

HIGHLIGHTS

of the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs

VOL. 12, NO. 1 ■ SPRING 2009



Risk, Addiction, and the Archetypes of Gambling

BY JAMES C. "JES" MONTGOMERY AND SHERRY K. YOUNG

This article will discuss the prevalence of gambling addiction in the United States, its pervasiveness in lives and families, and the preconditions that could increase the odds that a game, an occasional escape can become a preoccupation. In many ways, addictive gambling itself may serve as a metaphor for the pathological and mood-altering relationship that one can form with drugs, alcohol, food, relationships, work, spending, and sex. The operative words that link these objects of desire and potential misuse are "pathological" and "mood-altering," for with those qualifiers enters the element of risk.

According to recent statistics posted on the Internet, roughly 2.5 million adults in America are pathological gamblers and another 3 million of them should be considered problem gamblers; 15 million adults are at risk for problem gambling; and nearly 148 million are low-risk gamblers (www.clearleadinc.com/site/gambling-addiction.html). These data address literal gambling problems and do not include those risk-takers who take uncalculated risks in "culturally acceptable" formats including the stock market, business, sports, or sex—often with minimal negative consequences.

Gambling addiction is a risk behavior that causes disruptions in any major area of life—psychological, physical, social, or vocational. The term *gambling addiction* includes, but is

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The Story of a Former High Roller

BY JEFF BECK

The Gamblers Anonymous Combo Book asks whether knowing why we gambled is important and responds, perhaps, but that many people have stopped gambling without the benefit of the knowledge of why they gambled. My tendency is to be introspective so I have thought about the origins of my gambling problems and see four specific factors that led to my gambling.

The Four Factors

I was taught at a young age by my best friend's father that whatever you did should be based on a reward—we would shoot baskets for ice cream sodas or we would

play miniature golf for bagels. I learned that the intrinsic reward of doing the best I could was not enough—that external rewards were necessary. I believe this greatly influenced future gambling behaviors.

Second, I was not an athlete, and for male adolescents, athletics was a key to status and respect. I compensated for that by developing an almost encyclopedic knowledge of sports. This led me to believe I knew more than the next guy and was of particular importance when it came to sports betting, which I saw as a challenge of personal skill.

A third factor in my development of a gambling problem was my great facility with numbers. I would go to the supermarket and

double check the cash registers. When I discovered the racetrack I thought it was a panacea—a chance to use my mathematical wizardry for my own benefit.

It took me many years to understand the fourth factor that led to my gambling addiction. The Desjardins model of addiction talks about addiction resulting from unmet needs, namely need for power and control, need for security, and need for sensation. The need for security was the relevant one for me, not financial security, but a sense of belonging and fitting in. I think I turned to drugs and gambling as a way to define myself, to identify with others of like interests. Anything was better than being in

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Terry Harrell, tharrell@courts.state.in.us
Michael E. Larson*, lawyerhelper@bmt.net
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Jayne Mahboubi*, jmahboubi@ridgeviewinstitute.com
Robin Fernandez McCown, rdfmcc@bellsouth.net
Andrea L. Rocanelli, andrea.rocanelli@state.de.us
W. Terry Sherrill, wterrysherrill@aol.com
Nancy Stek, nancystek@lap.aol.com
Janis Thibault, janis.thibault@calbar.ca.gov

*New members

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Comments from the Editor

This issue of *Highlights* focuses mainly on gambling. It is what I refer to as a hidden addiction, particularly with the onset of Internet gambling. Internet gambling gives ready access to anyone with a computer and makes it much easier to access all forms of gambling. I have read statistics indicating that as many as 2.5 million adults in America are pathological gamblers and as many as another 3 million may be problem gamblers. Millions more are at risk.

The legal profession is not immune to this addiction as it is not to any other addiction. Frequently, recovering alcoholics and addicts begin to gamble in recovery and it becomes a problem for many of them. Unfortunately one of the main consequences is that gambling-addicted lawyers often begin stealing client funds. The resultant damage to the clients, the legal profession, and the addicted lawyer is profound.

We hope that the excellent articles in this issue of *Highlights* will help educate you and make you more aware of this important problem. My experience as a LAP director is that this addiction is a difficult one to uncover. It's easier to hide, as we don't see the outward signs that usually accompany alcohol or drug addiction. More often than not the lawyer is in deep trouble before we become aware of the problem. Education of the legal profession is crucial and I hope that this issue leads to more of it.

—HUGH GRADY, IOWA LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Chair's Column Loss of a Pioneer and Dear Friend

BY HONORABLE ROBERT L. "BUTCH" CHILDERS



This is a sad column for me to write because of the recent loss of Edwin L. Blewer—a great man, friend, and pioneer in the field of lawyers helping lawyers. Ed was actively involved in the American Bar Association's (ABA) lawyers helping lawyers program since its creation in 1988. He paved the way for those of us who followed him as chair of the Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP), the office he held from 1998 to 2001. During his time as chair, Ed was instrumental in the creation of the CoLAP Advisory Commission to aid the existing ten-member Commission in its efforts to save the lives and careers of lawyers throughout the United States and Canada. He was truly a southern gentleman, who was always there to help others. Our sincere condolences and prayers are sent to his wife, Julia, who has

also been a great contributor to the efforts of CoLAP. We will be forever grateful to her for sharing a part of Ed with the rest of us. Ed will be sorely missed but not forgotten. His legacy will be felt for years to come through the work of CoLAP and the state and province lawyer assistance programs.

Much of CoLAP's expansion of services is due to the vision and leadership of Ed. He was an inspiration to me because of his passion and dedication to helping his fellow lawyer. My goal is to continue to enhance CoLAP's services to state and provincial lawyer assistance programs and to all members of the legal profession. CoLAP's services are especially important to members of the profession during this time of economic insecurity.

In order for CoLAP to be more effective in meeting the needs of the LAPs and ABA membership, a Strategic Communications Planning Session was held in Boston, Massachusetts, during the ABA Midyear Meeting. It was facilitated by Sarina Butler, ABA's associate executive director of the

Communications Group, who was assisted by Deborah Weixl, director of Strategic Communications Planning. The Commission and representatives from the Judicial Assistance Initiative and the Program Technical Assistance Committee (Evaluation of LAPs) defined its vision on how it wants to communicate the role of CoLAP, which resulted in the following draft:

CoLAP and its work will be recognized as essential and valuable to help target audiences understand stress, addictions, addictive behavior, depression, and other mental health and aging issues. CoLAP's programs will be viewed as essential to assisting disabled lawyers in their recovery and their careers. Bar leaders will understand that fully executing their responsibility of leadership compels them to focus on assisting lawyers with problems so that recovery may result, so public confidence in the profession may grow, and so effective administration of justice may occur. CoLAP will be viewed as the premier

source of information, model programming, and experience on lawyer recovery and other mental health disabilities.

