

Non-specialist Gambling Services Training

ABACUS Counselling, Training and Supervision Ltd



What is Problem Gambling?

- Gambling is an entertainment that is common in New Zealand - 90% of us gamble
- Gambling occurs when we risk something of value, usually money, on an uncertain outcome
- Problems can start to occur when we gamble more money or time than we can afford, resulting in debt or missed appointments because we prioritised gambling or 'lost time' when gambling
- As with problems that arise from misuse of alcohol or drugs, problems can be from mild to severe, and can increase very quickly, especially with electronic gambling such as gambling machines



How much is too much?

Are these signs of a problem?

Donald buys a Lotto ticket every week without fail and says he gets anxious if he hasn't bought it

No

Marie plays a gambling machine once a week for up to two hours and says she could stop if she wished

Possibly – a screen may clarify

Jonathon has been spending more time at the TAB lately and has also increased the size of his bets

Possibly – a screen may clarify

Selina has been approached for the second time in a week by pub staff about leaving her children in the car when she is playing the pokies

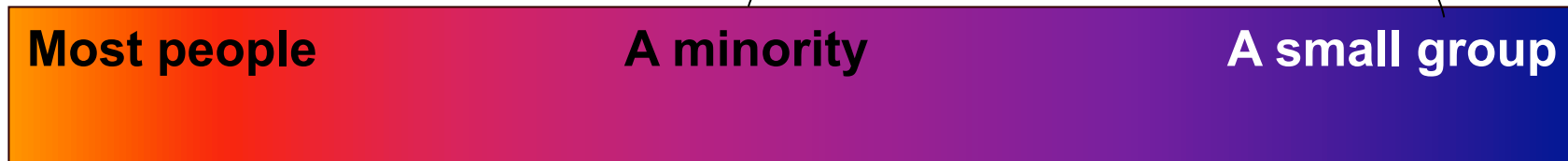
Yes

Gambling Continuum

Can move up and down the continuum



Problem gamblers



Most people

A minority

A small group

No problems
Entertainment

Moderate problems
Chases losses
Guilt
Arguments
Concealment
Some depression
High expenditures

