family, making excuses for being gone, telling lies about where the money was going. “I didn’t get along with anyone, even my wife, Karen. I just figured my world was falling apart and she’d be better off without me,” Keith said.

Gambling problems are real. For most people who enjoy gambling, it is an activity regarded as harmless entertainment. But when someone becomes obsessed with gambling, chasing more wins and hiding severe losses, they may have a gambling disorder.

Problem gambling can affect people of all ages, genders and incomes, as well as all cultures and ethnicities. If not addressed, problem gambling can lead to gambling disorder, which is characterized by:

- A need to gamble greater amounts to reach the desired excitement;
- Frequent preoccupation with gambling;
- A need to bet more money more frequently;
- Restlessness or irritability when trying to cut down or stop gambling;
- An inability to stop gambling despite serious negative consequences, such as loss of significant relationships, job, educational or career opportunity.

But how common is gambling? And perhaps more importantly, how common is problem gambling?

It has been 25 years since the last problem gambling study. Now we have a much better idea. A new study, “Gambling in Minnesota: A Study of Participation, Attitudes, and the Prevalence of Problem Gambling,” provides a glimpse into how people gamble and how often, the incidence of problem gambling, and attitudes toward gambling and treatment.

The report is well timed, given that March is National Problem Gambling Awareness Month. Now in its 15th year, Problem Gambling Awareness Month is helping to raise awareness of the prevention, treatment and recovery services available for those adversely affected by gambling. That March is National Problem Gambling Awareness Month is no coincidence. “March Madness” leads to an estimated \$10 billion in bets placed on the NCAA basketball championship games.

The study from Wilder Research and commissioned by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, was done through a random survey of 35,000 households across Minnesota in the spring of 2019. It found that:

- In the past year, 67% of adults in Minnesota participated in some type of gambling activity;
- 1.3% of adults in Minnesota are problem gamblers, which represents over 56,000 adults;
- When considering those at-risk for problem gambling as well, there are over 217,000 adults who may need,

or are close to needing, treatment for problem gambling;

- Among all adults who ever thought they might have a gambling problem, only 14% wanted help or thought about getting help in the past year;
- 22% of Minnesotans have been negatively affected by the gambling behaviors of a friend, family member, or coworker;
- Problem gambling is more prevalent among lower income households who can least afford it.

As Keith’s gambling problem got worse, Karen could see the change in him. “Keith turned into a person that I didn’t like and I didn’t know. I couldn’t talk to him,” she said.

“When you’re in the midst of your gambling addiction, you’re not thinking about asking for help because you think you have everybody fooled,” Keith said. “You think no one knows you have a problem. In actuality, everybody knew but me.”

Eventually, Keith got help. “It wasn’t until somebody asked me if I thought I had a gambling problem that I even began to think about dealing with it,” Keith added.

We are all well aware of the array of gambling opportunities available to Minnesotans, including purchasing lottery tickets, playing electronic or table games at casinos, betting on horse races, purchasing pull tabs, buying raffle tickets, and playing bingo, among others. We need to make sure that people are also aware of the array of services that are

available should their gambling get out of control.

Which brings us to the most important thing to know about problem gambling: people can and do recover.

Karen said, “Now, he’s a different person. He’s calm, happy and content.”

Added Keith, “Now, I try to give others a piece of my story so they realize it happens to everybody.”

Wondering if you or someone you care about has a gambling problem? You can find a wealth of resources, including a self-assessment, at getgamblinghelp.com. That’s where you can find Keith and Karen’s story, and more stories about people who turned their gambling disorder around.

But it all starts by getting help. Call 800-333-HOPE for free, confidential information and referral to services in your area, or Text HOPE to 61222 and chat with an experienced professional.

Knowledge is power, and armed with a better understanding of the adverse effects of gambling on too many Minnesotans, we can make sure people have the resources they need to get a handle on their gambling. Armed with an understanding of the dangers of problem gambling, we can start to make changes in our lives. And armed with the knowledge that people can and do recover, we can reach out for the help we need.