CoLAP has benefitted from the ABA's Planning Office and Communications Group staff several times in the past. The first Long-Range Planning Session, facilitated by Dolores Gedge in 1999, was followed by focused planning sessions on the National Conference for Lawyer Assistance Programs and the more recent Judicial Assistance Initiative. Without this support, CoLAP would not have been able to expand its services by learning to utilize more volunteer support. This work also resulted in new members and associates for the ABA, because many of the individuals interested in CoLAP's work were not members of the ABA, but joined as a result of being recruited to assist in developing new services.

A report on other actions of interest from the Midyear Meeting in Boston appears on page 6 of this issue of *Highlights*. **H**

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JOB OPENING

Assistant Director Position

ARKANSAS JUDGES AND LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Arkansas Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (ArJLAP) is looking for an assistant director. ArJLAP is a program of the Arkansas Supreme Court that provides confidential assistance to licensed lawyers, judges, and their family members for substance abuse, mental health issues, and problems associated with disabilities or aging.

The duties of the assistant director include clinical (assessment, brief counseling), administrative (budgeting, chart maintenance), and marketing (brochures, presentations). A certificate or license in the addictions and/or mental health fields, administrative skills, and people skills are preferred. **H**

E-mail resume and letter to Dr. Sarah Cearley at sarah@arjlap.org. For more information on the program go to www.arjlap.org.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2009

- APR 22 TELECONFERENCE 1–2:30PM EDT
Suicide Prevention, Identity and Responsibility
- MAY 28–31 ABA COLAP SPRING BUSINESS MEETING
Hilton Garden Inn | Bozeman, Montana
- JUN ABA DIVERSITY SUMMIT
Washington, D.C.
- JUL 30– ABA COLAP BUSINESS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS
- AUG 02 ABA ANNUAL MEETING
Chicago, Illinois
- OCT 06–09 ABA COLAP'S 22ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
The Arizona Grand Resort | Phoenix, Arizona
- OCT 09–11 ILLA ANNUAL MEETING
The Arizona Grand Resort | Phoenix, Arizona
ILLA Contact: Hal Nevitt (hal.nevitt@staff.azbar.org) or www.illa.org

2010

- FEB 07–10 ABA COLAP BUSINESS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS
ABA MIDYEAR MEETING
Orlando, Florida
- AUG 05–08 ABA COLAP BUSINESS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS
ABA ANNUAL MEETING
San Francisco, California
- OCT 05–08 ABA COLAP 23RD NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
Indianapolis, Indiana
- OCT 08–10 ILAA ANNUAL MEETING
Indianapolis, Indiana
www.illa.org

For a full list of events, visit CoLAP's website www.abalegalservices.org/colap.

Case Law Corner

Coffman v. Ky Bar Association, 183 S.W. 3d 176 (Kentucky 2006)

Public reprimand with a sixty-one-day suspension, with the period of suspension probated. Coffman pled guilty in federal court to one count of willfully failing to pay taxes. At sentencing, a psychologist testified that Coffman had been a pathological gambler. The expert testified that Coffman had a secondary disorder of alcohol abuse that was common in those suffering from pathological gambling.

The attorney seriously and aggressively addressed his gambling addiction, his alcohol abuse, and his major depression issues. Coffman had not gambled since 1999 and had been sober since 2002.

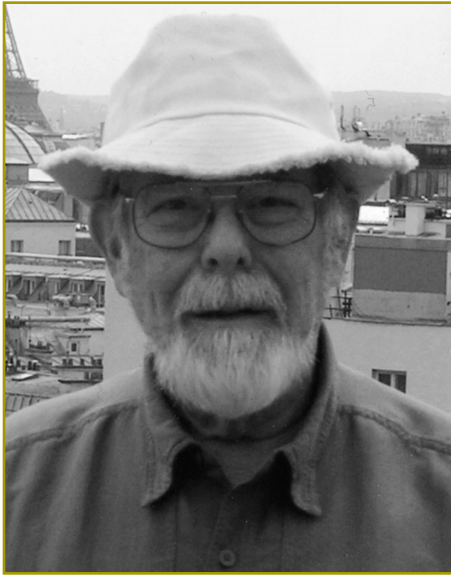
Iowa Supreme Court v. Reilly, 708 N.W. 2d 82 (Iowa 2006)

License revoked. Reilly had an uncontrollable gambling problem that left him in constant need of funds. The commission found that Reilly was guilty of a conversion of client's funds and had perpetrated a check-kiting scheme that caused a substantial loss to one of the banks involved in the transaction. The Grievance Commission recommended a three-year suspension. In rejecting that recommendation the court noted that the misappropriation of client funds would by itself warrant a revocation of his license. The check-kiting scheme was an aggravating factor.

—Hugh Grady, *Iowa Lawyers Assistance Program*

In Memoriam: Ed Blewer

BY KATHLEEN AND BILL LEARY



One of the funeral directors where Ed's visitation service was held in Shreveport, Louisiana, indicated that he believed the crowd to be the second largest in attendance in the history of the funeral home. The Presbyterian church that Ed had attended for his entire life was beyond capacity for the memorial service. The memorial service, itself, was a true celebration of Ed Blewer's amazing life. Ed touched so many lives in positive and meaningful ways. He had the foresight and the insight regarding what "folks" needed. He was caring, always listening, being present to others in times of need. He, often, simply did what he perceived was needed. He gave

of himself. He was a gentleman and a gentleman, but he could be direct and firm, always tenacious, but at his core, near his soul, he was a deeply compassionate and spiritual man. He appeared to be guided by a prayer familiar to many of us. I, often, observed him changing what he could and deferring to the God of his understanding, "his God," when he needed the wisdom to know the difference. All of us who knew him will sorely miss him, but are better for having had him in our lives. The lady he adored, his life partner, walked in tandem with him. We are blessed to have Julia in our midst. **H**

Edwin Laurine Blewer Jr.

JUNE 7, 1933–JANUARY 27, 2009

SHREVEPORT, LA.—A memorial service thanking God for the life of Edwin Laurine Blewer Jr. was held Thursday, January 29, 2009, at First Presbyterian Church.

Ed was born June 7, 1933, in Shreveport to Edwin L. Blewer and Mildred Sewall Blewer.

He died in Shreveport on Tuesday, January 27, 2009. He is survived by his wife and best friend for forty-six years, Julia Miles Blewer, son Edwin L. Blewer III, daughter Julia Elizabeth Blewer, and his two beloved grandsons.

After graduating from C.E. Byrd High School, he graduated from LSU Law School. He finished first in his law school class where he was a member of the *Louisiana Law Review*.

Ed served in the United States Army before joining the law firm of Cook, Yancey, King & Galloway where he practiced for fifty years.

