

WANT TO STOP GAMBLING

© Jake Brindell (2006)

A free download from:

www.wanttostopgambling.com

(Word count 16,000 - approx. 1 hour read)

INTRODUCTION

'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'

(Proverb)

Hello fellow sufferer, thanks for downloading my book, I hope it really helps you. If it doesn't, maybe you could email me at the website and give me some feedback. I feel passionately about providing with you a service in the form of this short book and I know from personal experience of purchasing many 'stop gambling books' that there is a lot out there that fall well short of the mark.

CONGRATULATIONS on taking this huge step of reading this book if this is your first book about stopping problem gambling, if however like me, this is one of several books you have read then well done again, you know you're getting stronger.

My name is Jake Brindell and I live in Brighton (UK) and this book comes to you because I have suffered from problem gambling for 24 years, and am still suffering from the cause and effects of problem gambling i.e. DEBTS. Although this book may be written from a British point of view I would like to say that I am global in my thinking and I feel that problem gambling transcends all borders, although a few Native American and Australian aboriginal societies are an exception. They hold deep beliefs that wealth is owned in common rather than personally by individuals. See, the information journey has already begun, and I haven't even taken the car out of the garage.

The aim of this book is to carry on in that same tradition; it is a book for both sexes, all ages, all colours, creeds and religions. It matters not if you're a teenager that has got 'carried away', a middle aged woman who's just spent her life savings or a person sitting in his jail cell doing a long stretch for a problem gambling related criminal offence. I'm not concerned with whether the debt you find yourself in is one thousand, or one billion, our journey is more or less the same - you need to change.

In my eyes the past can stop HERE and the future can start HERE.

'They' say that a student will copy from two books, a lecturer from four and a Professor from six. I like this theory and it is one I have adapted for this book. No, I do not think I am a Professor but I have read more than six books and yes I will be copying the best bits from all of them. If it's not broke don't try and fix it.

Where I shall try to be a little different is that I won't be breaking the flow of this book by citing from lots of previous academic papers or attempting to give each term its correct academic name. There is a place for all of that and it is a wonderful place, but I quite like the idea of fusing the world between academia and casual reading.

I would like to apologise in advance for every mention I make in this book, that it is a book, when it is clearly, a little short. But it is longer than a pamphlet or a poem and the terms novella or self-help manual don't sit right with me, so I'll keep with the word 'book' because I like that word the best. If you do enjoy my 'book' then I hope you won't begrudge me this little luxury.

Welcome to your new future, but first, to find out...

ARE YOU A PROBLEM GAMBLER?

If you answer yes to 7 or more of the following questions then the likelihood is you are a problem gambler:

- 1) Have you ever lost time from work or school due to gambling?
- 2) Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
- 3) Has gambling ever affected your reputation?
- 4) Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
- 5) Have you ever gambled for money to pay debts?

- 6) Has gambling ever been associated with a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
- 7) Have you ever felt some urgency to return to gambling to win back lost money?
- 8) Have you ever felt some urgency to return to gambling after a win, in order to win more?
- 9) Have you ever gambled until your last penny was gone?
- 10) Have you ever borrowed to finance gambling?
- 11) Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
- 12) Have you kept money separate for gambling and been reluctant to use it for other normal expenses?
- 13) Has gambling appeared to cause you to be careless of your own welfare, or that of other family members?
- 14) Have you ever gambled longer than planned?
- 15) Have you ever gambled as a way to escape worry or trouble?
- 16) Have you ever committed or thought of committing an illegal act to finance gambling?
- 17) Have you ever had difficulty sleeping because of gambling?
- 18) Have you ever responded to arguments, disappointment, or frustrations by gambling or expressing a desire to gamble?
- 19) Have you ever celebrated, or talked of celebrating good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
- 20) Have you ever considered, talked about, or tried suicide or some other self-destructive act as a result of gambling?

7 or more, CONGRATULATIONS – You've just won an invitation to carry on reading and totally empathise with what I am about to talk about. Because I carried out a lot of my problem gambling in 'secret', I thought I was the only one feeling a particular way. I was wrong. Problem gambling is nothing new and we are not alone.

Here are just a few people who have experienced problems with gambling at some time.

- Marie Antoinette – Queen of France (1755 – 1793)
- Voltaire - French Philosopher (1694 - 1778)
- Horace Walpole - British historian, MP and novelist, among other things (1717 – 1797)
- Nell Gwynn – Famous British actress (1650 – 1687)
- Fyodor Dostoevsky – Famous Russian Novelist (1821 – 1881)
- Nick Leeson - 28 year old British trader who lost 830 million pounds and collapsed Barings, Britain's oldest bank
- Jake Brindell – Unknown Problem Gambler (1971 – present)

I think it is important to show that problems with gambling can strike either gender, regardless of their age, background, environment or which culture they come from. I also think it is important to leave the label of problem gambling as exactly that. Labelling someone as a pathological gambler or compulsive gambler almost seems to imply that it is some form of incurable disease, which it is not, and so for the rest of this book I shall use the term Problem Gambler.

Does this mean that...

I AM WORTHY TO WRITE THIS BOOK?

‘To know the road ahead, ask those coming back’

(Proverb)

Just before Christmas 2003 I found myself in the foetal position, lying on my mattress at home, surrounded by several personal clothing items and pictures of my 'life partner'. I had just lost a five figure sum playing on line poker and drunk eighteen bottles of beer, followed by nearly two bottles of Jack Daniels. I had been crying uncontrollably for some time but I was now struggling to stay awake. I had been drunk several times before but this time was undoubtedly different. I knew if I went to sleep there and then that there was a good chance that I would never wake up. Capricious fortune smiled on me that evening and introduced me to my rock bottom, and so myself offered myself a choice – lay down and sleep or, drag my sorry carcass to the bathroom and bring up as much liquid as I could, drink as much water as I could manage and go to sleep at an elevated angle.

Is a suicide attempt, failed or otherwise, enough I hear you say? I really don't know. All I can tell you is since that night I have read twenty books on the subject, read report after report and battled with the recovery myself. The beauty of this book is it is as much my recovery as it is yours. Since stopping gambling I find I have a lot of time and energy on my hands and mind. This is helping me 'big time' too.

My first book 'What's in a Gamble' honestly followed my thoughts and feelings for my first 100 days without a gamble. This book takes my educational journey to a new high.

Let us start at the beginning and find out.....

WHY ARE WE IN DEBT?

Living in this world with ever increasing pressures from a variety of sources can leave us constantly having to juggle money to make ends meet. We all dream about winning the lottery so that all our financial worries could be solved in one fell swoop. However for most of the population that is where it stays – as a dream. Then along come the problem gamblers and they try to make that dream into a reality by

actively pursuing those long odds. Quite simply they are chasing a dream that can never become a reality and that is why you will constantly find them trying...

GAMBLING TO GET OUT OF DEBT?

Sustained problem gambling has brought you to this place – sustained problem gambling will not get you out!

The above statement would seem so commonplace in a non-problem gambler's mind that it borders on being quite an absurd one. To the non-problem gambler the same could be said of any statement that to the sound mind would be so completely obvious, like...

If you handcuff yourself to a post, it will be difficult to walk away.

Or

Putting your shoes on opposite feet would make walking uncomfortable.

And yet all problem gamblers (me included until recently) think that sustained problem gambling gives them a *chance*. A chance that they may get out of debt with that ever elusive 'one big win'. This erroneous belief is one that a problem gambler must drop from a great height if they are to have any chance of success.

The fact that I am writing this book - the fact that gamblers anonymous is a worldwide organisation that helps problem gamblers – the fact that there are many different worldwide organisations offering help - the fact that there are thousands of other books about problem gamblers whose world's have collapsed - the fact that people have committed suicide due to gambling - the fact that millions and millions is poured into research around the world into the problem gambling phenomenon – the fact that many people are sitting in jail cells around the world because of gambling related crimes - sorry to be going on a little bit here, but the fact is, that all the facts add up to the fact that:

SUSTAINED PROBLEM GAMBLING WILL NOT GET YOU OUT OF DEBT – IT WILL ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE

Okay, for the people out there who still doubt - consider this. Even if a problem gambler has that 'big win' - sustained problem gambling would mean, it will only be a matter of time before they are back in debt.

Your new belief in this area should be that no matter if I won the big one, sustained problem gambling will put me back into debt.

Try placing a tick next to the statement you feel is the correct one.