Severe problems
Depression
Serious suicide thoughts
Divorce
Debt & poverty
Crime

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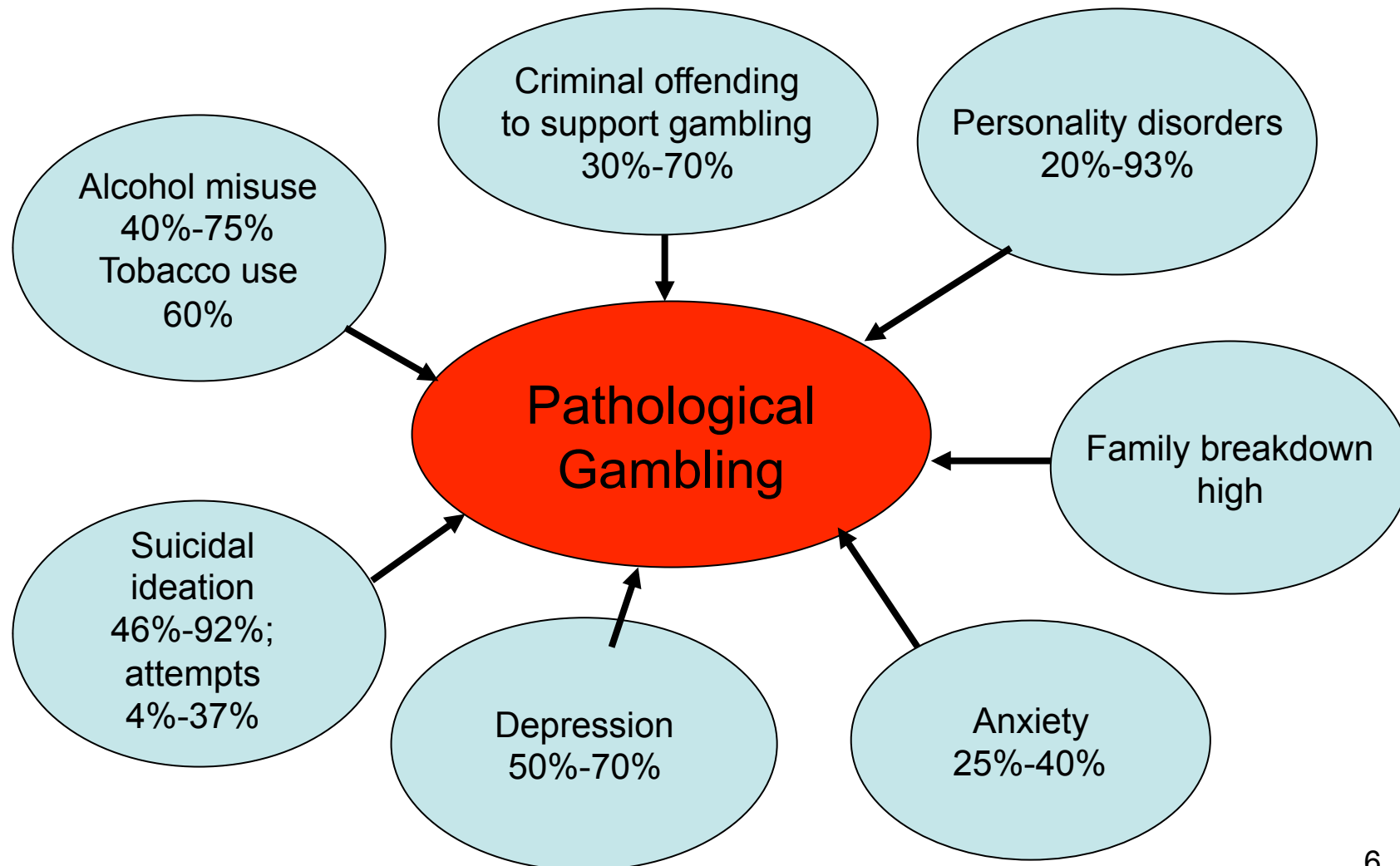


Abstinence (stopping) is one end of the continuum of a harm reduction approach

- All the population is on the same line from abstinence to severe problems
- Even small changes at the severe end have value and plant seed for future change
- Harm reduction allows for those not ready for stopping but will consider the concept of “controlled use” to minimise problems
- Takes the moralistic view away (focus is on reducing harm, not judging behaviour as bad)



Pathological gambling is associated with many issues



Advantages of helping at earlier stage

Being proactive to identify problems with gambling can:

- Reduce the harm to the client or family/whanau from addictions
- Help to stop the progression of the gambling
- Provide help at earlier stages when changes can be more successful and require less resources
- For some, there can remain an option of controlled use, where clients don't wish to stop altogether, and this is more likely to be successful at an earlier stage



Signs of Gambling Problems

Group exercise



What is a Brief Intervention?

Brief interventions:

- ❑ Are often opportunistic and can even be just one conversation that can motivate the person to change their behaviour
- ❑ Don't just happen in counselling therapy sessions
- ❑ Work better when the problem hasn't become advanced, but can also work with severe problems
- ❑ Their focus is upon improving the person's motivation to change their behaviour
- ❑ The aim of the brief intervention is to trigger a decision and a commitment to change (includes referral to problem gambling services)