A member of the Shreveport Bar Association, he served as its president

in 1988 and received its Professionalism Award in 2004; as a member of the Louisiana Bar Association, he served both in the House of Delegates and on the Board of Governors. He received its President's Award in 1995. He was also a member of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. In 1985, Ed and four other attorneys were the founding members of the Impaired Lawyers Committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association, which evolved into the Lawyers Assistance Program. He served as its chairman for six years and continued to serve on its committee until his death. In the American Bar Association, after serving for several years as a member of the Commission on Lawyers Assistance Program, he became its chair from 1998–2001.

He was a very active member of the board of the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse of Northwest Louisiana for a number of years and was president in 1987. He received the Council's Wayne Drewry Award for outstanding

service to the community in 1989. He continued to serve on the board until his death. He also served on and was president of the Board of the Louisiana Association on Compulsive Gambling. For a number of years he served on our state's Commission on Addictive Disorders, having been appointed to it by the last five governors.

In November 2008, Ed was named "Samaritan of the Year" by the Samaritan Counseling Center. He was deeply touched by this honor.

Ed had three passions. The first was his family to whom he was devoted. The second was "The Cabin" in the Jemez Mountains of New Mexico. His third passion was his work helping people who found themselves in trouble with alcohol and drugs. There was always time to help one more "One Day at a Time."

A Report from Boston

BY HONORABLE ROBERT L. "BUTCH" CHILDERS

CoLAP and its committees had a full schedule of meetings during the recent ABA Midyear Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, February 13–15, 2009. The following is a brief description of some of the work done and actions taken.

Multi-tier Sponsorship Program—CoLAP is expanding its non-dues revenue efforts by combining individual promotional opportunities into one multi-tiered sponsorship package. The idea was a joint effort developed by CoLAP staff with input from specialists in ABA Publishing. It has been a multi-year plan to offset ABA's financial support while providing an appealing opportunity for our longtime treatment field sponsors. The plan began in 1993 with Phase I, creating an Expo of mental health and addiction treatment facilities at the National Conference in Cancun and every year thereafter; Phase II, providing sponsorship opportunities at business meetings (2001); Phase III, offering advertising in Highlights, CoLAP's quarterly newsletter (2008); and Phase IV, combining these benefits and more into Bronze, Silver,

Gold, and Platinum sponsorship levels.

Group Consultation/Technical Support—CoLAP will be offering a special group training in conjunction with its Spring Meeting in Montana for the surrounding states that do not have lawyer assistance programs, wish to develop a multi-state or multi-disciplinary program, or wish to expand their current programs. This area was selected because of a demographic similar to Montana, which has a successful working program. This training will be based on the LAP evaluations that CoLAP has conducted as part of its original charter. Since 1993 CoLAP has conducted over thirty-five evaluations using both the ABA adopted Model Lawyer Assistance Program and Guiding Principles for Lawyer Assistance Programs as a guide.

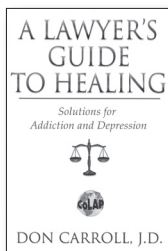
National Teleconference on Lawyer Suicide Prevention—This program will be offered in April 2009. Our Education Committee Chair, Joan Bibelhausen, is responsible for program content. A key speaker will be Dr. Paul Quinnett, an expert in training on the identification of suicide and prevention techniques. This teleconference is being offered through ABA's Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Center. CoLAP has opportunities to cosponsor programs with other entities. This has been discussed with ABA CLE, Standing Committee on Federal Judicial Improvements, Young Lawyers Division, and the Center on Racial and Ethnic Diversity.

Expanded Publications Program—In cooperation with ABA Publishing, CoLAP has organized a Publications Board that is reviewing manuscripts from outside for possible publication by CoLAP, updating existing pamphlets entitled "Law School Stressors" and "Straight Talk About Your Career Choices" by Professor Lawrence Krieger, as well as a new multi-author book with Alabama LAP Director, Jeanne Marie Leslie, as coordinator and editor. This book will be produced with support from other state LAPs and will include anonymous, personal stories by judges, lawyers, and law students who are recovering from chemical and process addictions and depression.

Training Provided in Boston by CoLAP—It has been CoLAP's practice to provide an educational program for the attendees at each meeting related to the work in our area of service. At this meeting we had a member of CoLAP's Advisory Commission, Dr. Jayne Mahboubi, present on "Developing Cultural Competence in Service to Client Populations" and Dr. Penelope P. Ziegler shared her expertise on "Addictive Disorders among Sexual Minorities."

As part of CoLAP's ongoing service, we continue to work with other ABA entities. In preparation for the fourth edition of *GP Solo's* "Bumps in the Road," CoLAP solicited authors and topics from the state and local lawyer assistance programs. This special issue will be published before the ABA Annual Meeting in Chicago and will include articles "Balancing Life in a High Stress Job" by Susan Riegler; "Relapse after Long-Term Sobriety" (anticipate an increase because of job layoffs) by Janet Piper Voss and Susan Riegler; "ADA and Disciplinary Hearings" by Mary Robinson; and "Ethics of Reporting Self/Colleagues" by Thomas P. Sukowicz. **H**

A Lawyer's Guide to Healing: Solutions for Addiction and Depression



By Don Carroll

This book is for lawyers who find law challenging, frustrating, or stressful—either a dream that must be pursued or a vision that cannot be ignored. This book offers insight into the addictive and emotional problems lawyers face and a special understanding of how we, as lawyers, become susceptible, get sick, and can seek help and recover.

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The Lawyer Squeeze Ahead: Caught in a Legal Recession

BY DAVID E. BEHREND

If not already, your state LAP will assuredly start to receive calls from lawyers who have been traumatized by the loss of their job and with the reality that for the first time in their adult working life, they have nowhere to go. For those in recovery the loss of a job is an added burden, or for those with depression, the stress level is also heightened to code red.

Never before has job security made so many lawyers so anxious. For many, their career, social fabric, and identity are tied up with their firm, in-house counsel, or government position.

As you receive calls, recognize that few are immune to being pushed out on the

street. The statement, “no one is indispensable” holds true more than ever before in this deepening recession.

I recently received a call from the Ohio LAP about a displaced lawyer, sixty years old, who had been in corporate law, a university counsel’s office, and most recently with an independent business, only to find the latter unable to gain traction in this recession and shut down. In another case, a LAP referred a dismissed state government lawyer who had been with a department for many years, who was an expert in their field, and who, at forty-five years old, was not able to retire but unsure of which direction to go. Finally, I counseled a recently

hired associate who was terminated due to lack of business in his practice groups (real estate and mergers and acquisitions).

As this recession continues and the squeeze on lawyers tightens nationally, there are strategies to assist these lawyers. A number who have lost direction need to look not through tunnel vision, but through a kaleidoscope for all possible options. Some may make a job change, while others may pursue a career transition within the sanctuary of law, but a significantly different pew. And others will use this as an opportunity to explore a career transition outside the practice of law. **H**

DAVID E. BEHREND, M.ED., is director of Career Planning Services for Lawyers in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, assisting lawyers nationally who are going through career or employment transition.