- 1. **SUSTAINED PROBLEM GAMBLING MIGHT GET ME OUT OF DEBT. IT'S A CHANCE I HAVE TO TAKE GIVEN MY CURRENT FINANCIAL PREDICAMENT**

- 2. **SUSTAINED PROBLEM GAMBLING WILL ALWAYS PLACE ME IN DEBT**

'A gambler is someone who plays slot m/cs. I prefer to own slot machines'
(Donald Trump 1946 - American Businessman)

This leads me on nicely to say that.....

MONEY LOST IS NOT YOURS

During my lifetime of problem gambling I always viewed that the money I had lost was rightfully mine and that it should be given back to me - it's rightful owner. This strangely held belief has caused me untold pain throughout my life but I am happy to announce that I no longer want a penny of that money back. The gambling

industry has worked hard for it and therefore they have earned it. They are the new keepers of my old money.

A problem gambler is notorious for chasing their losses:

'My luck's gotta change soon '

'This horse just can't lose'

'Number four has got to come up; it hasn't been up in ages'

'Black has been up six times in a row, it must be red this time'

'Every time I get twenty, she gets twenty-one'

'This dealer has been doing me no favours, I never like the way he deals'

Sound familiar? What has to be understood at this juncture is that gambling is an industry like any other. It is designed to take your money and in return for your stake it gives you the opportunity to win more back. But the second you hand over your stake money it is no longer your property. It is now theirs, and it will stay theirs unless you win the bet. Therefore the money lost is not yours. To chase something that doesn't even belong to you anymore is a recipe for disaster. I spent my whole life chasing a big win of say five or ten thousand pounds, but in the process I've lost about a hundred thousand pounds and all those hours of wasted time, all that stress and anxiety etc etc... I love the fact that today; I don't find myself chasing other people's money. Wouldn't you feel great if you could let all that money go and say to yourself 'I've lost all that money and I'm never going to spend another penny trying to win it back'.

To help you understand we must now take a look at.....

WHY DO WE PROBLEM GAMBLE?

Aha, this is a tricky one that will be difficult to answer because all problem gamblers' have a different genetic make-up, their situations will all be different and the amount

of loss of control they have experienced will vary. On this one I'm going to let you build up your own ideas as to why you have had a problem with gambling.

A quick example:

After many hours researching about myself I found that...

- I have a mild form of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and as well as other things I go over and over the same thing again and again. i.e. a negative thought. Sometimes it really is nice to take a break from myself. Gambling provided a sanctuary for me
- When I felt stressed I would gamble to escape
- When I was depressed I would gamble
- When I was happy I would gamble
- When I was unhappy I would gamble
- Sub-consciously I felt like I had under-achieved in my life
- I was angry towards my parents for kicking me out of my home when I was fifteen
- I was angry towards my parents for not supporting me, or giving me any good advice, or any advice at all. Or helping me to get a university education, or go to college
- Whenever I got bored I liked to gamble
- I liked the buzz I got from gambling
- I have a fixation with numbers and figures
- I could beat the house odds because in some way I was *special*
- I became addicted to the action of gambling
- I thought I could gamble my way out of an eternally depressing financial situation
- I wanted to be rebellious and not play by the rules of society i.e. hard work
- I had trouble relaxing

After nearly two years now of looking into myself I can come up with that list. I am very proud of that list because it allows me to identify the negative emotions in my

life, where they have been coming from and why in the past I have walked into the arms of gambling each time one of them popped up, which was pretty much all the time.

So now we'll come round to you, come on, let's build your list. Place a tick next to the line that describes you. It's going to be a pretty exhaustive list because I don't want to miss any of you out.

1. I have a mild form of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and as well as other things I go over and over the same thing again and again. i.e. a negative thought. Sometimes it really is nice to take a break from myself. Gambling provides a sanctuary for me	
2. When I feel stressed I like to gamble to escape	
3. When I am depressed I want to gamble	
4. When I am happy I want to gamble	
5. When I am unhappy I like to gamble	
6. When I was younger I had a big win. I know that sooner or later I can win big again	
7. Sub-consciously I feel like I have under-achieved in my life	
8. I am angry towards my parents for something	
9. I am angry towards my partner for something they have done/said	
10. Whenever I get bored I like to gamble	
11. I enjoy the buzz I get from gambling	
12. I have a fixation with numbers and figures	
13. I think I can beat the house odds because in some way I am	

<i>special</i>	
14.I am addicted to the action of gambling	
15.I think I stand a chance of gambling my way out of an eternally depressing financial situation	
16.I want to be rebellious and not play by the rules of society i.e. hard work	
17.I have trouble relaxing	
18.There is a past trauma/traumas in my life that I haven't dealt with because it's too painful. Whilst I'm gambling I don't have to think about such matters	
19.I don't feel like I have a suitable role model in my life	
20.I like to self harm myself because I suffer from low self-esteem so losing money I do not have fulfils that need	
21.I have a mood disorder where I fluctuate between high energy and a euphoric mood one moment, then I find myself in periods of depression – it is at these times that I like to gamble	
22.I have an attention deficit disorder which means I am not able to focus for long periods of time. I find gambling risky enough to draw and hold my attention, temporarily relieving me of my symptoms	
23.I suffer from schizophrenia	
24.I see gambling as a way to boost my income	
25.I gamble because my friends do and it's a social thing	
26.There is a history of substance abuse and addictive traits in my	

family so problem gambling came naturally to me	
27.I have an addictive personality and do everything to the extreme. Not only do I problem gamble, but I take lots of drugs, drink far too much and I'm not unknown for overeating regularly.	
28.When I gamble without me knowing my brain is releasing endorphins that have a 'morphine' like effect on me. I am actually experiencing a high when I gamble and I like that feeling	

Ha ha, ironically now that I've just created that list to try and help you I have found a few more I can add to my own list. Did you notice that out of twenty-eight reasons above, that only one of them was linked to money? That's because problem gambling has got absolutely nothing to do with money and everything to do with negative emotions. And if you stopped reading this book right now and never read another word but you started to believe that was the case, then you would be well on your way to recovery and I would be as pleased as punch.

Let us now take a look at what actually happens to us...

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER GAMBLING

Before:

- An increasing preoccupation with gambling, to the point where nothing else is important. This is often experienced as sense of 'craving'
- A fear that you might miss an opportunity to win. How many times have we heard of the unhappy person whose lucky numbers turned up but who had forgot to buy their ticket!
- Irrational confidence and fantasies about winning

- Excitement in anticipation of placing a bet. Fantasizing what to do with the winnings
- Irritation, anger and mounting tension if something prevents them from gambling

During gambling:

- A total focus of attention on gambling; all else fades in importance
- Excitement and physical arousal, shown by increased heart rate
- Irrational talk inside their head: "the next bet is the winner I have been waiting for. It must be my turn for a large win, I just know it"
- Superstitious behaviour to increase the chance of a win

After a successful session:

- Relief and anticipation of the next occasion
- Confidence (I knew I could do it) and a conviction that winning was a result of skill
- Elated mood
- Inflated ego, having beaten 'them' at their own game
- Self-satisfaction at having money and being able to impress a partner or spouse

After losing:

- Guilt and remorse
- Fear of spouse or others finding out
- Worry over where to obtain money to cover living expenses
- Thoughts of what lies to tell to cover one's actions
- Self-directed anger
- Determination never to gamble again-but at the same time, thoughts of where to find money in order to return to chase losses
- Desire to forget problems through alcohol

And why do you choose to put yourself through that 'After losing' phase time after time. It's because of those...

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

If a coin is flipped into the air it has a fifty/fifty chance of landing on heads. We all know this. But if it lands on heads, then what is the chance that it will land on heads again? i.e. two times in a row

- A) Now less likely to land on heads, or
- B) Still fifty/fifty

If you chose A, and didn't think that the answer was still fifty/fifty then you need to put this book down, count slowly to ten and then pick this book back up.

If a horse tip from a reliable source comes your way and you back it and it wins, does this make you

- A) A smarter and better gambler than the rest
- B) Lucky this time only

If you picked 'A' again I'd like you to put down this book, ring up a brain surgeon and ask him to be on standby for an operation that could happen at any moment. Let us not forget that occasional wins only reinforce our false beliefs that we can win at gambling. If we all had these 'sure' inside tips and they always came in, then we'd all be rich and there would be no bookmakers.

If you win a sizeable amount of money at the casino, say £10,000 what should you do now?

- A) Bank some, but take a good sized stake back again very soon. Keeping a winning streak going is crucial to effective gambling
- B) Bank the lot, treat your loved one/ones to something special and be grateful for your luck. Do not go back any time soon and give them a penny of your money back

Please don't tell me you've picked 'A' again. You're really not getting the hang of this game, are you? I'm afraid you're going to have to pick up the phone and tell your doctor to get the operating room ready; you are on your way over there right now.

