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Evidence-Based Treatments for Problem Gambling

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Preface

Problem gambling treatments continue to develop; however, the literature in this area is not as vast as that for other addictions, most notably substance and alcohol misuse treatments. As cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) has been refined, and so called third-wave therapies have been developed to focus upon psychopathology over the last few decades, we have seen opportunities to apply some of these "newer" techniques to problem gamblers in our clinic. We believe that such a process has merit due to the success many of these approaches have reported with disorders that commonly appear comorbidly with problem gambling. Over this time, we have observed some healthy debate among clinicians about the contribution that some of the newer therapies bring to treatment beyond CBT. As is common in other treatment areas, CBT maintains the greatest levels of empirical support for problem gambling treatment and has provided a valid framework to assist many problem gamblers recover.

We believe that it is critical for our clients that the literature be developed by exploring new treatments in evidence-based ways. It is also very clear that the strategies of one therapy can easily overlap with the strategies of another, given the shared theoretical basis and common goal to improve treatment outcomes. There appears to be many ways to explain the same phenomenon, and given the diverse nature of individuals affected by problem gambling, there is also likely to be diversity in the way treatment is experienced by an individual. There are clearly many variables across successful treatment. Case conceptualization provides an example of this point, as very little research supports the inclusion of case conceptualizations due to the confounding effect they can have on protocols, yet most effective clinicians would not work without one. Although there is "room" in the treatment of this population for some eclectic treatments given the current status of the literature, we believe that it is incumbent on clinicians to use treatments in accordance with the existing literature or with an appropriate research focus.

In writing this book, we have attempted to provide the evidence base for the major contemporary treatments that can be applied to problem gambling. Many approaches described within have only an introductory level of research supporting them for this population, while others despite an extensive literature are still open to

development. Our aims in compiling the chapters that make up this book were to help clinicians find their "therapeutic voice," promote further clinical research for problem gamblers to develop the literature, and most importantly to try and contribute to the overall treatment effectiveness of this often debilitating disorder.

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Abbreviations

AVE	Abstinence Violation Effect
ACT	Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
APA	American Psychiatric Association
BPD	Borderline Personality Disorder
CBT	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
DBT	Dialectical Behavior Therapy
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
EGM	Electronic Gaming Machine
EI	Elaborated Intrusion
EMS	Early Maladaptive Schema(s)
fMRI	Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging
GABA	Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid
GRCS	Gambling-Related Cognitions Scale
MBCT	Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
MBRP	Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention
MI	Motivational Interviewing
NAC	N-Acetylcysteine
NTX	Naltrexone
PG	Problem Gambling or Problem Gambler
PGRTC	Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre
PGSI	Problem Gambling Severity Index
RP	Relapse Prevention
RNG	Random Number Generator
SMA	Schema Mode Approach
SSRI	Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor
SUDs	Substance Use Disorders
TAU	Treatment as Usual
TOD	Time on Device
YSQ	Young Schema Questionnaire

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