

WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

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MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR: Forest County Potawatomi Community of Wisconsin

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Summer/Fall 2005

Problem Gambling Linked to Parkinson's Drugs

A class of drugs used in treating Parkinson's disease are again in the spotlight for their relationship with compulsivity and obsessions, including compulsive gambling. Dopamine agonists, or drugs that stimulate dopamine reception, are commonly used to treat Parkinson's patients.



A lawsuit has been filed against Boehringer-Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., who makes the dopamine agonist Mirapex, accusing the company of failing to adequately warn patients about the potential side effects such as compulsive gambling. An attorney involved in the lawsuits is waiting to have the complaint certified as a

nationwide class-action lawsuit.

A study conducted at the Mayo Clinic and recently published by the Archives of Neurology examines the relationship between Parkinson's disease and pathological gambling. Dodd, Klos, Bower, Geda, Josephs and Ahlskog, (2005) assessed the medical therapy 11 patients were receiving for Parkinson's disease and the relationship to their assessed pathological gambling. In the study, Dodd et al. (2005), found that the 11 patients had recently developed gambling problems and the timing was related to the use of dopamine agonist drugs.

The researchers found that when the drug doses were reduced or discontinued, eight of the 11 patients stopped gambling

(the other three patients were unavailable for follow-up).

According to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation, about one million people suffer from the disease. However, it is not clear what the prevalence of pathological gambling among this population is as well as the prevalence among those taking dopamine agonist medication for their Parkinson's. It is recommended that patients consult their health-care professional regarding any concerns about their medication.



More info on the Web:

- Parkinson's Disease Foundation site: <http://www.pdf.org>
- The website for the Archives of Neurology: <http://archneur.ama-assn.org>



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New WCPG Training Program

Joanna Franklin, a national compulsive gambling expert, has developed a new manual and format for the WCPG training programs. The manual is a collection of information, references and data designed to be taught in our clinical training and education programs. All participants will learn useful information to help people who are impacted by problem gambling.

More detailed information about this training program will appear in the training brochure, which will be published later this fall.

Special thanks to Ed Ramsey and Tom Sebor for their ongoing time and commitment to the WCPG training program.

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Survey Looks at Gambling on UW-Green Bay Campus

A recently released survey of University of Wisconsin-Green Bay students found that 75% of the survey respondents had gambled in the past year. The survey was conducted under the guidance of Dr. Dennis Lorenz, Associate Professor of Human Development (Psychology).

Funding for the survey was provided by a mini-grant from the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling.

“With continuing increases in calls to our Problem Gambling Helpline, we know that people in Wisconsin, including students, face gambling problems,” said Rose Gruber, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling. “But without research and surveys, it’s sometimes difficult to gauge the extent of the problem. This survey is one tool to help us set a baseline for future surveys and research.”

The survey was conducted in the fall of 2004. More than 1,200 UWGB students responded to the e-mail survey.

“While the survey found that approximately 3 of every 4 students had gambled in the previous 12 months, the vast majority of students responded that

they were not gamblers,” Lorenz said. “That’s probably an indication that the students aren’t certain about what is and what isn’t considered gambling.”

Even among those who indicated they were not gamblers, 30% of the females and 55% of the males said they had played cards for money in the previous 12 months. More than 25% of the male and female “non-gamblers” also indicated they gambled at a casino in the past year.



Among those who said they were gamblers, 53% indicated they had gambled longer than they planned at least once and half said they’d felt a strong urge to return to gamble again after a win. Among the gambling group, 25% responded that they gamble until their last dollar is gone.

Lorenz also says that Internet gambling is an area to watch. While the survey found that the percentage of students who said they had gambled on the Internet was relatively low, more than half of the survey respondents had played cards or games of chance on the Internet without betting.

“It will be interesting to see if those who now play games on the Internet without betting, make the jump to on-line gambling,” Lorenz said.

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He and I: Love and Other Obsessions Between a Gambler and Her Addiction...

By: Julie Gimmel

Introduction by Rose Gruber

About 1 ½ years ago, I received a letter from a woman named Julie who was incarcerated at the John Burke Correctional Facility in Waupun, WI. I have had the opportunity to visit with Julie several times and have gotten to know more about her and her gambling addiction. There are many kinds of gambling: casino; lottery; internet; sports betting; dog races; stock market; cards; etc. Most gamblers have one type of gambling that they do most often. Julie gambled at casinos.

