


**FOCUS ON THE FUTURE**  
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**Presenter: Kathryn Elliott-Hudson**

**History of Chrysalis Rising**


**An Early Women's Group in Michigan**

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**History of Chrysalis Rising**


An Early Women's Group in Michigan



**Chrysalis Rising**


Conference: Focus on the Future  
Seattle, Washington 2008  
Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling  
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**Michigan 1994**

- Women at that time comprised 25% of the calls to the hotline.
- Windsor Casino opened in 1994
- 2 Detroit casinos opened in 1999 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2000.
- 7 racetracks Thoroughbred and 4 harness racing
- State sanctioned lottery
- Bingo Halls
- "The street lottery"
- Michigan clinicians began training on March 1997 and the first fifteen became NCGC and were paneled in July 1998.



**Michigan 2000**

- 2000 First attempt to facilitate a group for women
- Low numbers of women presenting for treatment did not support this effort



**Chrysalis Rising  
2002**

8-Week program debuted August 2002

Session cap for treatment program at that time was set for 24 sessions  
Facilitator was granted 8 additional sessions per participant

Rationale for forming group

- Weak GA in area. Only one meeting available.
- No strong role models. Maximum recovery time in group was reported as 18 months
- Women reported being intimidated by dominant male leader and that they had received little support from many of the male members



### Chrysalis Rising

Secondary reason for forming group was to have participants provide support for each other

How women were chosen

All 15 women on case load were asked to participate.  
10 took the challenge



### Composition of the group

Age range 30 to 58

Age 25 to 34	4
Age 35 to 44	3
Age 45 to 54	2
Age 55-64	1

Ethnicity

African American	2
Asian	1
Caucasian	6



### Marital status

Married	3
Living with significant other	3
Divorced	1
Divorcing	2
Annulment	1



### Length of gambling problem

Under 1 year	1
1-2 years	1
3-5 years	2
5-10 years	2
11-15 years	2
16-20 years	2



### Types of gambling activities reported

Mixed types (action and escape)	8
Escape gamblers	2

2 escape gamblers

- Client 1 Lottery/Slots
- Client 2 Video poker/ Slots



### Mixed types (Escape and action)

- Client 4 Video poker /Sports /Stock Market
- Client 5 Slots / Blackjack
- Client 6 Blackjack / Slots / Video poker
- Client 7 Poker / Scratchers



Mixed types  
(Escape and action)

Client 8 Lottery / Slots / Roulette  
 Client 9 Slots /Video poker / Blackjack  
 Client 10 Cards / Dice / Slots / Lottery / Bingo  
 Blackjack / Slots  
 (her first bet 11/99 presented for tx 8/1/2000)



Co morbidity  
N = 10

Alcohol	5
Currently drinking at intake	4
Reported 19 years of sobriety	1
Other diagnosed Mental illnesses	8
Depression	4
Bipolar	1
Anxiety	3



Other factors  
N = 10

Family History of gambling	4
Prior Mental health treatment	3
Prior Gambling treatment	1
Combined lifetime gambling losses	1,620,000
Legal issues reported	None



Meeting Format

1. READINGS
2. HOUSEKEEPING/ANNOUNCEMENTS
3. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT SESSION
4. MINI-LECTURE
5. GROUP SHARING
6. FORMAL CLOSING (group chose the Serenity Prayer)



Topics Discussed in Group

- Week 1: General information about stages and progression of the disease and defense mechanisms
- Week 2: Gambling problems in women
- Week 3: Anger identification management and thinking distortions
- Week 4: Relationships / progressive phases of recovery for the gambler



Topics Discussed in Group

- Week 5: Women and depression and stress inventory
- Week 6: Assertiveness, aggression, and non-assertive behavior
- Week 7: Women and finances and the pressure relief packet
- Week 8: Breaking the cycle of addiction, relapse prevention, and triggers



### Challenges

No concurrent family program

Geographic challenges  
Clients came from 3 counties

Therapist naiveté

Four participants reported problem drinking at intake.  
There was concern about addressing 2 addictions simultaneously. Asked to abstain and attend one AA meeting a week as condition of participating in group.



### Predominant Themes

Struggles with acceptance of gambling as a disease

Shame and guilt

Strained or fractured relationships

Lack of family understanding

Financial stress



### Triumphs

No relapses reported in 8 weeks

9 members with perfect attendance

1 member missed only 1 session

Commitment from group to attend GA in groups of 2 or 3

Participants requested that the group continue

Therapist began planning to honor group requests but had to leave the area due to husband's job transfer



### An Experimental Women's Group The First in St. Louis 2002

That same Fall there was another attempt to support women in recovery in a group setting

Ohlms, Terri Rodriguez and David L. Ohlms, M.D. of the Ohlms-Institute

A psycho-educational therapeutic support group was offered to 10 women



### Goal

They were to leave the safety of the facilitated therapeutic support group to form a self-help support.

"The First Women Gamblers" Self Help Support group in St. Louis, Missouri, was born.



### ABC Wellness Centre Scottsdale and Mesa, Arizona 2008

Agency has 13 weekly groups including finance group

Facilitator currently runs 3 groups

Group 1: Females 55+. Group started October 2005

Group 2: Women's group composed of gamblers, family members, and other compulsively disordered individuals. (Alcohol, drugs, food, etc.)