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Sustainable Satisfaction in Practice: Maximize Your Energy

BY JULIE A. FLEMING

Most lawyers enter practice with the goal of establishing a successful, satisfying, and sustainable practice. Two key questions quickly arise: what does a successful, satisfying, and sustainable practice look like for *me*? And, *how* do I go about creating that practice? Unfortunately, all too many lawyers seriously consider these questions only after a breakdown, which prompts the realization that something has to change.

For example, “Barbara” (not her real name) first contacted me by e-mail to inquire about coaching with this message: “It’s 4:27 a.m. and I’m sitting in my bathroom, checking e-mail here so I won’t disturb my husband’s sleep. I’ve been here since 3:30 a.m., when I woke up in a panic. I am exhausted and overwhelmed. I need help.” When we met in person, Barbara, a successful lawyer who had been in practice for about twenty years, described her days in a weary voice. On the go all day and well into the evening, she typically left home by 6 a.m. and would return around 9 p.m. She was tired, overwhelmed, angry, and she was experiencing relationship problems. Her wake-up call came when her husband observed, “Even when you’re home, on those rare occasions when you’re not working, it’s as if there’s just a shell there and the rest of you is somewhere else—and I don’t know where.” Summing it up, Barbara told me, “I love what I do. I’m good at it, but I can’t live this way. I’m already burned out—I’m going to burn out all the way.”

The first steps to Barbara’s breakthrough came as she learned to make choices that would maximize her energy for both professional and personal pursuits. As she did so, she created work/life integration. How?

Create Maximum Energy

Building a successful, satisfying, and sustainable work/life integration begins with energy. Energy is the currency for all activity and is essential for effective, productive output. Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, authors of *The Power of Full Engagement*,

identify four sources of energy that must be present for optimum performance: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (which I call purposeful) energy.

Physical Energy

Some physical fuels are universal: sufficient rest, good nutrition, adequate activity, and plentiful hydration. Find your unique daily requirements. For instance, maybe you’ve noticed that “white” carbohydrates like pasta, bread, and white rice leave you dragging, that meat makes you feel heavy, and that you feel energetic and satisfied when you eat fresh vegetables and fish. Ironically, we rely on some substances (such as caffeine

While knowing your values is critical, it’s actually incorporating them into your life and living from them that maximizes energy.

and sugar) and habits (like running on adrenaline) to deliver a quick burst of energy even though they actually function as physiological drains. Apply detective work and experiment to find what best fuels you.

Emotional Energy

Emotional energy is necessary to handle the frustrations and disappointments that occur throughout the day. Being short on emotional energy leads to negative outbursts (perhaps blasting an assistant for an error and later regretting it, chalking

your behavior up to stress) and limits your ability to meet clients’ emotional needs. Emotional energy may be increased by any activity that brings you back to “center.” Those activities might include meditation or moving meditation, visualization, listening to music that reaches your emotions, and sharing strong relationships in which you can express your emotion.

Mental Energy

Mental energy sustains focus and concentration and fuels the mental flexibility required to identify and examine a variety of points of view. Methods to increase mental energy include meditation and visualization, both of which draw on the power of the mind to focus and train for concentration. Mental energy may also be enhanced by creative work, such as painting or dance. Creativity may improve mental flexibility by getting in touch with the analytical and intuitive aspects of work.

Purposeful Energy

Spiritual or purposeful energy reflects values. A lawyer’s purposeful energy is maximized by knowing what prompted the decision to enter practice and by finding a way to connect that vision with day-to-day practice. Very often lawyers who experience a crisis in practice have lost the connection between their values and the way their career is playing out. Maximizing purposeful energy, then, calls for self-reflection. What matters most to you? What is your top priority today, this week, or this year? What are your top values? How can you express those values in the way you live and work?

While knowing your values is critical, it’s actually incorporating them into your life and living from them that maximizes energy. Write your top values or priorities onto several small cards or sticky notes and place those notes near your computer, telephone, and calendar—anywhere that you’re likely to look when making a decision about how to use time. Acting in accord with your values and priorities increases purposeful energy; acting in dissonance with them will decrease that energy.

Putting It All Together

Barbara and I worked together on energy management and addressed these four capacities. Barbara began protecting her

physical capacity by deciding that she would take early morning or evening meetings only three days a week, and that she would never schedule those days back-to-back. She decided that she would ordinarily work between 8:30 a.m. and 7 p.m., and that she would take thirty minutes at noon for a walk. She filled in some of the time with meditation and by taking up modern dance, and she spent more time talking and playing with her husband and family.

Barbara learned to focus on the task or the person at hand and not to be distracted by her long list of things yet to do. She was able to engage with the people she was working with and to experience positive emotions about her work and about her clients, which reduced her stress level dramatically. Most importantly, Barbara finally reconnected with why she was doing her work. Instead of feeling only the grind of her practice, Barbara came to relish the intellectual stimulation she found in her work and the joy she found in serving her clients.

By maximizing her energy, Barbara was able to get more done while she was at work and to enjoy her time away from the office. She received more referrals because she connected more deeply with clients and others who could send clients her way, and she reconnected with her husband. In our last conversation she told me, "This has been a very different approach to practice, and I was skeptical at first! Now I know that if I do the things that I've been doing, I can keep going and I can continue this practice. I enjoy it much more, I feel much better, and I am much better at it."

Action Steps

What changes will you choose to make to enhance your physical, mental, emotional, and purposeful energy? What habits can you put in place to protect the changes you make? Include some form of accountability or check-in to be sure that you're implementing the adjustments you want to make, and evaluate the effects you see every two to three months. **H**

JULIE A. FLEMING, J.D., A.C.C., is the founder of *Life at the Bar LLC*. Julie practiced law (specializing in patent litigation) for over a decade in firms ranging from two to more than 2,100 lawyers, before founding *Life at the Bar LLC* in 2005.

Archetypes of Gambling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not limited to, the condition known as pathological or compulsive gambling; increasing preoccupation with gambling; a need to bet more money frequently; restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop; "chasing" losses; and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting serious, negative consequences.

Pathological gambling is a process or behavioral addiction, although studies about the co-occurrence of gambling and alcohol reveal that problem drinkers are more likely to have a gambling addiction problem. Addiction is addiction—a disease of body (with genetic construction and predisposition), mind (personality orientation and brain configuration), and emotion (associated with other mental health problems like depression, anti-social and narcissistic personality structure and disorder,

and mood disorders in many cases). Risky attitudes and thinking affect one's health, brain activity and functions, functional and financial status, and relationships. In light of gambling's pervasive effects and consequences, it is helpful to see addiction to this disease as a spiritual malady in addition to a treatable disorder. And if the attraction to risk is as pervasive as the statistics would lead us to believe, the question must be asked: What is the soul seeking in its attraction to risk? What would be liberating and life-giving about the "gamble" if it were not literalized in a behavior?