Julie's original crimes were forgery and misappropriation of personal identifying materials. Following that she received a three-year prison sentence for violating probation, which included relapsing, erratic behavior at her job and relationship breakups specifically due to her disappearances, financial irresponsibility, and taking money that belonged to others. Julie has been instrumental in getting a Gamblers Anonymous meeting going at the John Burke Center-the first G.A. meeting in the state of Wisconsin in a correctional facility. For many years, Julie's gambling has controlled her life. Julie has now started to take her life back-step by step-day by day. She has made arrangements to enter an in-patient gambling treatment program as soon as she is released. Although Julie did not have any court ordered rehabilitation programs, she has taken a parenting class and has gone through a cognitive intervention program. She has also been able to pay almost \$10,000 in the past 13 months for room/board/debt/restitution and family support. This was not court ordered and a big step for Julie. Julie says she has some very good friends on the "outside" who have loved and supported her through all of this. They saw the sun, while all she could see were the clouds. Julie wanted to share her story in the hopes that it might help someone else and to let others know how far down the compulsive gambling addiction can take you.

Here is part 1 of Julie's story:

Prologue:

If you will forgive me for playing your games, I will forgive you for toying with my emotions...

It is 3:30 in the morning and I am walking to my hotel room alone. Normally, this is not something that I would have dared to do only a few years ago. I am drunk. It is very cold outside. The wind hits hard, slapping at my bare cheeks, and bringing with it snow filled with hard little ice crystals.

I have just left an anonymous apartment full of strangers whose names I never bothered to take the time to learn. I know that I am in a small town called Wisconsin Dells. However, my night has not been a total waste. I had just hosted a very successful pre-New Year's Eve party at the most popular bar in town. For the moment, I had been the 'it' girl, an account executive with a very successful and historic radio station in Wisconsin. I was good at my job. I knew how to throw a party. I knew how to look the part. People did not know that I had a very dark secret. I would almost die trying to keep it hidden. This desperate act also allowed me to learn to fake my existence. People thought I was normal and that is what made my situation so dangerous. If you do

things people think you should do, the way they think you should do them, they mistakenly believe that you are okay. I was so far from okay.

It is still pitch-dark outside, no glow of dawn illuminating the eastern sky, just the cold dark morning escorts me to my door. It is the night before New Year's 2000-2001. I know my hangover is going to be a serious one. I am not much of a drinker and I threw caution to the wind as this was a brand new account for me and the bar owner had paid a great deal of money to host this live remote. I cannot remember how many drinks I had or how many shots I slammed. (There are moments in life where the circumstances of what you pretend to not know are infinitely preferable to those things of which you are already certain. I missed this profound lesson and the connection that I should have made.) All I cared about at the time was that this had to be the kind of party that people would be talking about at their water cooler for the next week. It had to be the kind of party that our station DJ would talk about on his show during the lunch hour and those listening could nod their heads and smile a bit because they knew from experience

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Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

what he was talking about and they could reflect a bit on the silly antics they had watched or participated in. We were grown-ups who went back to our high school days, if only for a few hours.

I wanted to bring in more accounts from this county and I wanted my company to be proud of me. I went to a lot of time and expense to plant my feet in this resort town and secure my position here. It was all so much a part of a grander plan. It was non-negotiable. With the flick of my wrist my clothes flutter and settle like a cloud on the floor. I feel a tear drizzle from the corner of my eye, but I angrily slap it away. I have come to terms with myself and the fact that I am a lion in sheep's clothing. I am nothing more than a thief behind designer bags and Ralph Lauren labels.

I crawl into bed. I can hear the needles of sleet falling from a dark, starless sky. I caress the pillow next to me. Like me, it too is lifeless and cold. Yet it is not a man that I crave or the sweet goodnight kisses from my 10-year-old daughter who lies sleeping in her bed 60 miles away. The emptiness I feel is for a stranger who does not know me, yet he knows me very, very well. He flirts with me. He teases me. He entices me, but I always want him more. In the morning when the first light of dawn filters through the ice-crusted trees I will go to him. I miss him, yet it has only been hours since we were together. I ponder what this reunion will hold, this lover's tryst of mine. It is not blood, but champagne which courses through my veins when I think of him and what lies ahead...only I know that the love of my life is not a person. He breathes no air and he does not whisper in my ear. He owns me. All of me. He took possession of me and never let me go. The love of my life is a casino. My lover knows my name. He knows my face. He knows how deadly he is for me, yet I won't allow him to turn me away. Even when he tries to reject me, I don't accept it. Our meetings have become more intense and more tumultuous. He never makes me laugh anymore. He only brings me to my knees.