From the State of Minnesota is provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Free Without Charge Zip Dawb (Hmong) Unpaid On The House Courtesy Freebie Gratuite (French) Chargeless At No Cost Kostenlos (German) Gratuity Free Zippo Zero No Catch Free Of Charge Nothing Ilmaiseksi (Finnish) Complimentary

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For The Asking Miễn Phí (Vietnamese) Costless

No matter how you say it, treatment for gambling addiction is available **At No Cost** to gamblers and their families in Minnesota.

Northstar Alliance

NORTHSTAR PROBLEM GAMBLING ALLIANCE

Produced through a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services

Attend the Minnesota Conference on Problem Gambling 2020 Vision A Fresh Look at Problem Gambling April 30 - May 1, 2020

Call 1-800-333-4673 (HOPE) or Visit NorthstarProblemGambling.org

The Phoenix Spirit

from page 1

Overcoming Grandiosity in Recovery

When grandiosity is not something we grow out of, it becomes a defense against the disowned, hated parts of ourselves. It interferes with our ability to receive love from and give love to others. It gets in the way of our having compassion for others and ourselves.

People in recovery who are grandiose never get the full benefit of peer relationships and have much higher risk of losing sobriety. It is a way of staying in permanent isolation with our addict self as a “using” buddy. People with this problem are living in solitary confinement. They need to be kindly challenged and held in our compassion. They also ought to be approached carefully as they are experts at manipulating others and sucking them dry. Most of us dislike people who are above others.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE GRANDIOSITY

Most of the time it’s easy to see self-inflation when it occurs in people. Generally, most of us dislike people who are know-it-all’s, are exclusively self-promoting or see their way as the only way to see things, or continually one-up others on what they’ve accomplished or which vacations they’ve taken. More subtle clues of this difficulty include:

- doing all the talking and never asking others what their experiences are
- continually bragging or fantasizing about imagined personal successes
- chronic lying or omitting of the whole truth
- exaggeration of personal accomplishments
- displays of indignation and verbal abuse when confronted with the truth
- casting a spell on admiring others
- excessive deference and oblivious fawning reactions by collaterals
- inability to be humble, like others and be ordinary
- feeling that they have some special gift and are the answer to everyone’s prayers
- unwillingness to admit fault or apologize for any wrongs committed
- others feel demeaned in their presence.

You know tonight is my lucky night. I can feel it in my bones! Let’s go to the casino after our meeting tonight. I’m gonna hit it big. Come with me. Some of us just have it. Some of us don’t. I’ll show you how to do it.

You’re just lying to yourself all over again. Look I’ve been in the program for over 30 years and I can spot a liar from 40 yards away. When are you going to get real with your recovery?! If you’re not going to walk the walk, don’t talk the talk. I know more about you than you do about yourself. I know exactly what you need. So, give it up fellow!

SOCIAL EPIDEMIC OF GRANDIOSITY

Part of the reason we don’t see our own self-exaggerations is because our culture is swimming in narcissism. Too many of us are taking selfies and trying to be stars in some pathetic way. Being self-preoccupied seems normal. We don’t see ourselves enough from other people’s point of view and we glamorize stardom. We look down on leading a stable ordinary life or having a job with less social status. We are more

interested in self-promotion than in enjoying the actual scenery of life and being with others in real time. Some of us would rather live in a world of make-believe and instantaneous screen time of social media, just to have some quick thrills. Unfortunately, such joys are short-lived and rather shallow. Too many of us have grown up with emotional deprivation and don’t know what we are really missing or how to get it. We opt to live in a two-dimensional world where only appearances matter. We may not realize that our own grandiosity is actually perpetuating the emotional loneliness of our youth and making us depressed.