Okay so you're in your car, or on the bus, on route to your doctor's house. Here you will have the top of your head sawn off and the little part of your brain that keeps getting these answers wrong is to be replaced by a non problem gamblers' part, who has just passed away and quite lovingly, and knowingly, donated this part of their brain especially for people like you. But I am feeling in a generous mood and so I'll give you one more chance to avoid going under the saw.

If a fixed odds betting terminal that works by a random number generator, which normally reside in betting shops around the world, and it has just gleaned one thousand pounds off a fellow punter, do you?

- A) Keep on walking, that bears no relevance on any future outcome.
- B) Got to give it a try, the machine is due a payout.

Ha ha, I tricked you. I cunningly switched from 'A' to 'B' being the wrong answer. 'B' is the answer that I held close to my heart for many years and it caused massive amounts of self destruction. As did all the other false beliefs keep me buried in a world of pain. All these wrong beliefs are what have pegged you and me down all these years, but we want this to change - don't we? All these beliefs and many more beside, that are not based around fact or reason, go to the very root that make us act in this peculiar way at times. In order to progress we need to bury **ALL** of these superstitious beliefs.

I roughly estimated that from the age of ten to thirty-two I have lost about £100,000 to problem gambling. Because I like to play around with figures I tried to work out how much money that would be now if I had put it in a savings account instead. Based on an annual 5% interest rate, my nest egg would be worth £151,983.8 today. Putting it another way, left to mature and without adding a single penny more, if I retired at sixty, I would have a pension fund of £595,796.1. Ah, compound interest we meet at last.

My aim is not to depress you about financial matters because I know you're in deep. But I'm trying to assign massive pain to these false beliefs that can cause you an even bigger loss than you might think.

It is time now to question whether you go for...

'The dust of exploded beliefs may make a fine sunset'

Geoffrey Madan – English Bibliophile (1895 – 1947)

ABSTINENCE OR CONTROL?

'Should I stay or should I go now?

If I go there will be trouble.

If I stay there will be double'

Sorry about that, I just felt compelled to write some lines down from a famous Clash song, that were ringing in my head as I attempted to answer this question. Gamblers Anonymous say that you should never have a gamble again because if you have one, then the path to destruction has been re-joined. However, many studies carried out in academia have shown that some problem gamblers can return to controlled gambling without sliding back into their 'old ways'. I think this is a matter for the individual and you should make your own mind up on this one. All I will say is that for the immediate future everyone believes that complete abstinence from

gambling is the best way forward. As it has already been said, problem gambling is not about the money and everything to do with your negative emotions. You will not be able to deal with sorting out all of those whilst you are gambling. So, complete abstinence from now on until you can find better, less destructive ways of dealing with your negative emotions.

In time, should you choose to return to controlled gambling then go for it. But if you find that your slipping back into 'old ways' then you must stop completely again and re-start your 'negative emotion analysis' and find better ways of dealing with stress etc.

In order to ever return to controlled gambling you must first master the following techniques:

- 1) You must be able to reduce your urge to gamble when it arises.
- 2) You have to correct all erroneous beliefs you previously held about gambling
- 3) You will have to learn to identify triggers that will provoke your urge to gamble in the future, such as negative emotional states.
- 4) You will have to find alternative ways of dealing with stress, anxiety and depression
- 5) You will know how to avoid gambling-related cues that will fuel your desire to gamble.
- 6) You will have to become vigilant that you don't slip back into the 'old way'

What you may well find is when you become a master of all these techniques that you really don't fancy ever gambling again.

The question now begs.....

DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THE JOURNEY?

'The reed that bends will survive the windstorm, while the mighty oak will crack'

Proverb

I know you want to make this journey. I know you do. I know you can make this journey right to the very end and I want to meet you there, nod to each other and then carry on with our lives to the fullness of our ability and beyond. For X amount of years, each time we placed a bet we have been placing layer upon layer on our habit-forming 'trunk' that has formed us into the people we have become; people with a gambling problem. Gambling has become as important as eating, sleeping and breathing, and at times more important. This thick layered 'trunk' that has controlled our thoughts and actions has been built up in that X amount of years, and there is no giant on/off switch that anyone can give to us that will make it go away in an instant. Make no doubt in your mind that what lies ahead is nothing less than a journey. But like Sinbad who went in search of the Golden Fleece so that he could save his love, the reward waiting for us is just as sweet.

The length of this journey is undetermined, it will differ for each of us, but there is no mistaking that it cannot be achieved in one leg. My journey, which is nearly two years in since that near fateful night still goes on. I genuinely don't feel as if I am at the end, but a lot of water has passed underneath me since then and I feel great about my problem gambling as I write this line.

Like any journey of a great length we have got to recognise that it's not all going to be plain sailing, sometimes you might have to take a step back in order to make another three forward. This is not failure. If you find that you have a lapse this does not mean the ship is sinking and the journey is over, it more likely means that another part of the ship needs fixing in order for you to carry on. Your emotions will act as your compass and they will inform you when something is not right. Do not ignore them; remember it was ignoring them in the first place that got you here.

Remember, problem gambling is not about money, it is about not dealing effectively with your negative emotions.

In order to start this journey we need to decide whether we want.....

PLEASURE OR PAIN

In our lives.

I have assigned massive amount of pain to problem gambling, so much so that I don't gamble at all. Therefore I have assigned a great deal of pleasure to not problem gambling, and hey presto, this theory seems to work.

If you are still under the illusion that problem gambling brings you pleasure then you cannot and will not succeed in your quest. The reason being, our brain loves to do things that give us pleasure.

Remember when you were a kid and you wanted to eat sweets and chocolate all the time. Never entered your mind that they might actually be doing you any harm; they tasted and felt so good. A big bag of sweets was the monthly pay check for a kid and we all couldn't wait for payday. Then we started to visit the dentist and we saw pictures of tooth decay and we found out that sustained problem sweet-eating, although temporarily made us feel good, it was destroying our teeth and was unhealthy for us. What did we do? We stopped eating as many, gave ourselves the occasional treat and smiled for every photo opportunity that came our way. Okay, I'm not a natural in front of the camera but it is nice to have an okay set of teeth and not be eternally embarrassed when I go to the dentist. The similarities to what we face now and back then are frightening, but the principles are the same. We assigned long term pain to eating too many sweets and so we must assign too much pain to sustained problem gambling. In fact I think it is safe to say that too much of anything will come back to haunt us. Take a second out and decide which of the following statements appeal to you the most right now.

I want to carry on problem gambling so that I can temporarily feel good but for the rest of the time I feel disgusted with myself and see my health, looks, relationships and finances slide down the toilet.

I am currently problem gambling free, I am making amends for my past, and am enjoying sleeping, eating, conversing with my loved ones. Life feels brighter and lighter and I also seem to have a few quid in my pocket, so I wonder how I can treat myself?

Has problem gambling been...

AFFECTING MUCH MORE THAN MYSELF

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that problem gambling affects many more people than just the problem gambler. Certain studies have indicated that up to twenty people around you can be directly affected. When I first read that statistic I thought 'no way' I was always careful not to drag anyone else into my mess, that couldn't be right. How wrong I was, but I was still in denial and when I allowed myself to look again I found that, 'they' weren't far off.

The following could be examples of all the people you are affecting. Obviously this will not be the case for everyone but I am trying to cover the full spectrum of problem gamblers here.

1). Your wife or husband – for me this was my life partner and whilst I was in the throes of problem gambling I always maintained to myself that I conducted my affairs in secret so as not to get her involved. That way *she* wasn't being harmed with my problem, right?

Wrong.

I made my partner drive around in a beat up old car that had no heating during a cold winter. I resented her when she'd mention that she wanted to get her hair done. Arguments would start because an unexpected bill dropped on our door and I was expected to stump up for it – me – and my gambling funds, or access to credit, that was only meant for gambling was now being asked to pay for things in reality. This I did not like. Then there were the holidays I promised her that didn't materialise,

the cancelled dinner dates or weekends away that I simply couldn't afford because everywhere was 'maxed out'. Then there would be the arguments I started for nothing, just because I was in so much trouble and feeling lots of pain. I probably sub-consciously wanted to give her a little taster of what I was going through, without telling her any truth of course. I would also cunningly disguise my pain and turn it around on her and say it was her fault that we weren't doing so well, because she was failing to support me at times when I really needed her. Then there would be the heavy drinking that I pursued to help numb the pain after a bad day at the office, that brought some crackerjack arguments too.