I am filled with desire, guilt, and shame for two loves. My gambling which owned me but no longer wanted me, and my life which wanted me but could not have me...

Author's Note: If you will forgive me for raising you up so high, I will forgive you for bringing me down so low...

This is my true story. It is about the life that I chose to live as a compulsive gambler. I use the words, 'chose to live,' because they define behaviors that continued long

after people began trying to help me. I cannot and will not blame my addiction on my criminal thinking or criminal behavior. This story is about my self-destruction and about my recklessness. I stole more than just people's money. And gambling became much more than a game to me. My gambling became such an integral part of my life that it slowly transformed into the love of my life. The relationship we developed became the only relationship that I had. I allowed nothing and no one to come between us. I could never push gambling into the farthest recesses of my mind. It always was with me. Gambling affected my judgment, my work, my career, and my ability to mother my only child. I had eventually become the girlfriend from hell. I had become proficient at such haggling with my time and my schedule with the savvy of a Wall Street broker... "I'll-give-you-one-fabulous-home-cooked-meal-with-your-parents-and-throw-in-an-afternoon-of-nothing-but-not-only-if-you-allow-me-one-unaccounted-for-evening-after-work-without-you-phoning-the-police-to-see-if-something-terrible-has-happened-to-me." Vintage Julie. In Julie's world, every waking moment was spent idolizing the casino and formulating scenarios to get there each evening. In joyless irony, I had already become a prisoner.

I more than jumped off the deep end. I dove in it. I wallowed in it, and I eventually drowned in it. Prior to my addiction consuming my life I had had some successes. That may be why it was difficult for those in my life to come to grips with and comprehend that I would throw everything away for this obsession of mine. I had modeled for two magazines, I had worked on two cruise ships in the Caribbean for two summers, I had won scholarships to college for placing in pageants in California and my hometown, and I had fulfilled my dream of becoming a school teacher before making a very successful transition into the world of advertising. It seemed to others that things came naturally easy to me. To myself, the demons that I fought stemmed from a childhood of torment and sexual abuse that I could do nothing about. It lasted for 13 years. My stepfather's jealousy scared away any person that was close to me. I have lived with people throughout the course of my life tell me to, 'just get over it.' When your childhood is stolen from you, you don't, 'just get over it.' I did not know how to identify and relate to anyone who had a healthy home life. Even buying holiday cards to give my family became a traumatic task. The words and poetry never coincided with how I was truly feeling inside and it has taken me decades to finally believe it wasn't my fault. I know now that I gambled mostly at night because I was anonymous yet surrounded by

Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

safety in numbers. I did not have to be scared to fall asleep, only to be revisited by my stepfather's face in the middle of each night. Make-believe can only take you so far and eventually you have to return to the real world.

I want my story to change the course of as many lives as I possibly can. I want to saturate the public with the knowledge that people like me exist in their very world. I barely knew about gambling when I spent less than an hour at the casino my very first time; however, I was certain that I wanted to do it again. I do not want there to be any more casualties in my life. I do not have to hide anymore and I no longer have to live with the endless nights that someone would eventually discover my secret. I can tell others that I have been there and that I feel their pain.

Gambling addiction has no boundaries. There wasn't anything I wouldn't do to gamble and my rock bottom proved to be endless. I had nowhere to go except down further. There were moments of reprieve, moments where I felt that the world accepted me fully. But its gaze kept playing over me like a flame and eventually I was torn between not quite wanting to live and being not quite ready to die. My gambling years would take me through evictions, break-ups, job losses, jail, and eventually prison. Rock bottom? I laughed in its face. I greeted it with a smile. Surely you jest, come on Satan, are you testing ME? I didn't want to say goodbye to something I wasn't ready to let go of. Even now, there are days where I catch myself trying to believe that things weren't that bad. That I wasn't that bad. That I couldn't have been that destructive. How could I have wreaked so much havoc on so many lives? I never wanted to be the poster child for a gambling addiction.