The ordinary and profound fellowship of a good 12-Step group may seem on the surface rather uninspiring and threatening to us. Especially when people are admitting their own failings and lack social status. Paradoxically it is in the accepting of our own ordinariness and failings, and sharing them with concerned others, that our life opens up to a whole new vista of deep meaning and profound fellowship. Being ordinary with others is a “crazy” way to find fellowship, recovery and happiness. It puts us outside the box in a rather magical way. It works.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF SELF-INFLATION

Some of us have a genetic predisposition to bragging, self-promotion and charm, all of which increase our risk for this disorder, especially when coupled with low self-esteem. Others of us have had some outstanding real success in life but for lack of self-confidence have gotten lost in the false identity of stardom, which becomes our prison. We have forgotten our humble roots and all the people who have contributed to our success. Some of us are so isolated in life that we take a “sour grapes” attitude of pretending that we don’t need anyone else. We become self-preoccupied in a culturally sanctioned way. Others of us have never had anything bad happen to us in life and we feel we can walk on water. Generally, the roots of grandiosity originate in a childhood where we were either emotionally ignored or continuously over praised by parents even when such adulation wasn’t justified. The self-esteem movement in this country has produced more adults who over rate their worth and live exclusively for adulation from others. Children who are over protected, never expected to behave or contribute to others because they are fragile or special, are likely candidates for grandiosity.

GRANDIOSITY’S TWIN SIBLING: SELF-DEVALUATION

Deflation is the other side of inflation. It’s another way we hide from ourselves. It looks like the twin sister or twin brother of grandiosity. When we say, “I can’t do anything right” or “I will never be able to do what you do” we are self-devaluing. It’s really an indirect way of bragging how messed up we are. All the pity from others will not compensate us enough to offset running ourselves down. Perhaps we have learned this pattern by being around a grandiose person too much. We make excuses for our self by mistakenly believing we are not good enough for success and don’t need to try to succeed. Some of us can be quite grandiose in blaming our self for all the failings in our loved ones. We really are not all that important in other people’s failings. They are.

THE FOLLY OF HERO WORSHIPPING

Sheldon Kopp, a famous psychoanalyst and writer, once took a photo of a man sitting naked on a toilet. Under the photo he wrote the caption, “There are no great men.” It is startling for me to see just how prone we are as a society to idealize people around us and exaggerate what they’ve accomplished even when they haven’t delivered on the goods. Pro-athletes get paid obscene bonuses at the onset of their careers and often don’t pan out in the long run. Music heroes are said to be legendary, but their music lacks any depth and is easily forgotten after they pass from public view. Our own children are treated like little geniuses when in reality they are only “pretty good” and not particularly unique in their accomplishments. Our society relishes making people special when actually we are all pretty ordinary. Clearly there is nothing wrong about recognizing true accomplishments in any of us. But we are all not heroes. We are all fallible human beings having our moment of glory. If anything is heroic in us it is the fact that we care about others, have good character and are realistic enough to know we are not heroes. When we worship heroes, we put ourselves down, we lose touch with reality and we do no favors to people who do good things. True heroes already know what they’ve accomplished and don’t need adulation from others. That’s why policemen and firemen after saving people’s lives say, “We are not heroes. We are just doing our job.”

BEING LESS GRANDIOSE

Having a less exaggerated identity can be quite a project even when it is attainable. If you’re questioning your own possible lack of humility, look within and ask

trusted others if you are coming across as all that important. Perhaps you dominate conversations, don’t listen to what others are saying, see no need to show your vulnerability, prefer not getting help from others, are too concerned about appearances or have a habit of telling little white lies to promote yourself. Take the risk of seeing how others see you, particularly if they are honest and unbiased. Group settings or a relationship with a trusted professional may be great for getting an accurate view of yourself. You may get deflated and discouraged by what you hear but having an accurate picture of yourself will allow you to work on your shortcomings. Embrace the truth and it will set you free.

You may be surprised that you don’t need to be a hero to be genuinely loved and that you are already good enough and don’t need to brag. The greatest gift of losing grandiosity is making genuine intimate relationships with others that last a lifetime and accepting yourself as you already are.

If you’re good at something, say nothing. Afterall, what needs to be said? Besides, what you’ve accomplished is mostly because you are standing on the shoulders of people who were bigger than you. Be a bright speck in the universe but realize you are only a speck in the bigger scheme of things. Study astronomy and you will see just how small you really are in the universe. You are important but not heroic. Seeing our correct size will make us all confident and wise. And much more likable.us don’t. I’ll show you how to do it.