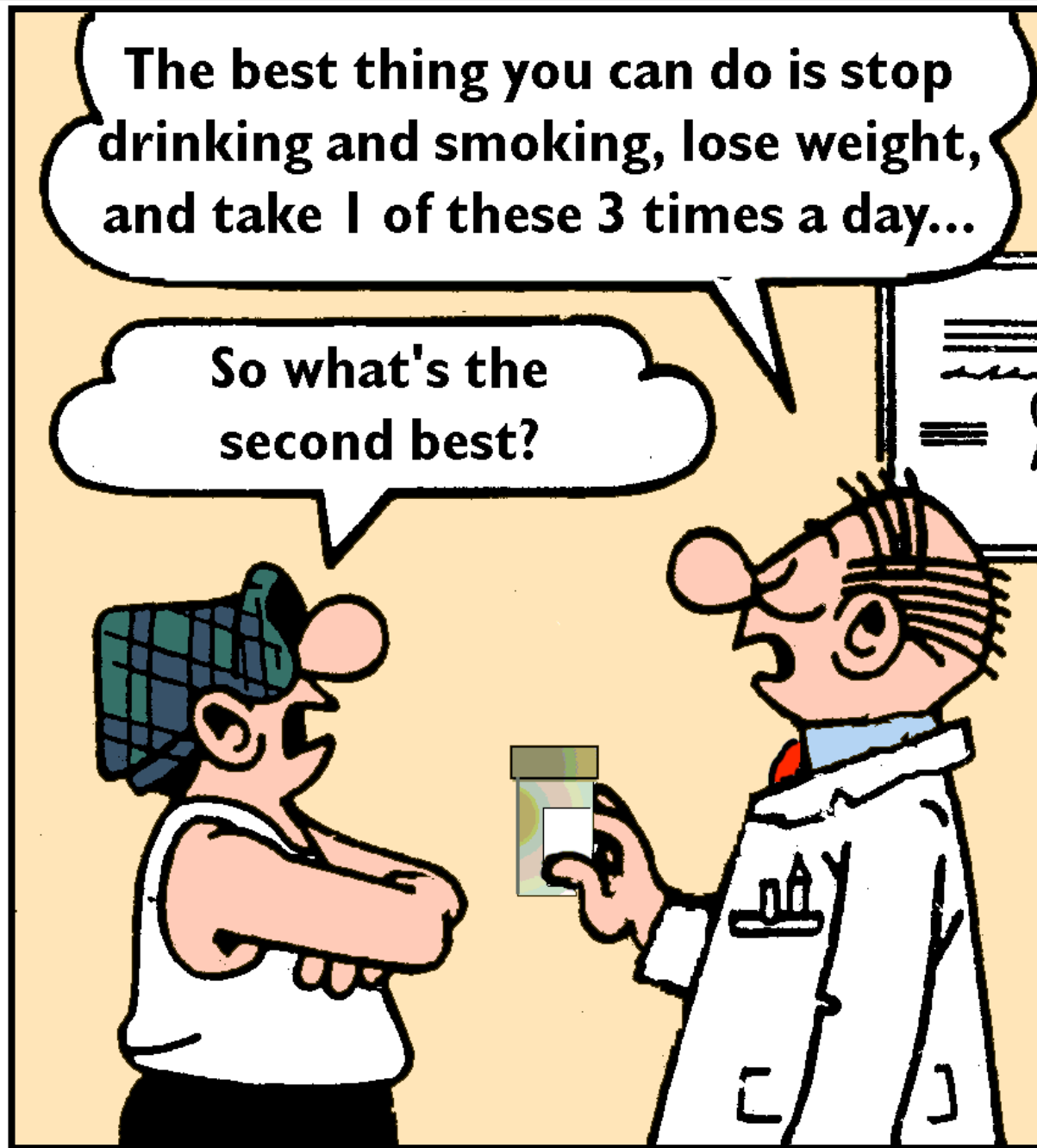


Raising the Issue

- For clients in social /health services who have attended for other specific reasons, questions or screens about problem gambling may feel irrelevant or intrusive
- Those who attend educational meetings about problem gambling or other addictions may not be seeking intervention at that stage
- Family members concerned about another's gambling may not yet be aware or concerned about their own behaviours even if problematic
- All of the above may not initially be receptive



Raising
the
Issue!