I have gone through some very dark times. But in the dark the eyes begin to see. I was asked by my mother a long time ago to write a book. I was too ashamed for what I had done that I couldn't see past it to know that I had a message of hope. A story. A cautionary tale. But endings always bring new beginnings and I am now ready to invite you into my world. You don't need a mirror to see a reflection of yourself... gambling and my love for it became an unman-

ageable part of my life which infected and destroyed all that was good. I was afraid that if I put the words down on paper and when people set these pages down, I wonder what they are to make of such a thing. I also share my most private life with you as my role as a mother. My child has been my biggest supporter and she was also the first to tell me that she had forgiven me. She was just 11-years-old. My little girl taught me that I needed to give love freely without expecting anything back in return.

Lastly, I want my readers to grasp the madness this disease carries. The progression. Within a year of my first bet, I had slipped over the border of recreational gambling and had crossed the finish line as an addict. I disappeared for days at a time. For more than two years, I didn't open my mail. Gambling, for me, radiated a mysterious presence as if it understood and saw things that no one else did. But I am no longer a slave to it. I am no longer in love with it. I fear it and that is what will keep it very real for me.

I am an addict. I don't look like one and I don't dress like one. It certainly wasn't something I dreamed about aspiring to when I was a child. I was born the first moment I made my first bet. This is my true story.

My First Arrest

If you will forgive me for the loud beating of my heart, I will forgive you for not hearing it.

My expression towards the detective was curiously blank as if I had wandered into the wrong room and didn't know what I was doing there. He was standing beside me like some medieval sentry before he plopped down to sit uninvited in his interrogation chair. He tells me to take a seat. (Maybe I don't want to sit down. Maybe I just want him to tell me what's going to happen to me so I can get out of here and get on with my life...Get on with the rest of my life? That was a good one...I knew of two more communities that I had broken the law in and it was probably just days before they would be knocking on my door...)

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Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

He reads me my Miranda rights and I initial the paperwork. He says nothing more. His eyes met mine. He had my attention but not much else. I wonder how often he has rehearsed this moment. I realize I am holding my breath. How many seconds will he program this pause to last? Is this sterile, grey room going to become the equivalent of a psychiatrist's chair? I felt like a grenade whose string was about to be pulled. If I so much as breathe, I will explode. It is important that I stay very still. I was the one in control, right?

He asks for permission to go through my purse and search my car. Each request of his gets more intimate. Like a game of strip poker, but instead of losing a layer of my clothing each round, I have to expose a piece of damning evidence. But he was going to have to prove it. I wasn't going to give up anything so easily. Like a child, I had to demand proof that I was the criminal and not he for arresting me.

I listen as he tells me he has all the time in the world to sit and talk and he gently places his pen on the desk. When I hear that, I want to throw his coffee in his face. I look at him icily. It began to hurt. It began to hurt like hell because he was the first person to come so close to the truth. I must get away from him before I let him hurt me anymore. In a split second, this detective has morphed into my stepfather who has also trapped me. I am no longer a woman, but a grade schooler making toast until I am cornered by him. This flashback brings me crashing to the present.

How dare Mister-smug-I-know-it-all-Dragnet-esque-detective interrupt my life with this little inconvenient arrest. I had plans tonight. I had a date with my slot machine. Why couldn't my ex-husband have just simply explained away my forgery when he had been given the chance to do so?

I was getting more agitated as the minutes on the clock ticked by. There is no trace of humor in his voice when he alludes to the fact that he knows this probably isn't an isolated incident.

With an edge to his voice he was telling me what he knew I was instead of giving me a chance to explain myself. It was frightening to hear someone else say the words.

It begins to sink in how much trouble I am in. God no, I think as the cobwebs clear from my mind with a fear so deep that I think I might actually get sick. I ask for

something to drink and when it is brought to me I can hardly hold the cup without spilling. My face must have turned ivory white because the look on the detective's face softens. He must know where my next question is going. Behind his formidable façade he must be a father. The man behind the badge must know that I was suddenly reliving the arrest with my child in tow. He must be able to see the shame and the pain that I feel. In a whisper, I ask about my daughter, Makenna. Is she safe? Is she hungry? She doesn't have her blanket and when she is scared she always needs her blanket. It makes her feel safe. God, I didn't bring along her blanket...I want to hold her and see her one last time before her daddy comes to the police station to pick her up. The detective tells me no, that that isn't possible right now. Through the blur of my tears I tell him again that I wanted to hold her. I wanted to smell her scent, her lingering aroma. I was her mother for God's sake and I should be the one handing her over to her father, not some stranger in his office. My throat tightens and I try to choke down these unwanted tears but they defiantly keep tumbling down my cheeks. How can I share with anyone that I am over \$50,000 in debt, I am about to be evicted a fourth time, and that I abruptly had just quit my job because I couldn't bare getting arrested at the radio station in front of everyone. My fiercely guarded secret life was beginning to fall like a deck of cards. Why couldn't I confide in anyone? Why didn't I trust anyone with what was really going on with me? Why was avoiding the truth so important?