No money to buy a home or save for a pension, I was too busy running up mountainous debts wherever I could. Yep, I didn't want to get her involved.

I was always careful that she wasn't being harmed.

2-6). Children – A problem gambler whose mind is occupied by gambling most of the time cannot be able to give his full love and attention to his kids. The longer the problem gambling goes on, the longer the relationship with their kids will suffer. Maybe you could think about how your parents were, and how their attitude was on something, when you were young. Now think how that has had a direct impact on you in later life? This could be a negative thought, or a positive one. I strongly believe that the style of parenting you choose will have a huge say in how your child views their life when they grow up.

Then there are the financial aspects of all this. What toys, holidays or opportunities are going begging because you have 'misdirected' the family funds?

7-11). Siblings – Depending on how close you are with your siblings will again depend how much this relationship is being affected. Because they may not know of your hidden 'addiction' does not mean they aren't worried about your well-being. Maybe you have drifted away from them so as to spend more time and thoughts on your 'hobby' and not to worry them.

12-13) Parents 14-16) Close friends 17-20) People at work

I think we can group all of the rest of these people together because I don't want to keep on repeating myself. Suffice to say, that everyone may trust you less because of your repeated shortcomings. There's a good chance that you have asked them to cover for you in a situation to get you out of a tight spot. You may have repeatedly borrowed or even stolen from them, so their resentment towards you will carry on until you sort yourself out.

All in all, I can safely say, without fear of sounding too judgemental that you have been one big massive LIAR. And as a result, people have become more distant towards you and your moods. All your relationships have suffered, some, to the point of termination - I know, I lost my first long term partner through this craziness. So no mincing about on this one, let's get it out in the open. I don't want to be confused on this one and neither should you.

For as long as you have been problem gambling you have been lying to cover your tracks. Owning up to this is not going to be easy but you must. I know why you have been lying to all these people – it was so you could carry on with the moral crusade of chasing that big win that would make everything alright. The end justified the means.

You have been lying to all these people because you were lying to yourself. I really do understand your pain; I know that at the time, you didn't want to get them involved in your mess, so you manoeuvred around the truth. I also know you want the lying to stop. It really drains you at times – all this pretence. You're sick to death of lying to others and sick to death of lying to yourself. I suspect you may have hit...

ROCK BOTTOM

'The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places'

Ernest Hemingway

Rock bottom is where you finally tell you're most treasured friend the TRUTH. It matters not if you have gambled one hundred pounds or one billion, if you are in jail or killed to feed your habit. Either the situation has forced this moment upon you or you have simply had enough. This is rock bottom and you should listen to it, it has the ability to be your best friend. At the time when my world came crashing down I thought it was the worst experience of my life. Two years on, I now think it was the best experience because it has enabled me to become the person I am today.

I never thought I'd hear myself type these words (I know) but your most treasured friend is – YOURSELF.

When I was a kid I never, ever dreamt that one day I would be writing a self-help book and trying to describe what 'rock bottom' was. I dreamt of flying jets during the day, helicopters by night, winning the FA cup on Saturday and then bathing like a Roman emperor on Sunday's. But describing rock bottom after a life-time of not facing the truth, no, that thought did not occur to me.

I'm sure you are just the same as me, albeit your dreams may have been different but they weren't what you're experiencing now.

What happened to us little boys and girls? – What happened that sent us down this path of self destruction?

Life.

Life happened. And rather than dealing with it in an effective and responsible manner we were seduced by all the trappings that problem gambling had to offer us. But now we have...

MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

To re-cap what I have written so far:

I _____ am a PROBLEM GAMBLER who is IN DEBT. I have tried sustained PROBLEM GAMBLING TO TRY AND GET OUT OF DEBT, it has not worked. In fact it has made things a lot worse. I have not been successful because I have been CHASING MONEY THAT WAS NO LONGER MINE.

From reading this book so far, I now have a clearer understanding as to WHY I GAMBLE. In the clear light of day I can now see how I behave BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER GAMBLING and how my SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS have been the root cause to my continued decline. I have decided that COMPLETE ABSTENTION is in order for me to start to MAKE THE JOURNEY towards recovery because I agree that PROBLEM GAMBLING AFFECTS MANY MORE PEOPLE THAN JUST MYSELF. I want to have more pleasure in my life, PROBLEM GAMBLING ONLY BRINGS ME LONG SUFFERING PAIN. I have hit ROCK BOTTOM and am totally MOTIVATED TO CHANGE.

SIGNED

DATE

I have just printed off the above declaration, named, signed and dated it and gone next door where I have read it aloud to my life partner. This may feel stupid and embarrassing but I'd like you to consider this.

Your treasured one has had to put with a lot from you over X amount of years. How nice a treat this would be if they could hear these words come from your lips. A lot of self-help books would now demand that you too should drop this book right now and do the same as me. I do not like this approach, and I don't feel many people do, so I'll just try my best and plant seeds where I can, and hope that they'll take root.

Okay, so I've attempted to answer all the 'why's' – let us now take a look at the 'hows'.

In order to be successful in your journey you must complete the...

6 STEPS OF CHANGE

Step 1 - Find out what pain and pleasure you want.

Firstly, I would to like offer that while you are reading this book your problem gambling is like a tiger outside the door, doing push ups. So even if you think you'd like to change, or should change, or will change soon, but not today, then as soon as you put this book down and walk out that door, that tiger will follow you wherever you go and may tear you from limb to limb at anytime it chooses to do so. Not a pretty thought, but we have to be clear here, problem gambling is no beauty contestant campaigning for world peace and this is not a beauty pageant. Problem gambling is the devil, in the form of a tiger, that is working out, right now and sharpening its claws and teeth waiting for the un-motivated, or, the slightly motivated to venture out. That is its bread and butter. The one and only beast they fear is the totally MOTIVATED.

I, like you had said to myself hundreds of times before that I wanted to stop gambling but I never did. I now know the formula to stopping problem gambling and if I stick to it, like you, it can become a thing of the past. If you can successfully complete all of the following steps then your desire to becoming problem gambling free can be a living, breathing reality.

Okay, so now I'm going to make a list of all the things that will happen to me over the next two years if I don't give up\ give up gambling. You can follow me mentally or make your own list as we go through it.

If I continue problem gambling for the next two years I'm pretty confident that I:

- Will be in more debt than I am in today
- Could lose my life partner who I love very much
- Will drink more and more to deaden the pain of my situation
- Will not progress my career any further
- May end up jobless and then homeless
- May end up in jail as an attempt to get funds so that I could gamble
- May have more failed suicide attempts, or even...
- Will see my health suffer
- Will see all my relationships suffer
- Will once again view the world as a dark and unforgiving place

If I can stay problem gambling free for the next two years I'm pretty confident that I:

- Will have a lot less debt than I have now, I may even be debt free
- Will have become closer to my life partner who really deserves it after what I've put her through, and heh, I really deserve it too
- Will not have been seeking out drink or drugs all the time to help fix my mood. I will just be happier all round because I choose not to problem gamble
- Won't be in jail
- Won't be dead or in hospital because of problem gambling

- Will have better health and my relationships will be in a better condition. I might have even gained many new friends or one very good friend
- Will have experienced many new things which will renew my vigour for life, the world and all its gifts and wonders
- Will feel empathy for anyone who is a problem gambler because I understand the pain they are in
- Will be continuing to help any problem gambler that seeks my help, because by helping them I will be helping myself further
- Will start to feel more and more triumphant about what I have achieved over the last two years, but I will never take anything for granted

Step 2 - Use the list as motivational Fuel

Now we're both going to take all the those painful things that will happen to us if we don't change, or, for me, maintain the change, and we're going to roll them all up into one big ball called 'Sense of Urgency' flip open our heads and slam dunk it in. Simultaneously, we will roll up all those pleasures that we want to start right now, label that with 'Sense of Urgency' and do the same again. If we find ourselves labelling them with 'things to do shortly' or 'must get round to it' then I think you know what will happen. The following example I'm about to give may not be the best example given the circumstances but I'm going to run with it anyway to illustrate a point, please take it in the spirit it is intended.

If someone was to follow you around everywhere you go with a gun to your head, threatening to pull the trigger if you problem gambled, I think we can safely say that you wouldn't do it. I know that is taking it to the extreme but in order to be fully motivated you have to employ a similar sense of urgency, albeit without any guns or bullets. I remember one of the tricks I employed when I gave up smoking six years ago was to eat an ashtray of used fag ends. Maybe over the top you say, or maybe not even enough, but it really helped create a sense of urgency within me, and so I stopped straightaway. Had a few lapses along the way but I haven't smoked a

single thing now for four and half years. Then, as now, I assigned massive pain to carrying on with my bad habit.