An exploration of several components of gambling in light of ancient myths exposes the banal duplicity of gambling and the dangers that dangle, often unnoticed, by a thin thread above the heads of some who play its games. Embodying that duplicity in story engages the complex reality that is taking place in gaming for those personalities with an attraction to risk and a genetic predisposition to compulsion. If we can engage

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David E. Behrend, M.Ed, director of CPS For Lawyers has worked with referrals through many CoLAP offices and rehab centers for over 13 years. Excellent national resource lawyers. Contact: Behrend42@aol.com or 610/658-9838.

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the “fantasy” of risk—the essential truth of its myth—perhaps we can find freedom from its imprisoning compulsion.

Risk and the Sword of Damocles

Cicero told the story of the *Sword of Damocles* based on a legend about the tyrant Dionysius II of Syracuse and his fawning subject, Damocles, who called Dionysius the most fortunate person ever. Dionysius offered his subject the opportunity to try out his lucky life, and Damocles readily accepted. Amid all the gold and luxuries that Damocles could enjoy, there was a sharp sword hanging from a slender thread that was in imminent danger of dropping. Damocles quickly wished to go back to his less fortunate life. The value of this myth lies in the double-edged sword of the “lucky.” Those who have much to lose realize that the risk of loss increases exponentially with increased gain. When one longs for the charmed life, the good life of ease and luxury, characterized by “getting something for nothing,” there is little consideration of the sword that dangles precariously overhead by a thin thread. Perhaps that thread that holds the sword represents the thin line between pleasure and pain, control and its loss, and the sword portrays the double edge of destruction once the line is crossed or broken, severing one from financial security, family trust, and (perhaps worst of all) power to exercise one’s own will. The real message of the Damocles myth is the recognition of risk and danger in forgetfulness and the unconscious quest of acquisition.

Fortune’s Wheel

Yet another ancient conception is that of fortune as a wheel. The cycle of gain and loss are necessary to complete the full force of fortune—good and bad fortune. In Roman mythology, Fortuna, the goddess of fortune, was the personification of luck; hopefully she brought good luck, but she could also be represented as veiled and blind, much like modern depictions of Justice; and Fortune eventually came to represent the capriciousness of life and she was called “Fickle Fortune.” Fortuna was usually depicted holding in one hand a cornucopia, or a horn of plenty, from which all good things flowed in abundance, repre-

senting her ability to bestow prosperity; in the other, she generally has a ship’s rudder indicating that she is the one who controls how lives and fates are steered.

A myopic focus on good fortune and its gain without regard for loss drives the gamers’ desire for more. As is typical with all addictions, the belief in one’s ability to beat the odds and figure out the system is the single operative component that drives desire to the pathology of addiction. The gambler thinks, “It won’t happen to me.” As Norman Doidge, MD, author of *The Brain that Changes Itself* points out on page 102, “neuroplasticity isn’t all good news; it renders our brains not only more resourceful but also more vulnerable to outside influences. Neuroplasticity has the power to produce more flexible but also more rigid behaviors—a phenomenon I call ‘the plastic paradox.’” (New York: Penguin, 2007). What is lost in any addictive thinking or behavior is balance. Or to look at this issue from a Jungian perspective, what is lost is the shadow. There is no inclusivity in addiction; it is all or nothing, either/or. In addiction, the “middle” is lost and there is no room for moderation and balance. The gambling addict sees only the “win” side of fortune’s wheel. The concept of loss retreats to the dark recesses of repression and once pathological gambling has its hold on the gambler, the behavior swings between acting out “expression” of risk behavior and “repression” of literal behavior that only comes out sideways in inappropriate risk taking in relationships, business, consumption, and sex.

Gambling and Pandora’s Box

Yet another image of gambling can be found in the myth of Pandora’s Box. Whether one gambles in a casino or online, gambling always creates a box of sorts. Think of the image and containment of the casino large and small. Sometimes, the casino’s placement “outside the city,” indicates a removal from all that is considered legitimate commerce, indicating it is beyond the range of that which is acceptable. Certain cities like Las Vegas, London, Monte Carlo, New Orleans, and Atlantic City are defined by the multiplication of gambling casinos, strip clubs, and entertainment that define the city itself, which

is characterized as a “sin city,” where what’s done in Vegas, stays in Vegas. In other words, is put in a box of silence.

In the casinos themselves, slot machines (American), fruit machines (British), or poker machines (Australian) are casino gambling boxes with three or more reels that spin when a button is pushed. Slots are also known as one-armed bandits because they were originally operated by a lever on the side of the machine (the one arm) instead of a button on the front panel, and because of their ability to leave the gamer penniless. This innovative manufacturing refinement makes gambling with slot machines even more abstract, as the action of pushing a button requires less effort than pulling a lever, even though many modern machines still have a legacy lever in addition to the button. The evolutionary design of the machines over time has further separated the gamer from an embodied experience. Slot machines are the most popular gambling method in casinos and constitute about 70 percent of the average casino’s income. It is estimated that 30 percent or more of the profits from gambling machines come from problem gamblers who mindlessly drop money into these boxes.

Today, Internet gaming is big business. This box is a flat screen, which may be opened at home or at work with the potential theft of time, money, and attention from commitments. The origin of gambling is always related to theft in myth. After Prometheus’s theft of the secret of fire, Zeus ordered Hephaestus to create the woman Pandora as part of the punishment for mankind. Pandora was given many seductive gifts from Aphrodite, Hermes, Hera, Charites, and Horae (according to *Works and Days*). For fear of additional reprisals, Prometheus warned his brother Epimetheus not to accept any gifts from Zeus, but Epimetheus did not listen, and married Pandora. Pandora had been given a large jar and instruction by Zeus to keep it closed, but she had also been given the gift of curiosity, and ultimately opened it. When she opened it, all of the evils, ills, diseases, and burdensome labor that mankind had not known previously, escaped from the jar, but it is said, that at the very bottom of her box, there lay hope. The only hope at the bottom of gambling’s

box is that one reaches the bottom. Hope flies out with all the evils of loss, isolation, emotional and spiritual bankruptcy. It is still available in the world if one seeks it.

Casinos and the Fantasy of Place

These images of gambling's risk that are offered to us from myth (the dangling sword, the wheel, and the box) offer insights into the seduction of the environment of gaming, like the places connected with a love affair with any mood altering substance, person, or behavior is the first indicator that deserves attention. Stand in any casino literally or imaginatively and read the place. Release from the chronology of clock time removes restriction to time. While clocks are mandated, they are elusively placed and not readily visible from most vantage points. The casino is a timeless place with an overlay of darkness pierced by glaringly brilliant light. Here, day and night are indeterminable and accountability is lost. Rollup, the process of dramatizing a win by playing sounds while the meters count up to the amount that has been won, increases visual and aural seduction of winning's flashing lights and sound the payoffs that shut down normal thought processes and any body indicators

that might tell the gambler that he is tired or hungry or lonely or has had enough. This visual and auditory assault deepens the already heightened trance that is at the core of the gambling addict's process. The regulators of feeling are externalized from the body by the winning response in the machines, the brilliant lights, and the apparent disappearance of time.