As my world was changing drastically second by second, the detective tells me that my daughter is safe, that she is well cared for and that I can call her at home when I leave the police station after his investigation is over.

He leaves the room so that he can have my car towed to the police garage for his inspection. I am locked into the interrogation room alone. The glow of the lamp in the ceiling funneled light down the wall toward the floor where it spread like pale, melted butter. I take my jacket off and hold it tightly to me like a doll to a child, as though I would never let it go. I subsided into terrified sobs, the tears streaming down my face, my whole body trembling as I let myself fall against the wall until I eventually landed on the floor.

Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

I stayed this way for a long time. More than seconds, more than minutes, and more than hours. It is amazing how much time could be spent doing absolutely nothing-not moving, not speaking, and barely breathing. My eyes were still troubled, my eyelashes still damp with tears.

I seemed trapped in an endless night, coming down through the frozen sky, a terrible coldness. Sometimes I didn't realize it, but I had a death wish that came with snowfall. I always lost what was most dear to me in winter. I slowly regained control of my breathing, but my heart knocked so hard that my vision was cloudy. The pulse point at the base of my throat throbbed as though jolts of electricity were slamming through me.

The hours became elastic, each on stretching, snapping, and popping into the next. I could only imagine in horror what the detective was thinking of me as he was sifting through mounds of papers that would eventually piece together my sordid new life of criminal activity. The detective has just met me, yet I was already a foregone conclusion. Guilty as charged. "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury...what say you? The house always wins, your honor!"

The door slowly creaks open and a new detective walks in. I don't know if he is here to check on my welfare, or to pick up where the last one left off. "Ms. Gimmel?" he asks me. The sound of my name crashes against my ears like cymbals colliding. It fills the inside of my brain, echoing and reverberating, booming around my skull as if desperately searching for a way out. I completely ignored him. "I believe I asked you a question," he says. I tell him, "I believe I didn't hear you." I wasn't ready to face the details. This all seemed surreal, another disjointed piece in the jigsaw that had become my life.

I tell him that I want to go and see what is going on with the search. That I thought this was taking way too long. I simultaneously smile and lie through my teeth as I tell him that maybe I could be of some help if I went there too. (I was surprised by how unconvincing I

sounded, even to myself.) I was desperate for him to buy into my story. Why couldn't I have a detective who either didn't ask too many questions or one who didn't care what the answers were?

I knew that once the fallout from my arrest spread there was a very good chance that I would not be able to ever step inside a casino again. This thought was all that my headache and heartache permitted. No, I would not accept that. I could not accept that. There had been so many years, so many moments, and I thought – so many good times that I had spent at the casino. It was there that I had celebrated and cavorted and cried with for the last 4 years of my life. But by doing this, by giving up the little things that make life worthwhile, all I'd done was forget who I really was. Yet for someone to tell me that I had a problem was unthinkable. I believed the casino felt real to me and solid and smelled of miracles. There was no escape from it. I saw nothing but him chasing me, following my every move. Calling me back within hours of just having left. What everyone didn't know was that it was too late for me to stop on my own. I was radically different. I was unprepared for these changes and I just didn't know what to make of them. Who and what I was becoming was so different from anything that I had ever known. I was so in love with my gambling and I believe that the greater the love, the greater the tragedy when it is over. I had already given my heart to the only thing that I would also allow to break it, and break it he eventually had.