Raising the Issue

Important to remember:

- For people who engage in gambling behaviours, positive outcomes are almost always experienced
- When negative consequences begin to develop for different reasons it can be a good opportunity to raise the issue
- By framing the inquiry as health, financial, legal or other related to the service that is being attended, this shows relevance, rather than judgements related to lifestyle and can raise interest in interventions, including screening



Strategies to Raise the Issue

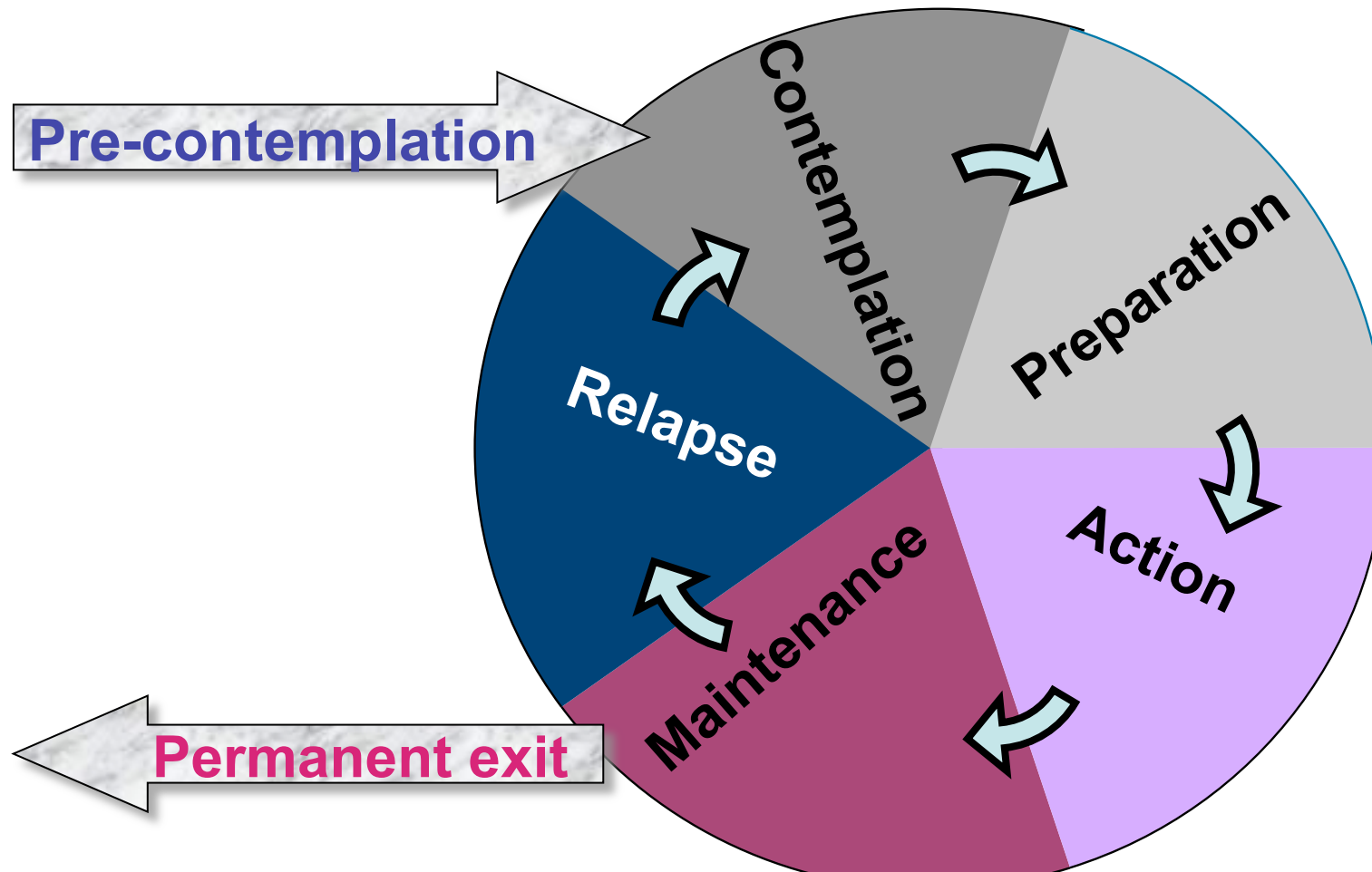
- ❑ Acknowledge what stressors may be going on with them/assist them to address it (may be personal, family, financial, or legal issues) in order to connect –those with addictions are often isolated through guilt, secrets and accompanying lies and put up a front
- ❑ Goals about their behaviours must be identified by the person themselves – don't assume it's always stopping behaviours (they may want to only reduce enough to stop problems)
- ❑ Slips are frequent with addictions – discuss them as learning opportunities, before they happen
- ❑ Avoid any perception of criticism. Encourage honesty and their accepting the consequences of behaviour