Any single element of place paints a bold and seductive face on gambling and risk taking. Glaring lights are Luciferian, belying the dark repetition that the brain activity and programming of gambling's mental exercise has no ill effect on brain function. Add to this the hidden alternate release and retraction of dopamine and serotonin to the neuroreceptors in the brain that accompanies the win/loss cycle of gambling and the overt excitement of strategy and choice fall prey to the covert brain patterns of the game. The light portends daytime accomplishment and achievement but it is a false light, subject to the capriciousness of luck, not human effort.

Wall Street's Poker Face

Trading floors replicate the adrenaline rush of gaming tables or slot machines. Stock traders usually try to profit from

short-term price volatility with trades lasting anywhere from several seconds to several weeks. Brett N. Steenbarger, Ph.D., associate clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York, and author of *The Psychology of Trading* (Wiley, 2003), has mentored numerous traders and coordinated a training program for traders. An active trader of the stock indexes, Steenbarger utilizes statistically based pattern recognition for intraday trading. He has written numerous articles about when trading becomes an addiction and maintains a blog to interact with traders who think they might have a problem (www.brettsteenbarger.com). Steenbarger exonerates trading as an exercise of the brain and will, saying that it involves ongoing analysis and problem solving, and it requires the steady development of performance-based skills. However, it can also be a vehicle for destroying mind and soul.

In "Addictive Trading," an article on Steenbarger's website, he states, "An addiction occurs when an activity provides a strong source of stimulation that, over time, leads to psychological and sometimes physical dependence. We generally label

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Around the LAPs

Alabama

The Alabama Lawyers Assistance Program (ALAP) has hired a new case manager to assist in providing services to members in need. Shannon Knight has completed her masters in psychology and is enthusiastic about working with us and has begun taking over many of our cases. She has worked with members of the legal profession for several years and comes to us from Lawyer Referral. I am looking forward to introducing her at the National Conference.

ALAP received a special gift this month. We had a self-referral client complete our program and much to our surprise he wrote a \$10,000 check to our Lawyer Assistance Foundation (ALAF). ALAF is a nonprofit corporation [501(c)(3)] under the management of an elected board of directors. The purpose of the foundation is to provide financial assistance in the form of loans to pay for treatment expenses. These loans are available to Alabama lawyers suffering with addiction and other types of mental health disorders who cannot afford to pay for treatment. ALAF has raised almost \$225,000 to date and has financially assisted over thirty-nine lawyers in obtaining appropriate care. JEANNE MARIE LESLIE

Arkansas

Sarah Cearley, Ph.D., LCSW, became the second executive director of Arkansas Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (ArJLAP) in December 2008. Dr. Cearley worked as director for client services with Dr. Gail Harber for two-and-a-half years before Dr. Harber retired this winter.

In the fall of 2008, CoLAP members Bill Leary and Michael Cohen conducted a thorough evaluation of JLAP. Based on their recommendations, JLAP has begun working with the Arkansas Bar and its Lawyers Helping Lawyers Committee

to create a Peer Counselor Program. In March, Dr. Cearley attended Tennessee's LAP Retreat and Peer Counselor Training to learn how they do it. What a great example of how LAPs work! SARAH CEARLEY

Maine

David Kee retired at the end of December as director of the Maine Assistance Program (MAP) for Lawyers and Judges. David became the program's first director after it was established in 2002. His hard work and enormous talent was largely responsible for developing MAP into a comprehensive statewide program that has assisted more than four hundred Maine attorneys and judges. In January, David and MAP's commission chair, Bill Cote, received the John W. Ballou Award from the Maine State Bar Association (MSBA) for their extraordinary efforts leading to the establishment and growth of MAP. The award was presented at the MSBA's winter banquet and honors individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the furtherance of the legal profession in Maine.

After several months of well-earned relaxation in Satasota, Florida, with his wife, Paula, David will return to Maine in April and assume the position of MAP's number one volunteer. David is succeeded by Bill Nugent, a former Portland attorney and longtime MAP volunteer.

Michigan

On April 16, 2009, the Michigan LJAP, in conjunction with Brighton Hospital, hosted its first annual fund-raising dinner. The dinner featured world-renowned authors and speakers, Jeff and Debra Jay. All proceeds from this event went to the Richard Steinberg Memorial Fund. MARTHA BURKETT

Minnesota

Diane Markel, MS LADC, has joined Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers as half-time case manager. She was previously employed at Hazelden where she worked in the MORE program and the family program. JOAN BIBELHAUSEN

Mississippi

The Mississippi Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program (LJAP) has just finished and presented to the Mississippi Supreme Court

the results of a three-year study completed by a commission appointed by the court to address the concerns of impaired lawyers. The report is comprehensive in nature and facilitated by the wealth of information, surveys, model programs, and forecasting of CoLAP. The commission's appointment is the result of the suicide of Billy Hood of Gulfport, Mississippi, who was a well-known lawyer and who had just served as president of the Southeastern Defense Bar. With his family's permission, Billy's death has helped to shine a very bright light on the value of the work of LJAP saving careers and lives and families of lawyers. Thanks to the devotion of the volunteers who make LAPs possible across the country. BETTY DAUGHTERY

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program (NHLAP) continues to build and will be incorporated as of April 1. We continue to get our message of confidential assistance out. Most recently we presented at our law school, featuring Chief Justice John Broderick speaking on the importance to lawyers finding life balance, by persisting in outside activities that matter to us—while in law school and after we become lawyers. He spoke compassionately about asking NHLAP for assistance when and if it is needed. He shared that as a young lawyer, his mentor was an established New Hampshire lawyer who had almost lost his career due to alcoholism, but who found recovery, salvaging his life and career. His message was well received, and I believe that the assurance of the top jurist in our small state could go a long way to alleviating the fear and stigma of asking for help.

Another positive development is that the court has called a meeting of the powers that be in New Hampshire to discuss the practical and procedural considerations respecting conditional admission (CA). The CA concept has already been introduced by the direct action of the court referring cases to me and I have also received referrals from the Character and Fitness Committee. However, the process is not established, and continued ambiguity could lead to overall discouragement. I have taken steps to provide education on the matter, and I am happy that the court has taken this additional step to organize

the effort. After an initial meeting between NHLAP, Discipline, Character and Fitness, Bar Examiner, and the court this month, we may have a CoLAP commission member (thanks in advance to Terry Harrell!) come to offer experience and advice.