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One at a Time

by *Mary Lou Logsdon*



"For fast acting relief, try slowing down." — LILY TOMLIN

Our yoga instructor asks us to come to a standing position "one vertebra at a time." I am not that well acquainted with my vertebrae. How many are there? Do I take them in sequence? What if they aren't interested in going alone?

Yoga familiarizes me with the inner workings of my musculoskeletal system. "You'll feel this in your glutes." "Here is a hamstring stretch." "Lift your toes and let them down one at a time." You are kidding me! My toes resemble a co-dependent family—none of them want to step out alone.

One by one I tune into these body parts and come to know them as separate pieces of an amazing whole. My body works best when all the parts do their job and not get lazy by depending on their anchor muscle or a neighboring ligament.

My back's vertebrae are reliant on tendons and discs. The tendons hold muscle and bone together so that I can move the bones of the vertebrae whether it is to twist, to walk or to stand up—one vertebra at a time. The discs are round cushions that separate the vertebra and act like shock absorbers. I need them both.

I need shock absorbers and connectors in other parts of my life.

Yoga is one of those shock absorbers—a soft space that separates activities and stresses. In class I soften my eyes, relax into the mat, stretch muscles that attend to the many tasks of my day without getting much notice. I practice balance—standing on one foot at a time, observing how each side feels. I quiet the distractions of my mind.

In the rest of my life, I find myself running things together with little separation. My phone is always close by if I am restless, bored or want to avoid that rare empty moment. The world is at my fingertips—along with its anxiety. Multi-tasking feels like it's more productive. It gets harder and harder to pause an activity to catch my breath.

Astrophysicists tell us the universe is moving at a faster and faster pace. I believe it. Change is thrust upon us. I see it everywhere. Regularly my electronics are updated with new software, all on their own. The children who touch my life grow and change at an amazing speed. A previously unknown virus is catapulting around the world and imprisoning millions of people in their homes and communities. There is almost no space between breaking news events. I want to stand on my soap box and shout, "SLOW DOWN!"

I cannot slow down the universe, but I can slow down me. The quickness of life around me doesn't mean I have to join it. I can choose.

Too often I begin my day by checking my phone, following up on texts, responding to email. How can I begin one vertebra at a time? Slowly. Attentively. Gently. I love it when I start the day simply with a cup of coffee, savoring its aroma and warmth as well as the surrounding quiet. From there it is easy to move into a few minutes of gratitude and a plan for how I might greet the day with joy.

Why not invite a few pauses into the rest of my day? Expand a lunch break to check in with a co-worker. Take five minutes with my eyes closed to focus on my breath as I transition from one activity to

the next. Pause between work and the remainder of the day, a wise investment in my serenity.

When I pause to notice the natural world around me, I am reminded of the vastness of creation. "He who can no longer pause to wonder, and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed," said Albert Einstein. I pause one vertebra at a time.

John Gottman, a psychological researcher specializing in marital stability, says that one of the worst things we do in our relationships is react. It's fire, ready, aim. When I stop, pause, notice, I can change how I do things. I take a breath, think about what I'll say and then respond. When my anxiety builds, I want to quicken the pace, get out of my discomfort now and do something. That's when I react rather than respond. It is not helpful to my relationships, often leading to more, rather than less, stress.

Where do those tendons come in? The ones that connect muscle to bone in my spine and thereby allow me to move with agility. Those are the connections I make throughout the day. It is the people I see at yoga for a few minutes as I come and go. I don't know them well, but I know that one just returned from vacation, another sold her house and moved to a condo down the road, a third is a member of my church with two young children in training to sit still.

Another tendon is the friend I walk with for an hour each week. We come to know one another's stories one walk at a time. There are the people in my 12-step group who I know only by first name. They pull me out of isolation into a supportive bond of caring, one meeting at a time.

Our social relationships are the tendons that tie us to our community, our workplace, our neighborhoods. While it is a gift to have good friends, the people we see in our routine comings and goings are also important. They remind us that this is where we belong.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one destiny, affects all indirectly." We all do better together.

My body, mind and spirit all need spaces and connections. The tendons of my life tie me into a community. The soft pads that separate help me move with some fluidity. One day at a time. One connection at a time. One vertebra at a time. I guess it is not as hard as I thought.

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