

What's the score on your New Year's resolutions?

January is already over. It's been a hot start to 2008 - hot in the house if you've no air-conditioning and if you had time off from work or the kids were home from school, then routine was out the window. We've spoken to people who had a very difficult time of Christmas and New Year and also to some who got through it quite well.

Perhaps it's not lack of motivation but rather lack of know-how.

We're wondering what's happened to your New Year resolutions? Perhaps you decided to give them a miss, having been unsuccessful on previous occasions. Maybe you've made some and are putting them in place. Or maybe you have given them a try but are finding it hard going. Maybe you just want a better year than the last. What ever the case, we want to share some of the stories of people attending counselling to encourage you to develop some resolutions or approaches that can enrich your life this year.

Lucy decided she didn't want to be gambling and wanted to do other things with her time. She stopped gambling, threw herself into work to keep busy and then found herself tired and stressed about work. This year she has decided to experiment with some new activities, to get her out of the house, meeting different people and finding out what she might like to do. Experimenting means she gets to try several different activities, to observe herself and see what works for her. First she had to generate some ideas of activities she would like to try. She went to her local library, the local Community Information service and talked to friends. She got information about where and when these activities are on and has set herself a schedule to get to each activity over the next three months.

John is setting himself a clear budget to ensure he has money to live off - to cover living expenses, some entertainment and things for himself and to have some money aside for emergencies. What John is finding is that he has some attitudes that get in the way of following through on his financial plans. He has decided to explore the thinking which has made it hard to achieve his goals in the past and to seek to fill the gaps in his knowledge and experience. He is breaking down his financial plan into steps and ensuring that he takes all the steps he needs to achieve his goals.

Experimenting and exploring presumes that we don't have all the answers before we start, but that we need to undertake a careful process of research to identify our goals and how we get to our goals. It may mean we have to be clear about where 'there' is and to develop a map of how to get there. Frequently New Year's resolutions are abandoned, not because we aren't motivated, but because motivation by itself won't get us there. We need to work out where we want to go at this particular time in our lives and then know what steps are required along the way. Sometimes our

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motivation is not the problem. Sometimes we try, try again - but with no success - as we haven't recognised or learned the missing steps which keep tripping us up. Doing the same thing that didn't work last time, over and over again, seems pretty defeating. Perhaps it's not lack of motivation but rather lack of know-how.

So have a think of those New Year's resolutions...what might you do differently to get to where you want to be this year and who or what might help you to develop your map to get there?

(Both stories come from people who are attending counselling to address the issue of problem gambling. Names and any identifying information have been changed to maintain confidentiality.)

Looking for alternative activities? Try the following resources:

- In the Recreation Portal of the Gambler's Help Southern website at www.ghsouthern.org.au/mos/content/category/3/8/28/

- What's Your Interest?
- Do It!
- For Night Owls and Early Birds
- Not On My Own
- What's On?

- On the Go For Your Life website at www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au You can also ring the Go For Your Life Infoline on 1300 739 899.



GAMBLER'S HELP™ 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Parkinson's and Problem Gambling

The link between problem gambling and Parkinson's is in the news. A segment on ABC TVs "7.30 Report" and an ABC News article, both by journalist Lisa Whitehead, discuss the side effects of certain Parkinson's medications and the pending class action against the pharmaceutical companies involved.

People taking part in the legal action say that while the drug has helped them to control Parkinson's symptoms such as tremors, stiffness and slowness of movement, it has led to behaviours including problem gambling, compulsive shopping and hyper-sexuality.

Parkinson's is a progressive, neurological condition involving a disturbance in the coordination of movement. The loss of cells in part of the brain is associated with lowered levels of the chemical dopamine. Dopamine is not only responsible for movement, but also learning and reward systems in the brain. Dopamine Agonists are drugs which restore the imbalance of dopamine. A neurologist interviewed for the news article, Dr Andrew Evans, says the drug may lead to compulsive behaviours by overstimulating or sensitising these reward systems. People with Restless Leg, Essential Tremor and Tourette's Syndrome may also be prescribed these drugs.

Client Services Coordinator for Parkinson's Victoria, Amanda Spillare, recently spoke to Gambler's Help Community Educators about this issue. Dopamine agonists have been linked to problem gambling behaviours in 7.3% of users. This is considered an underestimate. People with Parkinson's are already regarded as vulnerable to gambling issues due to a range of psycho-social issues. Ms Spillare said that the the best thing for a person with Parkinson's to do is to report any problem gambling behaviour to their neurologist so that their drug schedule can be changed.