I am escorted to the sally port (the garage where police stations keep their fleet and where inmates are secretly transported). The cold caresses me, sending icy chills along my spine. I see my car ahead. I see it being inspected under the watchful eye of several officers. For reasons that I do not even understand I wonder if I am experiencing the great paradox of addiction – the criminal who desperately wants to get caught because they are already living in a cage. I do understand

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Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

that we all live in a world defined by limits. I did give full authorization to search my car knowing the end result. It was a matter of good Julie versus bad Julie. I was struggling with that every minute and every second of my life now. A razor of guilt slices into my brain. This garage is yet another cold, dim place. A concrete fortress to protect the public from the likes of me. I, however, was my own greatest danger. Nobody had to help me dismantle my life, I was doing a great job of it all on my own.

I could not escape by closing my eyes. I wanted to be someone else, somewhere else, but I stood frozen in time. When I am near my car everyone stops what they are doing to look at me. The silence was so heavy that I felt I could hold it in my hands. No words are exchanged and I abruptly ask to go back to the interrogation room. I wanted to run. To run away like a school girl who narrowly escapes the playground bully. But I knew deep down inside of what was still good in me that these men were trying to help me. This had to stop some way.

The search of my car takes four hours. I knew that there would not be an easy end to this night. I just wanted to get it all over with. I am terrified of courtrooms, having never liked watching the dramas unfold on television. When the search is over, I hope that the detective quickly stabs at my psyche instead of prolonging the pain by slicing it inch by inch.

My thoughts are unconnected, my memory fragmented. I spent the next few hours trying to figure out a creative way to soften the blow to everyone because I will have to answer to this. From this moment on, was I going to be the person whom everyone now has to try to love?

My original detective finally comes back into the room. He sits down and starts placing everything from his hands into neat, little piles. Again the silent treatment. He is very effective because in anguish and horror I jump to my feet and cross the room as though by fleeing him, I could flee the truth.

I turned around and looked at the various piles of paper on the table. The stolen mail, the stolen checks, the endless stream of neglected bills. I felt foolish. Embarrassment washing up the back of my neck. As boldly as a headline in a supermarket tabloid I see the pile of yellow receipts that showed my winnings from the slot machines. Receipts that had dates, amounts,

and my signatures of all the times I believed I was a winner monetarily. That was the biggest pile. How ugly it looked to me now, how lonely, how wasted, when only a few nights ago those receipts had looked beautiful and fairylike. I so badly wanted to hate all of it for having stolen my life.

We are nearing 11:00pm. I am told that we are almost finished. We discuss how all of this came to be in my car. I admitted to taking it all and I also tell him that I am not sure how serious all of this is. He informs me that he has enough evidence to 'book me' and that he will now have to inform other jurisdictions that he has things they will want to question me about as well. I am not sure what a 'booking' is and then he says that it means he has to take photos of me and fingerprint me. He has to make my arrest official. I felt it then, as surely as if someone had turned on an air-conditioner. As if it couldn't be any more possible, the atmosphere in the room got suddenly colder. I offer to him that he might as well just lock me up for the night – that I didn't see the logic in why he was going to let me leave if this was all so serious. And why weren't handcuffs used...the mess in my life at this moment must echo the clutter in my brain...

Whether he was telling me the truth or not, his eyes soften and he tells me there isn't any room in the jail, and that I would not want to spend the night there anyway. He assures me that I am free to leave in less than an hour. What he didn't know was that I was terrified of going home to an empty house. Terrified that I was thinking irrational thoughts of hurting myself. Terrified that even after all of this, after ALL OF THIS, I was already wondering when I would be able to gamble. My stepfather's shadow enters the room again and he reminds me in some sick, twisted fashion that nobody would ever want me the way he did. (And now I am a criminal and the county jail doesn't want me?) I am haunted by this confirmation and I blink back tears that had no right to sting my eyes. What was the matter with me now? Where was my self-control? Why was I getting so upset when this was completely my fault anyway? I tried to keep my eyes on the detective and show no weakness. He was trying to scare me straight but I would not allow him to figure out my one great love – or let him push me to the breaking point.

The detective watches me intently and tells me he has to sort through the evidence he has and that all he is doing is just trying to get to the facts. Whether I intended to or not, I was bothering him, getting under his

Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

skin. So sure of what I'd done one minute yet admitting that it was a misunderstanding and sounding crazy the next. One second on the verge of tears, the next mad as hell. The last words that I say to him are that I never meant to hurt anyone. I never meant for things to get so out of hand.