Trans-theoretical Model of Change

Prochaska & DiClemente

Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change



Motivational Ideas to Encourage Interventions/Referrals (REACH)

- ❑ **Reflect** – their words, so they hear again their own thoughts on their need to change (“ I learn what I believe when I hear myself speak”)
- ❑ **Empathy** – the client feels his or her problems are understood by you
- ❑ **Ask permission** – gives them respect
- ❑ **Choice** – give them choices, not just one idea, and will be less likely to reject all options
- ❑ **Help** – always let them know they can contact the Helpline, give pamphlets/information



Why should I use a gambling screen ?

Sometimes waiting until an obvious sign of problem gambling exists is not the best approach, because:

- You may have effectively already 'screened' using your intuition, with maybe the wrong outcome ('no problem exists')
- Some behaviours have symptoms that are not obvious, such as problem gambling
- When we don't see behaviours, it incorrectly reinforces our belief that it doesn't occur often, and we don't check it out when we should
- Screens are designed to identify sensitive and 'hidden' problems



Barriers to screening in non-gambling services

- not enough time – management endorsement
- client/service relevance
- hard to raise topic
- “too specialised”
- limited training and follow up/support
- service resistance – need to use MI skills



Barriers Exercise



Screening in non-gambling services

- ❑ If the service already screens for related issues, a gambling screen or family screen can be added as needed, or the issue can be raised in the “comprehensive” context
- ❑ Screen questions can alternatively be asked informally in conversational style
- ❑ As this can be a sensitive issue, training is essential, to ensure it is done in appropriate ways that maximise honesty/avoid offending



Brief Gambler Screen

Introduction/Opening Statement: Most people in New Zealand enjoy gambling, whether it's Lotto, track racing, the pokies or at the casino. Sometimes however it can affect our health.

To help us to check your well-being, please answer the questions below as truthfully as you are able from your own experience. A 'no' answer can also mean that 'I don't gamble at all'.

- 1) Do you feel you have ever had a problem with gambling? (Only ask if not obvious)
- 2) If the answer to Q1 is yes, ask: And do you feel you currently have a problem with gambling?
- 3) Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
- 4) Have you ever had to lie to people about how much you gambled?
- 5) If you answered yes to any of the above, what would help?
 - I would like some information
 - I would like to talk about it in confidence with someone
 - I would like some support or help
 - Nothing at this stage

Why should I use a family screen?