For more on information on Parkinson's, visit the Parkinson's Victoria website at <http://www.parkinsonsvic.org.au/index.htm> or call the Toll Free information Line on 1800 644 189.

Links to:

- the transcript of the "7.30 Report" segment <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2143263.htm>
- the article "Patients to launch class action over Parkinson's drug" <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/22/2143502.htm>
- the symptom management information sheet "Gambling & Parkinson's" http://www.parkinsons.org.au/documents/web_information_sheet_gambling.pdf

Do you work in the Health or Welfare Sector?
Then the Problem Gambling Resource Kit For Professionals is for you...



The Kit has been developed to assist a range of health and welfare workers to identify and respond to problem gambling in their day-to-day work. Call Gambler's Help Southern on 9575 5353 to get your copy.



Victorian Commission
for Gambling Regulation
UPDATE

Gaming Venue Applications

Tooraddin & District Sports Club Tooraddin

Increase from 42 to 54 machines

Hearing adjourned at the request of the applicant, to a date to be fixed

Pakenham Lakeside Tavern Pakenham

New venue - 60 machines

Hearing adjourned at the request of the applicant, to a date to be fixed

Racers Entertainment Complex Pakenham

Increase from 92 to 105 machines

Decision pending

Playwriting Competition

**the write
stuff**

FOR THE RIGHT REASON

The Geelong Repertory Theatre Company has just launched a playwriting competition. Playwrights are asked to submit a one-act play centred around the theme "the impact of gambling on individuals, families and the community at large."

Winning entries will be workshopped and performed at the Woodbin Theatre in West Geelong and followed by a regional tour. This project is supported by Gambler's Help Barwon at Bethany Community Support and funded by the State Government's Problem Gambling Community Partnership Project Grants Scheme.

Visit the the Geelong Repertory's website at www.geelongrep.com.au for more details.

Press “i” for information



As of 1 January 2008, it is a requirement for all gaming machines in Victoria to be capable of generating and displaying on screen, certain types of electronic information. This rule has been in force for newly approved games for some time, but now applies to any machine, regardless of vintage.

- (d) the session win or loss - the difference² between credits won and credits played;
- (e) cash out - the amount² collected from the gaming machine by the player during a session;
- (f) credits available - the amount² that is currently available for the player to wager on the gaming machine;
- (g) the time the player began the session;
- (h) the current time of day;
- (i) the length of the session.
- (j) If jackpot win amounts are not included on the credit meter of a gaming machine, the electronic player information must include a statement that the information displayed may not include amounts won from a jackpot during that session.

Currently a player should be able to access and see displayed on screen, the following game information:

- (a) if the game is part of a linked jackpot¹;
- (b) the return to player rate of the game;
- (c) the jackpot contribution (if applicable)¹;
- (d) the average number of individual games played per any win, based on one line being played per game;
- (e) the chances or odds of achieving the top 5 and bottom 5 (in value) individual winning combinations;
- (f) the maximum and minimum bet options available.

All electronic game and player information is activated by selecting the “Information” button on the gaming machine.

Additionally, a player must be able to access certain kinds of player information relating to their session of play:

- (a) cash in - the amount² the player has put into the gaming machine during a session;
- (b) credits played - the amount² wagered by the player on the gaming machine during a session;
- (c) credits won - the amount² won by the player on the gaming machine during a session;

¹ There is a provision that jackpot information on a gaming machine that is part of a linked jackpot may be provided by an English language “talker” affixed to the machine, rather than electronically.

² expressed in dollars and cents.

Sources: www.justice.vic.gov.au; Victorian Appendix to Australian/New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard, Version 9.0; 5 December 2007; Tabcorp Player Information Display (PID) document, April 2003; Tattersalls Player Information Display document, June 2007.

The information in the table below has been sourced from Player Information Display screenshots supplied by the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR).