I look forward to the meetings in Montana and Chicago, and always return with ideas for how to make NHLAP work. I continue to think of our program as an arm of CoLAP, making every effort to institute the practices I observe in other states in a way that will benefit NH lawyers.

Thanks to you all for being there!
CECILE B. HARTIGAN

New York

Our spring retreat in the beautiful Adirondack Mountains will be held May 15–17, in Silver Bay, New York. Many LAP people from surrounding states make the journey to join us. I cordially invite LAPs from all over the country to join us as well. We are privileged to have New Jersey LAP assistant director, Nancy Stek, conduct our Saturday morning CLE on stress hardiness. Call Linda McMahon at 518/487-5686 for more information or to make reservations.

The Honorable Sallie Krauss is concluding her term as the New York State Bar Association Lawyer Assistance committee chair. She has been an outstanding leader and has done a remarkable job advancing the committee's mission. We look forward to introducing our new chair once that person is appointed.

Oregon

The Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP) is off to a running start this year with new groups, presentations, and planning for annual events. Shari Gregory and Meloney Crawford Chadwick are facilitating a group for adult children of dysfunctional families. Shari also began a six-week group for lawyers interested in improving their personal and professional effectiveness, which received even more responses from male attorneys when she titled it a "workshop" rather than a group!

In February, the OAAP sponsored a Brown Bag Luncheon Series entitled "Challenges Families Face." The series featured the following seminars: "Kids and Drugs" by Marv Seppala; "Older Adults" by Meloney Crawford Chadwick; "What

Can You Do When Someone in Your Family Experiences Depression, Anxiety, or other Mental Health Issues" by Clifford A. Johannsen; and "Gambling" by Meloney Crawford Chadwick, who replaced Richard Johnson at the last minute. The presentations were recorded and are available to lawyers statewide.

Spring is typically a busy time of year at the OAAP, and this year is no exception. The well-received Retirement Planning Workshop presented by Mike Long and Pat Funk was in Medford, Oregon, on April 3, for lawyers in Southern Oregon. Meloney and Shari are thrilled to be planning the Second Annual Women's Wellness Retreat, cosponsored by Oregon Women Lawyers. One of the OAAP's most popular events, the Annual Dinner for Lawyers in Recovery, will celebrate its twenty-first year on April 24.

Finally, the OAAP is pleased to announce that our colleague, Douglas Querin received the 2008 Distinguished Service Award from the Oregon Counseling Association. MELONEY CRAWFORD CHADWICK

Virginia

Virginia held their biannual conference March 13–14, in Williamsburg, Virginia. The conference included presentations on depression within the legal profession, sex addiction, diversity and inclusion, hardiness training, working with the board of bar examiners, impairment within the judiciary, and an unveiling of the recently completed survey of impairment of Virginia lawyers. JIM LEFFLER

Washington

The Washington State Bar Association has two groups, of ten lawyers each, meeting weekly for eight weeks. The focus of these meetings is support and guidance for unemployed lawyers. We are using Richard Bolles book *What Color Is Your Parachute*, 2009 edition, as the text for the groups. A third group will be started very soon. We have decided to enlist LAP Peer Counselors to work with group members individually so that they can practice skills they've learned in the group. The peer counselors are very enthusiastic to be of assistance.

BARBARA HARPER

Archetypes of Gambling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

a behavior as an addiction when people seek out the activity even in the face of demonstrable negative consequences. It is the inability to stop the activity when those consequences interfere with life that marks any addiction." Steenbarger goes on to say that nearly one trader in every ten has a diagnosable addictive problem.

Once one has recognized that risky behavior is a problem and is not the solution it seemed to be, how does one deal with addictive trading (or other activities)? The first step is to identify it, but the second—and harder—step is to acknowledge that you need help for it. Pride tells us we can handle it on our own through will power, but addictions wouldn't occur in the first place if will power were sufficient to control the process.

When trading becomes addictive, that is an indication that brain patterns have changed and the only solution to begin to restore healthy brain activity, self control, and the restoration of a life is to stop, because the brain will not learn a *new* pattern while the old one is *perceived* to be more preferable. After the activity or behavior that has initiated the imbalance has been stopped, a life of recovery requires a cultivation of an internalized sense of wholeness, acceptance, and moderation in all areas of life. The recovering gambler will acknowledge the inherent danger that dangles by a thin thread overhead, recognize that fortune is a wheel that spins out loss as well as gain, and that risk taking that has become pathological is an imprisoning box. According to Steenbarger, exchanging addiction for control is the best trade one can make. Spiritual healing begins when one admits they are "all out of chips." Powerlessness is the foundational qualifier for a "power greater than self" that can break the bondage of the addiction. Just as gambling addiction spins out of control as a process, so is finding the strength of freedom a long slow process of recovery once hope is found at the bottom of Pandora's Box of ills. **H**

JAMES C. "JES" MONTGOMERY, MD, is medical director and **SHERRY K. YOUNG, PH.D.** is national marketing coordinator at *Santé Center for Healing in Argyle, Texas.*

the abyss, in the darkness, alone. I remember well people coming up to me at my tenth, twentieth, and thirtieth high school reunions and saying, “Jeff Beck, I remember you . . . drugs and gambling.” I always felt that was better than not being remembered.

How the Gambling Began

My gambling began with weekend card games. It was a way to get out of my house, to bond with others, and to be competitive. I got a sense of exhilaration when I won and true despondency when I lost. The amounts did not matter, whether pennies or dollars, I needed to be respected as a good card player and as a winning gambler.

At fourteen I made my first excursion to the racetrack and I fell in love. The whole environment enthralled me. I vividly remember the first time I went to the track and bet \$5 to win and got back \$17. I had my utopia, a world where I could thrive. I loved the excitement, the characters at the track, the flashing ever-changing odds board. I attempted to use my mathematical adeptness to calculate the most efficient way to bet. Throughout my high school years I went to the track at least twice a week and often cut school to attend the races. I felt alive there—my natural shyness disappeared as I felt I could talk to anyone with a racing form.

I went away to college to Washington University in Saint Louis. I remember my college interview. I was asked if I had any questions. I responded, “Yes, are there any racetracks nearby?” and was told it was illegal in Missouri but there were two tracks across the river in Illinois. That made up my mind. My freshman year at college my gambling got out of control. I had a very fixed schedule and school did not fit in at all. I played gin (for money of course) from 2 to 4 p.m. Backgammon was from 4 to 6 p.m. We would then leave for the track and return around 11:30 p.m. At midnight the poker game would begin and would only stop when some of the players had to go to morning classes. I would then go to sleep, wake up around 2 p.m., and start all over again. I came very close to

flunking out my freshman year; I liked to say I was majoring in gambling.

