



## WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR: Potawatomi Hotel & Casino

### Gambling Addiction Triggers

Unfortunately for men and women with gambling addictions, opportunities to indulge in this potentially self-destructive pastime are endless. It wasn't always this way, but with the arrival of the Internet, gambling websites became plentiful and are now just a click away for recovering compulsive gamblers who might easily plunge headlong into the abyss.

If you've struggled with a gambling problem, you know that beating a gambling addiction is not easy and can only be accomplished one day at a time. Making the decision over and over not to gamble is the only way to preserve the integrity of your addiction recovery plan, and that can be quite a challenge. Gambling addictions are notoriously hard to subdue and control.

#### Triggers and the Ever-present Risk of Relapse

Wherever there is addiction, there are always risk factors for relapse. There are events, circumstances or even individuals that can trigger a recovering gambler's fall from grace.

One of the most critical aspects of overcoming a gambling addiction is to identify these triggers, and drag them out from the shadows of the subconscious and into the light. Doing this drains them of their power to sabotage recovery.

No two problem gamblers are exactly alike, but there are some common patterns to gambling relapse triggers that can make them easier to spot.

#### Trigger #1: Strong Emotional Responses

A key ingredient of gambling addictions is emotion. Gambling plays a role in helping addicts manage difficult emotions.

Gambling addiction is a compulsion but it is also a coping mechanism — a way of escape from psychological disturbance and discomfort. When problem gamblers experience stress, frustration, disappointment, anger, fear or boredom, they will often turn (or *return*, in the case of recovering addicts who relapse) to gambling to help ease their pain or restore their emotional equilibrium.

Using gambling to cope with life's challenges is one of the biggest predictors of an eventual gambling addiction. Once such behavior becomes entrenched it changes from a voluntary choice to a reflex, and it is the type of reflex that can undermine your recovery and trigger a relapse. This can happen if you aren't prepared to handle negative emotions in a more constructive way.

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#### 2018 Board of Directors:

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**Heather Herres**-  
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“Gambling disorder, which is also known as gambling addiction and compulsive gambling, is an often misunderstood problem that is characterized by an inability to control the urge to gamble even after this behavior has exerted a negative impact on a person’s life. Gambling disorder compels people to neglect and/or deceive family and friends, endanger their financial well-being, and put their careers in jeopardy, all in pursuit of a tantalizing and elusive emotional high that is associated with games of chance.”

**New Outreach Coordinator**

Hi! My name is **Erin Fisher**. I am the new Outreach Coordinator with the Council. I was born and raised in Suring, WI, which is about an hour north of Green Bay. After high school I attended UW-Stevens Point and majored in social work and sociology. During my last semester there I did an internship in the child welfare unit and focused on foster care. Shortly after graduating I found this job and have loved it ever since. In my free time I enjoy running, reading books and spending time outside. I look forward to working more with the Council.



**2018/2019 TRAINING SCHEDULE**

**“The Stakes Are High”**

Six Continuing Education Units For \$20.00

**September 28, 2018**  
Franciscan Spirituality Center  
920 Market Street  
La Crosse, WI  
8am-3pm

**October 5, 2018**  
Wildwood Lodge  
N14W24121 Tower Place  
Pewaukee, WI  
8am-3pm

**Register online at:**

<https://goo.gl/forms/4gYwUTcUSNfRCaTs1>

The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling Inc. is pleased to be able to offer 6 hours of the “The Stakes Are High,” an introduction to gambling disorder training.

Attendees will gain knowledge on the far-reaching effects of this devastating addiction. Information will be given on high risk populations, co-occurring disorders, types of gamblers and the differences between this and other addictions.



**WCPG Phase 1-4 Training Program**

**Location:**

Holiday Inn Pewaukee  
N14 W24140 Tower Pl.  
Pewaukee, WI 53072

**Dates:**

Phase 1-November 1-2, 2018  
Phase 2-December 6-7, 2018  
Phase 3-January 10-11, 2019  
Phase 4-February 7-8, 2019

**Times:**

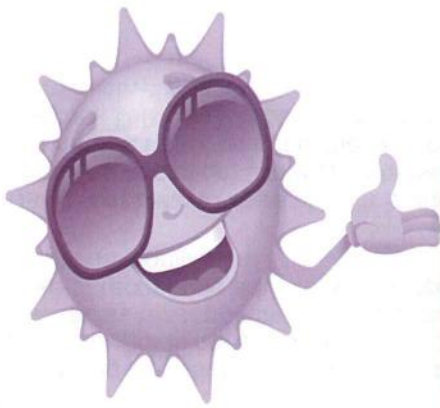
Thursday:  
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Friday:  
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
(1 hour lunch)