Game	Theoretical no. of individual games played per win	Top Winning Combination	Chance ¹	Bottom Winning Combination ²	Chance ¹
Sweet Hearts II	10.98	5 x Diamond	1 in 54,880,000	1 x Flame	1 in 52
Dragon Magic	9.89	5 x Pearl	1 in 51,704,680	1 x Phoenix 1 x Tiger	1 in 56
Queen of the Nile (Scorchin' Fortune)	8.87	5 x Cleopatra	1 in 39,283,200	2 x Pyramids	1 in 16
Dolphin Treasure	8.47	5 x DSunset	1 in 35,640,000	2 x Treasure	1 in 15
Geisha	8.70	5 x Geisha	1 in 35,640,000	2 x Gateway	1 in 15

¹ based on minimum bet selection and excluding feature wins
² shows bottom winning combination with the greatest chance of occurring

The “theoretical no. of individual games played per win” figure tells players how often, on average, any kind of win should occur. It’s worked out by the machine manufacturers by comparing the number of winning combinations in the game with the total number of possible combinations that can be produced by the machine. The figure shows that the majority of combinations possible on a pokie are losing combinations. eg. In the Sweet Hearts II game shown here, it (theoretically) takes 10.98 individual games to get 1 win. The spins that do not achieve wins are losing games.

A “win” can takes into account big, small or in-between wins. The player information display makes it clear that a player has a much greater chance of winning the smallest prize, than they do of winning the largest prize. Using the Sweet Hearts II example, it’s 1 in 52 compared with 1 in 54.88 million! Further, remember that depending on how a player is betting (multiple lines, multiple credits), sometimes a small win may not even cover the amount bet ie. that’s an overall loss.

GAMBLING SURVIVOR



Having a gambling problem may seem like a bad trip to a holiday island – it looked great in the brochures, seemed relatively cheap upfront and was full of fun, music and cheer when you arrived.

However, just as the gloss wears off the trip when you realise meals aren't included, the rooms need a makeover and the island is more mudflat than paradise, gambling fun can quickly become tarnished. It can be overshadowed by financial loss, juggling bills, stress, anxiety and complications in hiding your losses. You can feel quite alone on this island - even though it's crowded with people - finding it hard to share experiences and feeling increasingly disconnected from people or other activities. The island now seems lonely, overcast and the music has become, scarily, all too familiar.

Do you have the energy and resources to get off the island? Stopping gambling may feel like swimming out to sea - treading water, expending great energy, yet unsure if you're getting anywhere or indeed, unsure where you're going. The island you left behind for good reason may start to look appealing again. It's close, there's a routine, you know the place. In gambling terms it offers escape, pleasure, relief, a 'buzz' or a hope to win money. However, in swimming back to this island, ultimately no progress is made and the same issues keep arising.

So to help overcome the feeling of treading water, you need some water wings or buoys to help you stay afloat on your journey.

· **Get involved in projects.** Manageable jobs around your home or garden can provide a sense of achievement, distraction from the urge to gamble and help you to rediscover old skills or develop new ones.

· **Rewards are important.** They affirm your new journey and support a sense of feeling good. They can help you to revalue money and redirect funds, especially as pay or savings are often a trigger to gamble. While restoring finances may be a compelling reason to reduce or stop gambling, initially it may be worth investing in the process of **changing habits**. You can put some distance between the problem gambling behaviour (the island) and your new territory that offers greater stability, security and choices.

· **Building supports** such as those provided in counselling can bring further relief from feelings of disconnection and assist your journey by encouraging goal setting, greater control of finances, increased interest in other activities, plus healthier lifestyles and relationships.

BUILDING RESOURCES & SUPPORTS



Gambler's Help Southern provides free, confidential, professional support for gamblers, their families and others affected by gambling.

Services available include:

- Counselling for gambling related issues
- Financial Counselling
- Community Education & Development
- Professional Development
- Multicultural Services

We can also provide a wide range of resources and information such as:

- Self-help guides
- Materials for families & friends
- Brochures, posters & other display materials
- Personal stories
- Statistics & research
- Materials in community languages

All staff are qualified professionals and have experience dealing with gambling issues.

If you have concerns about your gambling, or the gambling of a family member or friend, call Gambler's Help Southern Intake between 9.30 am and 4.30 pm on 9575 5353 or the Gambler's Helpline which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 156 789.

**WANTED - FEEDBACK
ON GM: GAMBLING MATTERS
Go to www.ghsouthern.org.au
and follow the FEEDBACK link**

GAMBLER'S HELP™ 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

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