So to you, you must use your list, whether it's a mental one that you keep repeating to yourself, or one that you've tattooed down both arms so you'll never forget. Ha Ha! Only joking, imagine the look on the croupier's face or bookmaker as you handed over your money to place a bet. You'd feel completely embarrassed every time you did it, so embarrassed that you would never ever hand over any money again. No, that would never work.

Would it?

(There I go again, just throwing seeds up in the air and seeing if they take root). I'm not suggesting that you permanently discolour both arms with your list of pleasure or pain, but you can see what I'm driving at. On a more workable level maybe you could carry the list round with you in your top pocket, or keep it in your top drawer at home. By reading this list out loud to yourself, over and over and over again, it will keep your motivation levels at the necessary high and allow you to move on to the next step.

Step 3 - Constantly interrupt your old habit

Even though you are now fully committed to change this does not mean that the tiger outside will go away and give you an easy ride - Oh no - It means that when you venture outside you now have one of the tools necessary that can beat the tiger if he decides to pounce. It means you can be on your way to fuelling what you desire in life, and not what you fear.

But motivation on its own may be able to fight the tiger off every time it comes, but you really want to get to the position where he's not waiting for you at all. For this to happen you're going to have to scramble and interrupt your old habit so much so that it becomes unrecognisable, and a new pattern of thinking and behaving towards problem gambling, is born. Let me give you an example:

When I was in the grip of gambling I used to drift off to sleep to only two images. The first, I would be at Old Trafford and proceed to play the perfect game of football. The second, and much more frequent, would be where I would walk into a casino with five hundred pounds and watch all my numbers at roulette stay hot until I'd won one hundred thousand pounds. (can you imagine how that reinforced my belief that gambling could offer me with a way out). Anyway, as I was writing my first book I found myself drifting off to this same image, even though I was fully motivated to change. In order to interrupt this image every time I found myself at the wheel about to place a bet I pulled an axe from underneath my cloak (heh, it's my dream, right) and smashed the roulette wheel in two. It felt great and my mind went on to something else. In the early stages, don't get me wrong, one smash of the wheel was never enough, but every time it popped up I'd smash it again. This could happen maybe twenty times a night, but over time, this would be reduced down to one smash until one day the thought never entered my head again. I wonder if by re-igniting that old thought in my head if it will come and visit me tonight. I don't care if it does – the axe will be waiting.

Step 4 - Take active steps to changing

Hanging out at the same gambling haunts but not gambling, or talking to friends who gamble, about gambling related issues, will not help your cause. As well as interrupting, scrambling and rebuilding your thought and behaviour patterns about gambling you must ensure that other steps are taken so it will become less and less easy for you to fall back to your now, 'old ways'. You are going to have so much more free time on your hands and mind and if you let it go begging, then guess who will be waiting outside the door?

I myself have taken to writing two short books up until now. I have developed a website called www.wanttostopgambling.com and I write articles about problem gambling. I have also undertaken a degree in Psychology as well as many other leisure pursuits. The reason why I have done so much, I feel, is because I was in so deep with the gambling that I now need a lot to occupy myself. My advice to you is:

WHATEVER YOU DREAMT ABOUT BEFORE, DO IT - WHATEVER YOU TALKED ABOUT BEFORE, BUT NEVER HAD THE MONEY TO DO IT, JUST DO IT (OKAY IF IT'S REASONABLY POSSIBLE UNDER YOUR CURRENT SITUATION) IF YOU APPLY THE SAME FERVOUR TO YOUR NEW EXPERIENCES AS YOU ONCE DID TO GAMBLING, THEN I KNOW THE RESULTS WILL BE AMAZING, AND THE MORE OF THOSE YOU GET UNDER YOUR BELT AND THE MORE FUN YOU HAVE DOING THEM, THE LESS LIKELY YOU WILL EVER BE OF RETURNING TO THE 'OLD WAYS'.

Step 5 - Maintaining changes once they are made

Remember your negative emotions are nothing more than action signals. Take action now and for the rest of your lives and your change will become permanent. You and I can condition any behaviour within ourselves if we do it with enough repetition and emotional intensity. Failure to maintain your changes may lead to slippage. Picture yourself as a business and the new tools you have learnt are your customers. If you don't look after your customers, in time, your business will end up in the toilet.

Step 6 - Compare now and then

Ever since I wrote my first book my problem gambling has improved dramatically but I did have a couple of lapses. It was not all plain sailing. I now find myself immersed in other activities. I do not gamble presently and haven't done for over a year now, so I am in the 'Maintaining changes once they are made' phase. I do not take anything for granted but my life is one hell of a lot more richer now than it was back then. I am proud of writing these words to you but I know that I must keep all my tools sharp if I am to succeed in the longer term, and so must you.

It's time to join me in the munitions bunker so that I can equip with you the blueprints to your future. You already possess the one tool necessary to complete your mission but sadly it has been corrupted by years of mismanagement. I will now show you

what that three pound lump of grey matter is capable of and I will arm you with an array of techniques that will wipe out any opposition.

How amazing is...

THE POWER OF THE BRAIN

Your brain is capable of processing 30 billion bits of information per second and it boasts the equivalent of 6,000 miles of wiring and cabling. Your nervous system contains about 28 billion neurons (nerve cells designed to conduct impulses) and these are all needed to interpret the information we receive through our sense organs and pass it on to the brain. Each of these neurons is a tiny, self-contained computer capable of processing about one million bits of information.

These neurons act independently, but they also communicate with other neurons through an amazing network of 100,000 miles of nerve fibres. It may take a neuron a million times longer to send a signal than a typical computer switch but a brain can recognise a familiar face quicker than a computer and in less than a second. Reason being, a computer has to work step by step, but the brains billions of neurons can all work simultaneously.

So, if I was to clone Big Ben 7 times over, lay it end to end and build the world's most powerful computer that would fill the entire internal dimensions, and challenge it against your brain in a processing competition, you, would wipe the floor with it. – Astounding.

Now that we have the world's most powerful computer in the world at our disposal, let's see what it can do to our...

BELIEF SYSTEMS

He was bitter and cruel, an alcoholic and drug addict who almost killed himself several times. Today he serves a life sentence in prison for the murder of a cashier who got in his way. He has two sons born a mere eleven months apart, one of whom grew up to be just like dad, a drug addict who lived by stealing and threatening others until he too, was put in jail for attempted murder. His brother however is a different story. He has become a father of three children who enjoys his marriage and appears to be truly happy. As regional manager for a major national concern he finds his work both challenging and rewarding. He's physically fit and has no alcohol or drug addictions! How could these two young men have turned out so differently, having grown up in virtually the same environment? Both were asked privately, unbeknownst to the other, 'why has your life turned out this way?' surprisingly they both provided the exact same answer; what else could I have become, having grown up with a father like that?

So often are we seduced into believing that events control our lives and that our environment has shaped who we are today? No greater lie was ever told

ITS NOT THE EVENTS OF OUR LIVES THAT SHAPE US, BUT OUR BELIEFS AS TO WHAT THOSE EVENTS MEAN

'It is not the environment we are in, nor the events of our lives, but the meaning we attach to the events and how we interpret them that will shape who we are today, and who we'll become tomorrow. Beliefs are what make the difference between a lifetime of joyous contribution and of misery and devastation. Beliefs are what separate Mozart from a Manson. Beliefs are what cause some individuals to become heroes, while others 'lead quiet lives of desperation'.'

I have lifted the above passage out of a book because I feel those words do not need altering. They hit the spot for me and I hope they do for you, as well. If you

agree with the above then you will also agree that if you don't believe that you can change then you won't, but if you truly believe you can, then you will. This is what is known as a self-fulfilling prophecy and the key ingredient to a life free of problem gambling is giving yourself that belief that you can do it.

I am now going to start you on the road to giving yourself that belief. At the same time I will be reinforcing my new found belief and make it even stronger. I hope you can now see why I wrote this book, I feel completely empowered as I write these words to you.

Right where were we, oh yes its 1954 and up until now no human being on the planet had broken the four minute mile. Step forward Roger Banister, a 25-year old medical student who on the 6 May, at Oxford, ran the distance in 3 minutes 59.4 seconds.

Result:

Within one year 37 more runners had done it

Within two years 300 more runners had done it.