**Total Cost:**

Phases taken separately: \$125 each  
Phase 1 & Phase 2: \$175  
Phase 3 & Phase 4: \$175  
All Four Phase Trainings: \$300

**Enrollment is limited and pre-registration is necessary.**





## Mark Your Calendars!

**Save the Date:**  
**20th Annual Wisconsin Council on  
Problem Gambling Statewide Conference**

March 14th and 15th, 2019 at Blue Harbor Resort in Sheboygan  
Pre-conference to be held on March 13th

For more information call 920-437-8888,  
email [wcpbg@wi-problemgamblers.org](mailto:wcpbg@wi-problemgamblers.org), or visit our website at  
[www.wi-problemgamblers.org](http://www.wi-problemgamblers.org)

### Gambling Addiction Triggers cont.

#### Trigger #2: Environment

It is important to realize that opportunities to gamble are everywhere. Stores sell lottery tickets, slot machines are found in bars or clubs, and online gaming and wagering sites are always accessible whenever you're online. All can offer temptation.

Temptation also comes in the form of friends and acquaintances with whom you may have gambled with in the past. Being careful about where you go, what you do, and who you do it with are all essential strategies for gambling addicts who are serious about their recovery. Environmental triggers can weaken your resolve and leave you vulnerable to influences you swore you'd never be affected by again.

#### Trigger #3: Money Shortages or Debt

Compulsive gambling is a losing proposition, both personally and financially. But when you need money and need it fast, gambling might seem like a legitimate way to solve your problems.

You should be clear about what your gambling addiction means. It means you have a history of rationalizing to excuse your gambling behavior and that it will be incredibly difficult to stop if you start again. "Just this one time" is not a phrase a problem gambler should ever use, regardless of the circumstances or the urgency of the cause or motivation.

#### Trigger #4: Substance Abuse

Drugs and alcohol affect judgment and reduce impulse control, which makes substance abuse and gambling a toxic combination. Studies show that between 10% and 20% of those with substance abuse disorders also suffer from gambling addictions. This connection is certainly not a coincidence, and there is little doubt that being under the influence of drugs or alcohol (even if you aren't addicted to them) can undermine your recovery from gambling dependency — in a heartbeat.

#### Therapy and the Quest to Understand Your Gambling Addiction

While you should be able to identify at least some of your gambling triggers through private self-reflection, this is a topic you should discuss frequently during your addiction counseling sessions and also during your Gamblers Anonymous meetings (assuming there is a chapter in your area that you actively attend). Your therapist and your peers can give you valuable insight and feedback, helping you gain greater understanding about your gambling behavior and the circumstances that cause or encourage it.

**Resources:** New York Council on Problem Gambling: Staying Safe after Problem Gambling



### Congratulations!

A BIG Congratulations to our Executive Director, **Rose Blozinski**, as she celebrated 21 years with the Council on July 5th! Thank you for all of your wisdom and all you do, Rose!

Our Operations Manager, **Cheri Cuny**, also celebrated a huge milestone! Cheri celebrated 15 years with the Council on August 4th. Thank you for everything, Cheri!





For help, call: 1-800-GAMBLE-5

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Green Bay, WI 54311  
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on Problem Gambling  
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**VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT:** The WCPG is currently accepting volunteers. Anyone interested in donating their time and skills to the organization by helping with administrative projects is encouraged to contact us at (920)437-8888.

**RESOURCE LIBRARY:** The WCPG has both books and videos in our lending library. Materials can be loaned out on a two week basis. These materials can also be mailed to you. For more information, call Heather at (920) 437-8888 or e-mail her at: [conference@wi-problemgamblers.org](mailto:conference@wi-problemgamblers.org)

**The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling, Inc. provides resources, public awareness and education on gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling.**

- Our goals are to:**
- Promote public education and awareness of gambling disorders.
  - Maintain a toll-free statewide Helpline where people with gambling disorders and their families can call for immediate and continuing assistance in dealing with the addiction.
  - Advocate quality assistance for all individuals affected by gambling disorders.
  - Identify "high risk" individuals and groups with gambling disorders and provide prevention activities and information.
  - Provide expert training to professional counselors in the treatment of gambling disorders.
  - Compile and maintain a database of statistical information concerning gambling disorders in Wisconsin.