



How can partners influence the gambling habits of their gambler spouse?

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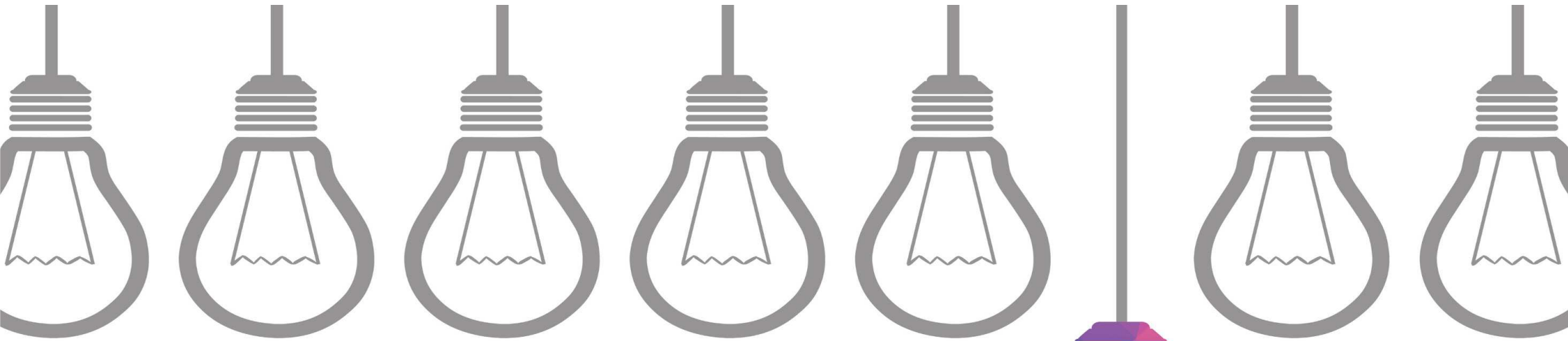
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**Mélissa Côté declare that they
have no conflict of interest.**

**The research project was
approved by an ethics
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- Partners in love with pathological gamblers experience negative consequences from their spouse gambling habits (Dickson-Swift et al., 2005; Holdsworth, Nuske, Tiyce, & Hing, 2013; Hodgins et al., 2007; Kourgiantakis, Saint-Jacques, & Tremblay, 2013; Mathews & Volberg, 2013; Patford, 2009)
- In order to adapt, it is recognized that the partner will use an amalgam of coping strategies to deal with this situation
- Key elements in intervention models (Copello, Templeton, Orford, & Velleman, 2010; Hodgins, Shead, & Makarchuk, 2007; Rychtarik & McGillicuddy, 2006)

Our research 1st article

***JGI* Scholar's Award, Category A**

A new look at the coping strategies used by the partners of pathological gamblers

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Abstract

People living with pathological gamblers (PGs) have to endure the negative consequences of their problem gambling. It is known that the partners of PGs will develop adaptation strategies to cope with gambling behaviour. However, research conducted on the topic is still in its early stages. The goal of this study was to draw up a portrait of the strategies employed, their context, means, and main goals, and to examine the variation of these strategies over time and the viewpoints of the 2 members of the couple. Using 19 semi-structured interviews, we noted that the partners used some 30 strategies aiming primarily at modifying the gamblers' pathological behaviour, and also at improving their own personal well-being. An analysis of the usage context illustrated the many possible interactions which occurred between individuals and their environment and which triggered a strategy's use. Generally speaking, both members of the couple had a similar perception of the strategies used by the partners. When partners realized that they had not influenced the PGs' habits, they sometimes changed adaptation strategies.



**Our research
Article #2 submit
November 28th 2018**

IMPACT ON GAMBLING BEHAVIOURS OR DESIRE TO PLAY

REDUCE

INCREASE

No
Change

High

Moderate

Light

Change

Light

Moderate

High



-10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 +6 +7 +8 +9 +10

WHAT ARE THE BEST STRATEGIES?





- All gamblers recognize that their partners can implement several coping strategies that will influence their gambling habits

Mechanisms that help decrease the desire to play:

1. Anticipation of conjugal separation (strategies #23 and #24):

«I'm afraid of losing her. Then, I'm afraid of losing my kids, so it has an impact for sure. Well, that is pretty much the main reason that I stop gambling. » [3031-Gambler]

«But when the fight started [...] and she told me she was going to leave me [...], the threats pushed me to go gamble because she wanted to control me too much. I did not take it, it made me angry, then I left and I went to gamble. » [3051_Gambler]



2. Awareness – Gambler (strategies #1, 5, 6, 18, 25):

Logical order:

- Realize the seriousness of his gambling behaviors
- Becomes aware of the extent of the negative impact engendered in the lives of the people they love
- Participation in new family or marital activities without gambling
- Disapproval of the partner against the gains from the gambling

«I-took-it hard, when I saw my wife crying because I saw all the harm I was doing to her. It helped me reduce to -8, it was strong. I took it hard because we don't like to see those we love cry. » [3051_Gambler]



3. Involvement of the partner (strategies # 3, 14, 15, 17, 18):

- **When using positive verbal reinforcement:**



«Instead of always getting angry at me, she showed me that she loved me, in this misery. It takes love. [...] she proved to me that she was there. It helped me.»
[3051-Gambler]

- **When the partner used behaviour reinforcement:**



«It reassures me, it reassures me very much, because she is totally with me in this step it helps me a lot. If I did not have her I'm not sure I would be here at the moment [in therapy]. She really pushed me to go. Yes, it helps me a lot. [...] If she was there and did not say a word, I would probably continue to gamble. » [3061_Gambler]



WHAT ARE THE WORST STRATEGIES?



What are the worst strategies?

1. Lack of involvement and understanding of the partner:

«If she ignores me. If for example she decides not to pay attention or act like she did not care about my problem well, it would increase my desire to gamble. Because I would have the impression that our couple isn't strong any more anyway.» [3031-Gambler]

«I thought she did not understand what I was going through, that she did not see the seriousness of the things I was going through. Because I did not find the support I wanted, my exit door was the gambling.» [3041-Gambler]



What are the worst strategies?

2. The gambler pleases his partner, the couple have a good time together (strategy # 28):

«I told her that I had not gambled big, that I had tried a machine and that it paid off. She was very happy that I won [...]. It made me feel good. I was happy. [...] Inside me, I already hated myself to gamble so when I pleased her with my winnings, well it calmed me down. » [3051_Gambler]





What are the worst strategies?

3. Supervision/External Control (strategies # 7, 9, 29):

« [...] I feel like gambling, but she refuses. Well, it reduces a little bit (-2, -3) on one side, but it has increased by a good more +6 on the other side. It's like a child who wants to have [something], but you do not give him right now, he becomes [then] more and more excited. » [3111-Gambler]

« I was more suspicious [when she suspected me]. I avoided going out I stayed at home. I did not pretend to go do this or that. I was doing everything to erase all suspicions. I could spend a week, two weeks, and when I saw that everything was back to normal, and that the confidence had returned well, there I went back to gamble. » [3041-Gambler]

KEY POINTS





- Partners use a variety of coping strategies to influence their spouse's gambling behaviors and to improve their own well-being or that of their family, their couple
- Partners must be considered active agents of change
- It is important to make partners aware of the most efficient strategies and those that may be outlawed
 - Link between marital conflict : gambling brings major marital problems but it is also considered as a solution that may Help gambler cope with these relational issues
- It is important to allocate part of the treatment to identify which coping strategies the partner is using



Comments and questions

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