At the time, Roger was only running as an amateur and the weather that day far from ideal, a 15mph crosswind and gusts of up to 25mph meant that Bannister nearly called off the attempt. So, in the scheme of things and as time goes, did this mean that virtually overnight, men had all become much fitter. No. It was because he believed in himself, and then inspired others to believe in themselves. I find that fascinating.

Fast forward to 2005, Champions league final between Liverpool and AC Milan. Milan Boasting the stronger side and being the favourites they thought had the cup in the bag after half time when they were leading 3-0. But they didn't figure into their plans the belief of two men, Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher. I may be a Manchester United fan but I am also a football fan and the display those two men gave in the second half was the best I've ever seen when you take into consideration the stage, the opponents, and the scoreline. I remember just watching

how their belief that they could win raised their game play to a superhuman level and that in turn inspired their team-mates to believe also.

Result:

Liverpool won 3-2 on penalties

Awesome.

Let's rewind to the summer of 1966 in Patterson, America when Rubin Carter and John Artis, two black men were arrested and then later charged for the shooting of four white people in a coffee bar, in which two of them died instantly and a third, a month later. Rubin Carter, or as he was more affectionately known, 'Hurricane' Carter was a world middleweight contender at the time and the most feared fighter of his day. Unfortunately for him it would be the prejudiced *beliefs* of many of the white police force at the time that would mean he would spend the next twenty years of his life behind bars, an innocent man. Fresh out of luck with all his appeals, the 'Hurricane' became so depressed over the next few years that he told his wife never to come back and see him again. He then wrote a book called 'The Sixteenth Round' which was a plea for help to anybody on the outside.

In September 1980, about six years after Viking had published the book; Lesra Martin was enjoying his new life in Toronto. The year before, the young man from the Bushwick section of Brooklyn had met a group of former Canadian hippies, now Toronto entrepreneurs, who happened to be testing a new product in the Environmental Protection Lab where Lesra had a summer job. *Believing* that Lesra had tremendous promise, and concerned he would not fulfil his potential in Brooklyn, the Canadians convinced Lesra's father to let the boy live with them in Toronto. Life was going well for Lesra. He was actualising his potential and his appetite for reading was increasing. At a Toronto book fair, Lesra spotted 'The Sixteenth Round' which he bought for 1\$.

As he read the book, Lesra became mesmerised and he totally identified with Rubin Carter. He would read passages of the book out aloud to his Canadian 'family' and

they too, became completely immersed in the story. By its end, all of them had new found *beliefs*. That Rubin Carter was innocent.

Initially it was Lesra who met the 'Hurricane' in prison, in December of 1980, but he returned in 1981 with his mentors, Sam Chaiton, Terry Swinton and Lisa Peters. All together they started to go to work on the case. So passionate were their *beliefs* that he was wrongly imprisoned that in 1983 they sold up in Toronto and moved to Patterson so they could work on his release full time. The only chance left they had of a court reviewing the case again would be to try to file a petition for writ of Habeus Corpus. Habeus Corpus is where the federal court can determine whether a prisoner has been wrongfully imprisoned by correcting any abuses of the Bill of Rights at the State court level. This petition would take an enormous amount of work and would be the last chance for the 'Hurricane'.

U.S District Court Judge H. Lee Sarokin was assigned Carter's Habeus Corpus case on November 7th 1985. He knew the respected Third Circuit Court of Appeals and possibly the United States Supreme Court would review his action. He also knew that the higher courts may have found that he abused his discretion, but he did what he *believed* was right.

In 1985, after 20 years of imprisonment Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter and John Artis were released from prison and declared to be free men.

Oh the power of *beliefs*!

So, all those superstitious *beliefs* that you have held have got you into this predicament, and so your new found *beliefs* can lead you out. You are going to have search for things to *believe* in. i.e. if you *believe* I can stay problem gambling free (virtually) for two years then why can't you?

Trawl the internet and find other problem gamblers who have turned things around for themselves on all the websites out there. There are hundreds of books for sale about problem gamblers from all walks of life that have moved on to bigger and

brighter lives. Let their *beliefs* and actions inspire yours. Become a believer - it is the most powerful force at your disposal.

For *belief* systems are the basis for our...

DECISIONS THAT DETERMINE OUR DESTINY

More than anything else, I believe it's our decisions, not the conditions of our lives, that determine our destiny. You and I both know that there are people out there who were born with advantages, they've had genetic advantages, environmental advantages, family advantages or relationship advantages, yet still we constantly meet, read and hear about people who against all odds have exploded beyond the limitations of their conditions by making new decisions about what to do with their lives. They have become examples of the unlimited power of the human spirit. I want to become such an example, because of the past that I have had, if I can continue to stay problem gambling free I will mark that up as most remarkable achievement I have ever done, and I'd like you to join me in feeling that way.

My experience tells me that you've got to watch out for those who want to pull the rug from underneath your progress, such as...

CUES, TRIGGERS AND URGES

Cues:

Know that these are situations or the environment that is all around you and they will come at you thick and fast, if you monitor them, especially in the early stages you will note that they are EVERYWHERE.

Some examples:

a) Reading the form guide in the newspaper

- b) Flashing adverts on your computer screen
- c) Walking past the bookmakers, casino or amusement arcade
- d) Watching the lottery draw on TV
- e) Hearing or participating in a conversation about any form of gambling

To not allow these cues turn into triggers my advice is to treat them with the contempt they deserve. So:

a) Don't read the form guide in the newspaper under any circumstances. Once the thought creeps into your mind that thickly formed habit trunk that you've been feeding over the years will take over and you will hardly feel a thing until you meet with that 'After Losing' phase again. Be smart, don't even be tempted to test yourself, I know from experience especially in the early stages that you're not yet strong enough.

b) Do not click on anything to do with gambling. Ask any companies to take you off their mail-outs. Use the link page on the website to help block out any gambling messages on your P.C.

c) On this one try and use a different route, or if they become unavoidable which many times they will, try turning them on their head i.e. Whenever I see the sign above the bookmakers Ladbrokes, in my head I've trained myself to see the sign 'Brokenlads'. I smile and move on, without this cue turning into a trigger.

d) Do not watch any form of gambling on the TV. For the same reasons as a).

e) If some of your friends or colleagues are trying to engage you in a conversation about any form of gambling either make your excuses and head for the toilet, it will soon blow over or again if it becomes unavoidable then subtly try to change the subject. Its fun and you will feel empowered when you do it. If you find yourself with friends that talk incessantly about gambling I know it's not really like me to say such a thing, but you need to find new friends. The ironic thing here is that they're either heavy or problem gamblers themselves and they will only want to hang out with like

mindful people. Maybe you could anonymously send them a copy of this book. Ha ha! I'd like a friend like you.

Triggers:

Triggers can be brought about by situational cues or they can develop from negative emotional states from the brain. i.e.:

- Stress from work or home
- Feelings of euphoria so you want to celebrate by gambling
- Red letters or unpaid bills demanding payment
- Feeling generally unhappy with life
- Distress that friends and colleagues have so much more, and you want to 'catch up' with them
- Resentment towards anybody about many different things
- Etc, etc

Urges

Once the situational cue or trigger sets off in your head the urge now becomes a living, breathing organism. It becomes the tiger that has been waiting outside the door. But now you know where it all comes from. You know that all you have to turn around this urge is, stick with the DECISION you made, that came from the new BELIEF that you have, that was born from the MOTIVATION TO CHANGE, that was fed up with the PAIN you have felt, and that desires your future to be graced with PLEASURE.

What before was a blur which left you not knowing what to do, except gamble, is now becoming a lot more clearer. You can you see what that slippery super computer (your brain) is up to? Can you see the pattern that is emerging time and time again? It's like your very own brain has become your worst enemy, but remember, it's only doing what you have told it to do for those X amount of years. It just needs re-programmed, that's all.

And it's being re-programmed right now.

Useful techniques that can curb your triggers and urges are...

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Right, I may find this section a little tricky because, if I'm being perfectly honest, I would feel completely hypocritical by listing any in-depth stress management techniques such as 'Imaginal Desensitisation' here, when I don't practice them myself. Also, such practices are very involved and I would not be doing them any justice by trying to condense them for the purpose of this short book. If you would like to know more on this area there are some suggestions for further reading at the end of this book. Putting that to one side I do think that this section is of paramount importance to your success of a problem gambling free life. Remember:

PROBLEM GAMBLING IS NOT ABOUT THE MONEY, IT IS ABOUT NOT BEING ABLE TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL STATES.

Now okay, that statement may not be 100% true (you may like to gamble when you're happy etc) but for the purpose of your progress coupled with the fact that it's about 90% true, if you hold that statement, as your newest and most valued of beliefs then I know it will only do you good.