- Family/whanau members of problem gamblers are rarely asked (screened) about their own wellbeing
- About 7 others are affected by each problem gambler (Productivity Commission 1999)
- Barely 1/4 of clients of problem gambling treatment services are family or whanau of problem gamblers
- They seldom focus upon their own wellbeing and tend to focus upon trying to change the gambler's behaviour
- Their health may be very poor through stress and/or lack of money for essentials; inevitably these issues impact on the family's children and affects their health



Brief Family/Affected Other Screen

Introduction/Opening Statement: Sometimes someone else's gambling can affect the health and well-being of others who may be concerned. The gambling behaviour is often hidden and unexpected, while its effects can be confusing, stressful and long-lasting. To help us identify if this is affecting your own well-being could you answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. Awareness of the Effect of the Gambler's Gambling (record the number of the response)

Do you think you have ever been affected by someone else's gambling?

- (0) No, never (you need not continue further)
- (1) I don't know for sure if their gambling affected me
- (2) Yes, in the past
- (3) Yes, that's happening to me now

2. Effect of Gambler's Gambling (record the total number of positive response (tick) between question 1 and 5. Record 0 or 6 if no other responses are ticked).

How would you describe the effect of that person's gambling on you now? (tick one or more if they apply to you)

- (0) It doesn't affect me anymore
- (1) I worry about it sometimes
- (2) It is affecting my health
- (3) It is hard to talk with anyone about it
- (4) I am concerned about my or my family's safety
- (5) I'm still paying for it financially
- (6) It affects me but not in any of these ways

3. Support Requested (response not recorded)

What would you like to happen? (tick one or more)

- I would like some information
- I would like to talk about it in confidence with someone
- I would like some support or help
- Nothing at this stage

Some ways to encourage the completion of a screen

Providing information on why they are being asked to complete the screen (relevance to current presentation) and also saying it is a usual practice of the service

Examples

- ❑ (Budgeting) “We are asking our clients to fill out brief questionnaires because we have found that if we don’t deal with issues like gambling then the best efforts of both of us can fall flat”
- ❑ (Community Justice) “You may be aware that many people we see are struggling with a lot of difficulties at this time. To help avoid future problems we have found that this can be a good time to check whether gambling has contributed to what has happened”



Some ways to encourage the completion of a screen

Explain how the screens will help:

Examples:

- “The findings will just help you to decide whether more information is required, an important step for you to consider in any future plans”
- “These questionnaires can provide you with information that may help you make sense of why situations seem to keep happening”
- “I guess it’s important to know as much as you can before you decide the best way to deal with things successfully”



Some ways to encourage the completion of a screen

Ask permission to screen, and offer to give feedback

Examples

- “Can you assist us by completing this brief questionnaire? I can give you feedback on it as soon as you’ve finished”
- “It will help if you can fill out this questionnaire now and I can help you with that and let you know what it indicates straight away”
- Offering choice with respect, and by offering feedback, will enhance cooperation and increase honest responses



Gambling Scenario: Robert

Robert has come in to the budget service several times and can be difficult to deal with. He has been staying at a friend's place and seems to have little money. Although he is on a benefit and has no fixed expenses, he is always trying to get money from work and income, and now the budget service. He asks for help on a regular basis but never follows through with any of the plans you make together.

Robert says he is not with any other service and says he has never had any mental health problems. He says he doesn't drink or drug or smoke, but you can't understand where his money might be going. He says he likes you and you are one of the few people he trusts and that actually helps him.

In small groups, try introducing a gambling screen.



Family Member Scenario: Maria

Maria has confided to you that she is really worried about money for her family, and she has considered going to a food bank for the first time. She reveals that her husband Rawiri was made redundant and instead of looking for work, he has been trying to win a jackpot at the casino to set the family up.

She knows he has spent a lot of his payout on gambling, but is afraid to question him too much. He is spending a lot of time away from the family and she wonders what she can do to change him and get him to seek help before it's too late.

In small groups, practice introducing a family screen.



Referrals

- First point of contact can be the Gambling Helpline at 0800 654-655 (operates 24/7)
- Client can speak anonymously, toll free, covers different ethnic groups, can assist a problem gambler, family and person seeking information and resources
- Helpline can contact treatment service while customer on-line and make appointment
- There are local agencies in most centres throughout New Zealand