I somehow made it through college and into law school. It was at this time that I began betting on football games. My story is the representation of what is referred to as progression. I originally bet only professional football games—two a week and those that were on television for a small stake. By the fourth week of the season I was betting four games a week, by the eighth week I was wagering on six games

I kidded myself into thinking it was just friends getting together—it was the gambling that drew me to Vegas and kept me returning.

a week. By week ten I had three bookies instead of one, not in order to shop for best lines but because I was a little embarrassed about how much I was betting, and felt by spreading it around no one would be too critical of me. The bets kept getting bigger and bigger, far beyond my means. But I was betting with credit, and when I bet fourteen games, I figured even on a really bad week I would go six and eight. By the second year, I included Saturday college football in my betting and the numbers became staggering. But it was not real to me, only numbers on a piece of paper. It reminded me of when I was in London at a casino I would bet pounds as if they were dollars—it was the action, not the amount. Fortunately, or unfortunately as one might choose to believe, I had wealthy and generous parents so whenever I got into financial problems with my gambling they would bail me out.

Through my eighteen year career as a lawyer I continued to gamble with frequency and urgency. I had two vacations every year. Every August I would go with friends to Saratoga for three days. I actually started a Saratoga fund whereby I would put away \$100 a week for the trip. I loved the elegance of Saratoga, the class of the people, the dress and style. I would stay at hotels that were \$90 a night eleven months a year and \$350 a night in August. I would take limos from the hotel to the track. I felt it was the best place on earth. I could feel comfortable as a degenerate and could actually attain respectability and even big-shot status

My second vacation was in October to Vegas. I would go every year with four friends who I had gone to kindergarten with. I loved the lights of Vegas, the excitement. I could not bring enough money for the four-day excursion; whatever I had I would race through in hours and have to get more. I kidded myself into thinking it was just friends getting together—it was the gambling that drew me to Vegas and kept me returning.

The gambling was about money, but it was really about much more. It was the excitement and the adrenaline. It was also a cure for boredom. Gambling was my mistress so there was no room for anyone else in my life. I tended to be a loner but when I was gambling, I felt I was with many other people and thus saw it, in part, as a social activity. It was an intellectual challenge, testing my ability against others. It was an emotional release, a freedom, a chance to throw away the law books and focus on what was inside me. It was a physical sensation, when I went three days without the track I felt a loss, an emptiness. Gambling made me feel alive and real.

My History with Addiction

I have a history of addiction. I was a three-pack-a-day smoker for twelve years and decided in law school that it was time to quit. I went through a program called Smokenders, a behavior modification program. I learned to change brands, take hot baths to drain off nicotine, wait for increasing periods to smoke after eating, and other tactics to help stop. It was a five-week program and I have not had a cigarette

since February 23, 1979. I remember at the conclusion of the five-week course we were told to celebrate giving up cigarettes, so I went to Atlantic City for the weekend.

I had a serious problem with marijuana and cocaine. I smoked pot every day for twenty-two years and developed a cocaine habit that lasted ten years. I was arrested for possession of marijuana in 1991 and decided it was time to deal with the issue. I entered an intensive outpatient program, 6 to 10 p.m., four nights a week for six months, two nights a week for four months, and once a week for two months. The program was a combination of 12-step, group therapy, creative therapy, and education. I have not had a drug or drink since February 23, 1991. The program expressed concern about my gambling but I was not ready or willing to address same.

My gambling continued at a frenetic pace. I had a nice condominium, a good law job, and I saw my gambling as a distraction. It was, of course, more of an obsession. It was what kept me going day to day, the source of my joy and energy. Friends and family expressed concern about my gambling but I laughed it off.

A Turning Point

By 1996 I had lost my passion for the law and decided to make a career change. I considered several options and chose to pursue a career in counseling. I felt I had great knowledge of addiction, that others had helped me, and that I could repay that debt by helping others. I enrolled in a program called Recovery Assistance Training Program to get the necessary educational hours to get certified as an alcohol and drug counselor. On January 3, 1997, I attended a six-hour presentation on compulsive gambling. I heard myself described to a tee and it hit home. If I wanted to help others didn't I have to help myself? I wrote a letter to Ed Looney, who had given the lecture. Ed is the executive director of the New Jersey Council on Compulsive Gambling. He invited me to dinner and on January 12, 1997, he took me to my fist Gamblers Anonymous (GA) meeting. I have not made a bet since that day.

When I stopped cigarettes and drugs, I changed my behavior. When I stopped gambling, I began to change me. The ben-

efits of GA have been overwhelming for me. I got the confidence to return to school and get a masters in addiction counseling and then complete all course work for a Ph.D. in social work. I began to work on my character defects, the things that had haunted me throughout my life. I addressed my procrastination, my self pity, my stubbornness. I got married in 1998, and though that did not work out, I got married again in 2007 and this is a wonderful relationship. I am now a licensed professional counselor, a certified compulsive gambling counselor, and a certified anger management therapist. I counsel clients with gambling addiction and mental health issues. I lecture on compulsive gambling to the public, to students, and to counselors.

GA saved my life. I attend a meeting every Saturday morning—it is a wonderful way to start my week; it is my sanctuary. I have developed wonderful friendships through GA. I now understand that I am not alone—that others have gambling problems and that help is available. Two years ago I had a big fiftieth birthday celebration and two tables were filled by GA friends. I have learned a new self respect. I know that I can never gamble “normally” again. I do things to excess, moderation is not possible for me. I know if I went to the track and made a \$2 bet I would be off to the races. I have learned to respect my illness, that I am a compulsive gambler and will always be one. I have managed to put that illness into remission but I know it can come back to bite me so I am very protective. I am now the managerial assistant at the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey where my focus is on presentations, research, supervision of counselors, writing, and special projects. In 2008 and 2009, I was national chairman for National Problem Gambling Awareness Week. I try to follow the 12th step of GA—carry the message to others still suffering. It took my abstinence to understand how unmanageable my life was and how powerless I am over gambling. GA has been the greatest blessing in my life. It has allowed me to heal previously damaged relationships and to make new exciting ones. I have gotten to meet and befriend wonderful people. My life was once controlled by a need to gamble, it is now controlled by a need to

not gamble. That is a 360 degree turn and I am so much the better for it.

When I celebrated ten years in GA in 2007, I listed my top ten benefits of being in GA. They are:

1. Bless me with great friends and support network.
2. Realize untapped potential.
3. Gave me satisfaction of counseling problem gamblers.
4. Provided clarity and purpose in life.
5. Gambling no longer my mistress and I'm now happily married.
6. Time became a friend rather than an enemy.
7. Began lifetime work on character defects.
8. Self confidence let me change careers.
9. Source for my spirituality and values.
10. Adds structure and organization to my life. **H**

JEFF BECK is a managerial assistant at the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey. He is a licensed professional counselor, certified compulsive gambling counselor, and anger management therapist in Springfield, New Jersey. He resides in Lawrenceville and celebrated twelve years abstinence from gambling in January of this year.

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