Taking the stress out of our lives and being able to relax, so we are more healthy and balanced people is not something that is going to happen overnight, it takes time and effort. It is not just handed to us on a plate and one thing we can both be sure of is that life does not hand out only pleasurable experiences. But stop. I am even contradicting myself here, because if we rewind back three sections it doesn't have to be that way, i.e.

ITS NOT THE EVENTS OF OUR LIVES THAT SHAPE US, BUT OUR BELIEFS AS TO WHAT THOSE EVENTS MEAN

So one stress management technique I can give you is for you to view things in a different way.

Another technique I could give you is one of acceptance. For example, if you could picture life as a beautiful garden where you have created a beautiful menagerie of flowers to look at - however by the very nature of being a garden, weeds will come and try and block your view. No-one else can tend to them and by their very nature they will keep on coming, If you can accept that that is the case but knowing if you keep on top of them, then there is no reason for them to ever spoil the view.

Okay, again I'm feeling hypocritical because I don't follow that principle for every second of every day, but I have been heading in that direction more and more in the last two years and that has helped me a great deal. I suppose I could say that we are getting incredibly close to Buddhism now and some form of spiritual enlightenment but heh, a little bit of that in our lives would be no mean thing. Wouldn't you agree?

On a more practical level I feel lucky enough to live by the sea so I regularly go for long walks on the beach. What a great stress neutralizer that is! Maybe you could go for walks where there is nice scenery, or find any activity that keeps you occupied and keeps you calm.

Lastly, I will slip in the use of breathing techniques. They really can help. When I decided to write my life story two years ago and look at the total damage my problem gambling had caused I was met with several fierce panic and anxiety attacks. They really came from everywhere and at all times (Father Time did see these go away) and these were invaluable at the time. Maybe they could help you too.

Pick a time of day where you can be totally on your own and follow these steps. You don't have to wait for an attack to come for you to start these.

Make sure you are on your own and won't be disturbed for twenty to thirty minutes.
If possible find a place that is quiet.
Close your eyes but don't fall asleep.
Start taking deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly.
Let all the thoughts, good or bad, flow away from you. Do not pay them any attention.
Concentrate only on your breathing.

That's it – piece of cake. It is now imperative that you find an empowering...

REPLACEMENT ACTIVITY

This may seem like I'm stating the obvious but I know from personal experience that problem gambling can engulf and cocoon you to the point where nothing else matters and depending on how severely you have suffered from it you may think that there is not much else in life apart from gambling and the pursuit of money. There is, and do you know what the best thing I like about being problem gambling free is – Going for a walk anywhere and not feeling the guilt. That is priceless to me and you can't put a monetary figure on that. When I was problem gambling I would always make sure that I did enough reading, watching and doing to get by. Get by! – How I short changed myself. Now, I find that when I walk into a bookstore after reading so much lately that I am the tallest man on the planet. That feeling you cannot buy either.

So for this section I'm not going to reel of the obvious and list all the things that you could do that make you happy. Only to say this. You can become very empowered and very happy, very quickly. These feelings will happen the moment you start to take action.

Time to deal with...

REPAYING THE DEBT

If you can enlist the help of someone you trust then that would be of a huge benefit to you, at this stage. Normally your partner, but it may be a family member or a very close friend. If there is no-one to hand then you can always find someone through the list of people and organisations at the back of this book that are always more than ready and willing to help. If you choose someone close to you personally, there is no doubt in my mind that they will only be too happy to help when they see the willingness in your eyes. Sit down with this person and tell them everything that you have done and that now you are completely ready to accept the responsibility for your actions and you want to pay everything back that you owe. Tell them about this book and other research you have done and how that is helping you to understand why you did the things that you did. Tell them you accept that you were out of control in the past, but now you want to take control of your future, and you really need their help and support. This will not be an easy time for you emotionally because together you both have to assess the full cost of your problem gambling. But you will also feel a huge weight off your mind by finally allowing someone in, and you should feel empowered that you now want to take control of the very thing that has been controlling you. I salute you and am proud of you for getting to this stage. The practical steps you must take are:

- 1) Make a list of every debt and everybody you owe
- 2) Make another list covering all yours and your families' (if they are willing to contribute) income and deduct all your living bills including food and essentials
- 3) Leave yourself with a realistic amount that you can pay towards your debts, whether this is on a weekly or monthly basis
- 4) If possible, hand over all money, cards and means of access to money for this trusted someone to hold. After a period of time re-evaluate the situation and maybe step by step you can regain control of your own finances

- 5) There are now self exclusion programmes that can be activated to help you. See back of book. You can also exclude yourself from arcades, bookmakers and casinos
- 6) Filing for bankruptcy should be a last resort
- 7) Try not to be tempted to arrange one super loan to cover all outstanding debts as this will only incur more debt
- 8) Arrange your debtors into categories ranking them from most immediate to not so immediate
- 9) Contact all debtors and tell them of your repayment plans. Explain to them your debt situation and income and say you are only taking out vital monies for food, shelter and utilities. The rest is to pay back your debts. If you go to them with such a proactive plan you will find them more sympathetic and willing to negotiate terms. This will also empower you more because you are taking control
- 10) If you have very high debts then maybe you could get in touch with debt repair agencies. They may be able to get your debt down to a lower and more repayable level. Visit website links
- 11) Make sure that you set yourself realistic targets so that when you achieve them you will see that you are making progress
- 12) Don't despair; Rome wasn't built in a day
- 13) Give yourself little amounts of money to treat yourself and your loved ones. You deserve it

Ironically, you may find that because you're finally owning up and facing the very things you have been avoiding for X amount of years that your perspective may change on...

HOW YOU VALUE MONEY!

By reassessing your financial situation at this time it may provide you with a valuable opportunity as to how you actually spend your money and review what you would

like to see for your long-term financial priorities. But for me personally it has allowed me with something more than that, and that is to closely look at

THE VALUE OF MONEY

I've been in hot pursuit for that 'Golden Fleece' (until recently) my entire life and look where it has got me? Look where it has gotten you? I'd like you to stop for a second and consider that if you won that big win you've been dreaming about all this time. The one which would provide you with enough money to solve all of your 'problems' and maybe provide you with that luxury lifestyle you've always wanted. Would that instantly solve the way you deal with your negative emotions? Is it really possible for money to solve the world's negative emotional states? - I think Elvis, Robbie Williams and the millions of other rich people since the dawn of time and from around the world may have something to say on this matter.

Can money have saved lots of other rich people from losing loved ones to illnesses or disease?

No.

Can money buy me the same feeling I am going to get if lots of problem gamblers read this book and tell me that it helped in some way?

I think not.

Can money buy you the feeling you give yourself when you look in the mirror at the end of the day and say 'Today I had urges to gamble but I resisted them and have not gambled today'?

Nothing can match that feeling, and by the way if you can do it for one day then you can do it for a million days. Just one day at a time, as 'they' say.

Can money buy you that sense of achievement you are going to feel when some time has passed and you allow yourself to compare how you are now and how you were then?

No way near. That is going to make you feel a hundred feet tall, especially given your history.

So I would like to offer you that health, happiness and love as well as many other things come before money and when you give up the pursuit of the 'big win' and give them more attention the results you can achieve will astound you.

Given below is a list, in order, of my new value system. I wonder what yours may look like...

- Health
- Love
- Happiness
- Fun and friendliness
- Giving to others
- Honesty
- Learning and education
- Making a difference
- Passion for life
- Achieving my goals
- To be an individual
- Freedom
- Being wealthy

Never under-estimate the importance of...

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRAISES

The journey you are undertaking is one of constant reflection and review. I think to spend too much time reflecting on all the negatives that have transpired in your life may lead you back to the very place you don't want to be. The self fulfilling prophecy (where you say things over and over again which in turn makes them come true) is true for both states of mind, so keep on your toes. Awarding yourself with internal mental praises when you reach each goal along the way will help keep you on track. And a little message to all you great problem gambler supporters out there.

Regular, voiced praising will work wonders for the pair of you. By doing these acts you will both be bathing in progress and the snowball effect will continue.

You must be completely aware that...

LAPSES AND RELAPSES

Are two different things and neither should be seen as failure.

A lapse is when a problem gambler carries out some gambling behaviour. It may be for a day or longer.

A relapse is where a problem gambler returns to gambling with the same intensity that brought out to bear that they were a problem gambler in the first place. This may be for one session of betting or much longer.