Group 3: Female gamblers only



Facilitator's general observations about women gamblers

Progression of gambling for female gamblers is telescoped

Onset of gambling to desperation phase - 1-3 years

Tavares et al 2001 reported that the time interval for recreational gambling to problem gambling 1 year for women and 4.6 years for men



Facilitator's general observations about women gamblers

Winning stage different for women

Women tend to have episodes of small jackpots or an occasional big win.

Primary motivation for gambling is escape  
Secondary motivation is money



Facilitator's general observations about women gamblers

50% report family of origin stressors

Substance abuse

Mental illness

Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse



Facilitator's general observations about women gamblers

Currently 20 % of the women I work with have reported fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and rheumatoid arthritis

Facilitator questions whether these conditions contribute in any way to the progression of the gambling disease in women.

Do these conditions make women more vulnerable to gambling?



Special concerns for all women in dealing with money and the law

Effects of these negative consequences

Legal issues: Up to 15 months for resolution

Finances: Longer for bankruptcies to be discharged due to change in bankruptcy laws.



Profile of women gamblers ages 20 – 35 (The New Kids on the Block)  
N = 5

Majority (90%) focused on escape games

Short gambling history

Family relationships are impaired

Strained marital and significant other relationships

Work history / employed



Profile of women gamblers ages 20 – 35  
(The New Kids on the Block)  
N = 5

Negative consequences reported

Legal concerns

Financial stress and history of poor money management

Threats of divorce or separation



Profile of women gamblers ages 20 – 35  
(The New Kids on the Block)  
N = 5

These women often reported

Family history of alcoholism

Family history of mental health

History of sexual / physical abuse

Family history of gambling

There were 2 cases of postpartum depression reported.  
In both cases gambling increased.



Profile of women gamblers ages 20 – 35  
Treatment Challenges

Balancing home responsibilities with meetings and treatment

Dependent children

Difficulty with arranging or affording child care

Behavioral issues with children

Guilt about not being there physically after emotionally not being present for them



Profile of women gamblers ages 20 – 35  
Special Treatment Needs

Money management education to address history of poor money management

Focus on balance in all areas of life

Relaxation and stress management skills



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 36 – 54

Majority focused escape games 85%

Frequently reported by this group

History of social gambling (uses gambling for its intended purpose)

Good employment history

Past history of planning ahead (denies impulsivity) and making sound decisions.

History of low-grade depression or anxiety



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 36 – 54  
Possible triggers

Loss

Examples of losses are empty nest (especially trophy wife syndrome), divorce, death, unemployment (especially traumatic if single) and unresolved instances of sexual abuse/incest

Onset of Menopause



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 36 – 54  
Possible triggers

Those women who participated in games of skill were exposed to gambling at an early age through family activities

Potentially life limiting illnesses such as breast cancer

Chronic medical conditions



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 36 – 54  
Challenges in Recovery

Legal concerns. Lack of understanding by legal system.

Short history of social gambling

Have a better chance to recoup financially from bankruptcy and pay restitution

If there was physical neglect, many health issues can be remedied or arrested

Need for development of social activities to replace gambling



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 36 – 54  
Special Treatment Goals

Empowerment through education about the disease

Recognizing/ acknowledging their own needs

Supporting changes in career or pursuing education

Validate appropriate risk-taking

Addressing need for structure

Exploring and developing social interests

Monitor transfer of addictions



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 +  
Frequently reported by this group

Fastest growing sector of the addicted population

Limited social gambling in their past

Strong employment history and/or successfully raised families

Past history of planning ahead (denies impulsivity) and making sound decisions

History of low-grade depression or anxiety

Many reported that gambling was their only social outlet

Past history of being responsible with money



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 +  
Possible triggers for gambling

Losses

Empty nest, divorce, death, unemployment, retirement, and unresolved instances of sexual abuse/incest

Those women who participated in games of skill were exposed to gambling at an early age through family activities

Life limiting illnesses such as breast cancer

Menopause



Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 +  
Specific Challenges in Recovery

Financial inability for many to recoup losses

Legal concerns: pay day loans and bankruptcy

Increased limitation of physical abilities may limit options to social activities

Learning to ask for help



### Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 + Specific Challenges

Diminished eyesight may make traveling to evening meetings difficult

Fear for personal safety if traveling alone to meetings

For the hearing impaired, attending meetings may be a challenge due to noise distortion

Respite care not available. They may be raising children or taking care of elder family members



### Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 + Treatment goals

Reduce isolation

Participation in senior citizens community centers

Learn new skills

Socialization

Redirect use of time

Encourage volunteering

Part time work



### Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 + Treatment goals

Provide referrals to other support groups such as Alzheimer's care givers or hospice grief groups

Monitor medication management

Wellness

Address neglected health (physicals, pap test, mammogram, dental care)



### Profile of a late-onset female gambler 55 + Treatment goals

Relaxation Skills

Meditation

Support client's need for exploration of spirituality



### Recommendations for 12 step participation

Strongly encourage GA attendance

Become aware of the dynamics/demographics of groups in area (seek out women supportive mixed groups)

Encourage women to go to meetings together

Prepare new clients for first meeting (format, recovery language, temporary sponsorship)



### Contact Information

If you have questions about this presentation or facilitating women's groups, I can be reached at

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### Life's Lessons from a Butterfly

Let go of the past.

Trust the future.

Embrace change.

Come out of the cocoon.

Unfurl your wings.

Dare to get off the ground.

Ride on the breezes.

Savor all the flowers.

Put on your brightest colors.

Let your beauty show.