By the way he avoided my gaze, I suspected that he had something to say, but wasn't quite sure how to phrase it. I was probably the first pathological gambler he had ever crossed paths with in his career. I wasn't taking money to live grandly or to save for a rainy day. Every cent that I had in my possession went into the casino. There was one constant in my life, and that was leaving the casino every time broke and literally penniless. It defies logic and that is what makes the addiction so difficult to understand. "Don't worry about it," I told myself, but worry had been my steady companion over the last few years. Everything in my life was eating at me, keeping sleep at bay. I couldn't even tell myself what was going on, so I just quietly left the room that had come to know me so well. For now and here, it was over. Except that it wasn't over, and I knew it wasn't, no matter how much I wanted to be finished with it.

After I was booked, I walk out of the police station. The world was still eerily there. People were still living their lives. I walk across freshly fallen snow to my car. Snowflakes melt against my skin, drizzling cold trails of water down my face and my neck. I hated the snow then, watching as it swirled and spun and danced right in front of me.

Driving through the snowy streets, I noticed that the towns seemed inordinately quiet; few cars were traveling the highway passing by homes still proudly displaying their month old holiday décor. None of the lights, garland, or wreaths brought me any joy, nor any comfort. I dreaded the holidays now, a time of year that felt empty and cold and riddled with guilt.

I slowed for my driveway and through the snow saw the lights of the town twinkling in my rearview mirror. As I step from my car, the

wind blasts me. Pushing my hood off of my head and running icy fingers through my hair. I slowly climb the stairs, the burden of nine lonely hours on my shoulders.

My apartment was silent, aside from the sounds of the wind gusts buffeting the patio doors. Only my voice seemed to echo back at me. The interior was more than cold. It felt dead. As if it forgot how to welcome anyone home anymore.

Driven by an impulse I didn't care to examine just yet, I walked into every room on the main floor. Since my addiction to gambling, I'd had too many homecomings like this one, when I walked around in silence and roamed each room, looking for something I couldn't name.

I sat on my couch and turned on the television, but punched it off after five minutes, annoyed by the inane hum. I tried to read a book but couldn't concentrate. And in this hollow hour, the recriminations began. Why did I steal the checks? Why would I put my daughter through this? Why can't I stop going to the casino? Why am I so lonely and when did I forget that life is truly a gift? Thinking about all of this is almost unbearable. I know I have to come to terms with this or I will surely lose my mind. But even when I banish these thoughts from my waking hours, I know they will return at night to taunt me.

I began to know what was at risk. I had a real fear – a dark, gnawing dread that ate at me because I realized that everything I did, everywhere I turned, every place I once held sacred, was no longer safe from me.

Suddenly I head to the bathroom and sprinkle two 500-milligram tablets of ibuprofen into the palm of my hand. I taste the bitter pills that dissolve against the sides of my mouth, and spill across my tongue as I choke them down with water. Two of these pills were all that were necessary to remove my anxiety, control the panic and restore the calm. Fifty would be enough to stop my breathing alto-

Julie Gimmel's Story Continued...

gether. It was a frightening thought that I tried to push away but kept demanding to be considered.

Emotional pain was everywhere, spreading through me in stupefying waves that had no beginning or end, but circled, endlessly circled, into every cell. "I am alive and not dead." "I am alive and not dead." Again and again I chanted the words in my head, and my mind tried to make sense of it all. Nausea coated my stomach and I continued to rock back and to pray I wouldn't be sick or empty the bottle of pills into my mouth and add more misery to this night.

I turned on the faucet and splashed cold water on my face. I saw myself in the mirror. I looked to make sure that I knew who I was and that I was really real. My eyes were wide and terrified. There were two things that I had to do before I made my final decision to choose life or welcome death.

I walk up the stairs and enter my daughter's bedroom. I remember the exact moment that we picked this apartment out. Actually, the exact moment she picked this apartment out. She fell in love with the idea of having her own balcony bedroom complete with a skylight so that the moon and stars could watch over her while she slept. Her favorite childhood book was, "Goodnight Moon," by Margaret Wise Brown and I think somehow she felt safe in this room. She must have felt closer to me and closer to the mother I once was. I fell in love with the idea of a fresh start and this pattern, sadly, would continue to repeat throughout the course of my addiction. But I could not argue with the romanticism of my 9-year-old. Her dreams always became my dreams.

The moon's light shines across her bed and trickles onto the floor where her Barbies and Beanie Babies lay scattered and well-loved from endless hours of 'let's pretend.' I know the lines and contours of my only child's face as well as my own, maybe better. The huge blue-green eyes that are so much lighter than her daddy's, the high cheekbones, and the bow-shaped mouth she inherited from me. She dreams of being a designer or a jockey.