It can be difficult to see exactly where the two merge but they should not be seen as a sign to long-term failure. Nor can I possibly say here that either one of the above is crucial in order for you to fully recover. I myself have suffered from a couple of the above but remain completely gambling free for well over a year now and even if we

were to put everything aside for one moment and contemplate that I have a bout of problem gambling at some point in the future does this mean all is lost?

No it does not.

I would, as you should if it happens, simply work through everything again. What I would like to say is that I did have a couple of lapses in the early stages but as time goes on it seems increasingly less likely for me to have one. This is because my beliefs have reached the level of convictions so they are even stronger but I never take anything for granted.

One skill I have picked up along the way which might pay you huge dividends is for you to...

READ YOUR WAY OUT

'Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind'

Rudyard Kipling – Indian born British writer (1865 – 1936)

If you agree that your actions stem from the decisions you make, and that they are powered by your beliefs, then the more you can do to compound your new beliefs toward gambling the more successful your journey will be. I have found that the more I have read about the destructiveness of problem gambling, the more I have researched how the gambling industry operates and the more I read about how to deal more effectively with my negative emotional states, the less I feel the urge to gamble.

The urge has got weaker the more I read and so this is why I have decided to set up a website whereby I can continue in this vein. That thick habit forming trunk that was once built on my irrational, illogical and superstitious beliefs which directed my way of life has been completely destroyed and will never return. The knowledge I have

now is something that I did not have before. For example, I did not know I had a mild form of obsessive compulsive disorder until I took time out to look at myself.

I did not know I was in as deep as I was because I always paid the bills (albeit juggling everything all the time). A lot of the people around me were gamblers and so I felt constantly assured that my behaviour was normal.

The gambling industry would constantly tell me that gambling was a fun and exciting leisure pursuit and heh, one day all my dreams might come true. I wasn't doing anything that bad because no-one pulled me to one side and said that I needed help, in fact all I ever got was encouragement; at the bookmakers, the TV, the computer, the Casino, the dog track etc

Okay okay, I don't want to be seen as using these as excuses but they all played a part in shaping my earlier beliefs. Ultimately I chose what I wanted to believe and I chose to believe that problem gambling was good for me for a very long time. I kept it a big secret whilst that one big win would iron out any creases.

But I don't longer have any of those beliefs – I have woken up to myself and admitted to those around me what I have been really doing all those years. My new habit forming trunk has now been built up by all the books I have read and continue to read. I think if we look at the story of...

SANTA CLAUS AND THE TOOTH FAIRY

We can see that once you have been exposed to the truth about things, to then go back and believe about earlier fallacies is a nye on impossibility. Could you imagine your brain somehow reverting back to the belief that Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy really do exist and that all this time everything you since learnt was a lie. How bizarre would that be!

Let us consider why we ever believed in them and then why we changed our beliefs. This may sound a little strange at first but the similarities between gambling and Santa Claus are amazing, bear with me while I attempt to make you agree.

Come on Jakey boy, you better make a good go of this, or I can sense this book may be hitting the inside of the nearest bin.

Okay deep breaths.

Let everything flow away from you and leave behind nothing except Santa Claus and Problem Gambling.

Right, here we go.

In the beginning we were born and come around December every year for about the first seven to nine years of our life we truly, deeply believed that Santa Claus existed and that every year he would come to visit us through a window, or if we had one, a chimney. This belief was so powerful that we would behave very strangely in the weeks and days leading up to Christmas Day. We would incessantly ask our parents endless streams of questions like, how would he get in? How he could he possibly see every child in the world on the same night? What did he like to eat? Etc.etc. Our parents would even make us write out our list and address it to Santa, so they could pass it on. Come Christmas Eve night, we were all so excited that it was almost impossible to sleep and we were always awake at the crack of dawn. I think it would be fair to say that we all fell for it, hook, line and sinker. Why?

Because we trusted our parents and also come Christmas morning there would be a whole host of presents sitting round the tree that weren't there the night before.

I for one, would love to still believe in Santa Claus, as long as he was true, because the memories of such a person are so pleasurable.

So why we did we stop having that belief?

It's because we started to have independent thought and as the years rolled by, the evidence of such a person existing just didn't stack up.

- 1) How come he managed to see every child in the world on the same night?
- 2) How come neither you, your brothers or sisters, or friends had ever seen him?
- 3) You noticed that your mum and dad would wink at each other when they talked about him. You were starting to know what a wink meant
- 4) You would eventually find out that it was just a ruse and it was invented to make kids happy around December and give them a faith that the world was special at times and there were magical people in it. It was beautifully wrapped in a way we could understand seeing how we were still learning about the ways of the world

Gambling for the problem gamblers among us works in very much the same way. We have had deeply held beliefs that gambling was good and brought us lots of pleasures. Chances to win lots of money, a chance to get away from all our problems, a chance to make us feel special. We too, would behave in very strange ways where gambling was concerned, we thought we had magical powers. The gambling industry is the equivalent of our mums and dads leaving brandy and mince pies out for Santa, the way they advertise themselves reinforce our beliefs in very much the same way. The government, who collect billions of pounds in revenue from gambling like to tell us that the lottery is good and we're all, contributing to great things. This has reinforced our superstitious beliefs because we trusted our government. We trusted them to look after us, I trusted them too. But in the last two years I have caught them all winking behind my back, plus I managed to get back my independent thought which allowed me to research what gambling was all about for me. By reading this book you are awarding yourself with that independent thought and just as kids who shared the knowledge in the playground that Santa doesn't exist back then, we are now sharing the knowledge that problem gambling is no good for us now.

We now both know the truth about Santa and we both know the truth about problem gambling, there is no going back.

'Man's mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions'

Oliver Wendell Holmes

TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Okay, I can still see you, so I can't be in the bin (yet), not much longer to go now. If you've got this far you might as well read on to the end, I promise no more fairy tales. But I would like to share with you a few examples of magical people that have existed and are most definitely real.

Oprah Winfrey was born into 1950's America being poor, black and female. She suffered rape at the age of nine by her cousin and molestation by her uncle, and a friend of her mothers. Today she is an internationally renowned philanthropist and truly a shining beacon to mankind of what can be achieved from humble beginnings.

December 1 1955, saw Rosa Parks, an unknown seamstress; refuse to give up her bus seat to a white person in Montgomery Alabama. This single act of defiance inspired freedom-loving people everywhere that brought about the end of legal segregation in America. She continued to spend the rest of her life helping others and when she passed away in 2005 she was the first woman in American history to be buried on Capitol Hill. An honour usually reserved for Presidents of the United States.

We all know the story of Nelson Mandela, but for a man to be imprisoned for 28 years of his life and then to come out and shake his captors by the hand is something that should never become a tiresome story. And what about Ghandi – a man with his unmovable belief of non violence, brought down the biggest empire this world has ever seen.

One man – one belief!

Staggering, but they are just a few of the more famous examples from around the world. There are magical people all around us and I suggest to you that seeking them out, whoever they may be, will give you the inspiration for what you face today. Role models in our lives can help us tremendously to get what we want, and they can be found on the bookshelves, on the internet or be some of the people

around us. And remember it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, the ability to triumph begins with you. Always.

'A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials'

Proverb

CONCLUSION

'I have been grateful for the outcome of my trial, and this gratitude has been paramount in my new life. As much as I regret the harm my past actions have caused to Roberta and others, I know I cannot live in guilt and remorse for I can twist them to self-pity so quickly. Instead I look to see how my experience can benefit others. I no longer regret being a compulsive gambler nor am I afraid of my past – or of having my life defined as a gambler and a thief. I know who I am today because I know who I want to be in the future.'

That was a paragraph from one of the books I have read that followed the downward spiral of a problem gambler in Canada, and I think it's message is one that I subscribe to. Things can happen to a person for a multitude of reasons but your past does not have to become your future.

If you were to read my first book 'What's in a gamble' you can see the anger that was in me and how I was rushing around at more than 100mph, but if you could compare then, to the positive message I am writing now, it really shows that change is more than possible.

And for that, I am very proud.

MAKE A DONATION

If you have found this help-guide useful, and can afford it, I would like you to consider making a small donation at the website. I am a one man band and any contributions received would go towards the running costs of the website and the maintenance of this free service.

Whether you have donated or not I would like to wish you all the very best on your journey and I look forward to talking to you at the website.

RECOMMENDED READING

- What's in a Gamble
By Jake Brindell

- Overcoming Compulsive Gambling
By Alex Blaszczynski

- Awaken The Giant Within
By Anthony Robbins

Anything and everything that will help change your core beliefs about gambling.