Standing in the moonlight, her moonlight, I think of how it does something magical to her hair whenever I watch her as she falls asleep. It reveals a dozen different shades from honey blond to light chestnut. I am lost in my reverie until I feel the warm tears upon my

cheeks. Through their blur I see all of her pictures displayed on her bookshelf. I pick up my favorite one of her sitting on the Easter Bunny's lap and look into those beautiful blue-green eyes and ask her to please forgive me one day. My words colliding with my tears as suddenly I am interrupted by the sound of my cell phone ringing...

My Second Worst Day of Gambling

If you will forgive me for being so pathetic, I will forgive you for taking advantage of it...

It was early evening, not quite dusk, the sky a radiant red and orange over the horizon – the air sweet with the fragrance of freshly mown grass. The Friday work traffic was beginning to taper off in downtown Milwaukee. Most of the people were already sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the interstate, ordering a round of drinks with co-workers, or sitting down in the comfort of their homes to a warm meal and family conversation.

I hurried to my car, locked the door, and turned on the radio as loud as it would blare. A mixture of disbelief, anger, frustration, rage, fear, and exhaustion magnified the renewed sense of loss, and for the first time that day, I broke down. I began pounding the steering wheel and clapped my hand over my trembling lips as I started to cry. Not the quiet, repressed sounds of sadness, but the anguished cries of a child. My shoulders shook violently and I didn't know if anyone could hear my pain as I cried from the very bottom of my soul.

"Oh my God...Oh, my God..." It was all I could say. "But how? It isn't...oh Jesus...God..."

I gazed through my window. I gradually opened it to get some life back into my car. The breeze was warm though it was becoming the coolest part of the evening, it whispered through my hair and dried the tears on my face.

The 'art of deception' glass bowl over my world was now broken. I looked back towards the casino. God, I didn't want to love him anymore, not after today. I didn't want the memories, the pain, or the anguish. Today he made a fool of me. He seduced me and lied to me and showed me that I am nothing to him.

To be continued...

Upcoming Trainings: Contact the WCPG for Details

DATE	TRAINING	LOCATION
October 6 & 7, 2005	Phase 1	Wausau, WI
November 3 & 4, 2005	Phase 2	Wausau, WI

Upcoming Opportunity for Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine or Waukesha County Treatment Providers:

The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling is pleased to be able to offer a "Gambling Treatment and Special Populations: Treatment Update" for treatment providers in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine or Waukesha county. Joanna Franklin, a national compulsive gambling expert, will be presenting this program on October 6 & 7, 2005. This opportunity is sponsored by a grant from the Forest County Potawatomi Community of Wisconsin. Contact Cheri at (920)437-8888 for more information about this training.

Other Upcoming Events:

- National Problem Gambling Awareness Week: March 6-12, 2006.
- The 20th Annual National Conference on Problem Gambling: June 22-24, 2006, at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel in St. Paul, MN.

Mark Your Calendars!

Eighth Annual Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling Statewide Conference

March 30 & 31, 2006

Our 2006 state conference will be held March 30 & 31, 2006, at the Country Springs Hotel, Water Park and Conference Center in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Make your hotel reservation by calling 1-800-247-6640. Please make your reservation by March 5, 2006, to be eligible for our conference room rate of \$89.00 per night.

If you are interested in getting involved, planning is underway for:

- Conference Presenters
- Exhibitors
- Sponsorships
- Gift Basket Donations

If you are interested in any of these programs, either as a participant or to volunteer behind the scenes, please contact the WCPG office at (920)437-8888.

The Wisconsin Council On Problem Gambling promotes public awareness and education on problem and pathological gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling.

Our goals are to:

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

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT:

The WCPG is currently accepting volunteers. Anyone interested in donating their skills and time to the organization by answering Helpline calls or helping with administrative projects is encouraged to contact us at (920)437-8888.

RESOURCE LIBRARY

The WCPG has both books and videos in our lending library. Materials can be loaned out on a two week basis. These materials can also be mailed to you. For more information, call Cheri at (920)437-8888 or email her at: wcpgamble5-cheri@new.rr.com.

Check us out on the Web at:
www.wi-problemgamblers.org

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

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