The WAGER, Vol. 1(5) – Comparing DSM-IV criteria for pathological gambling and substance dependence

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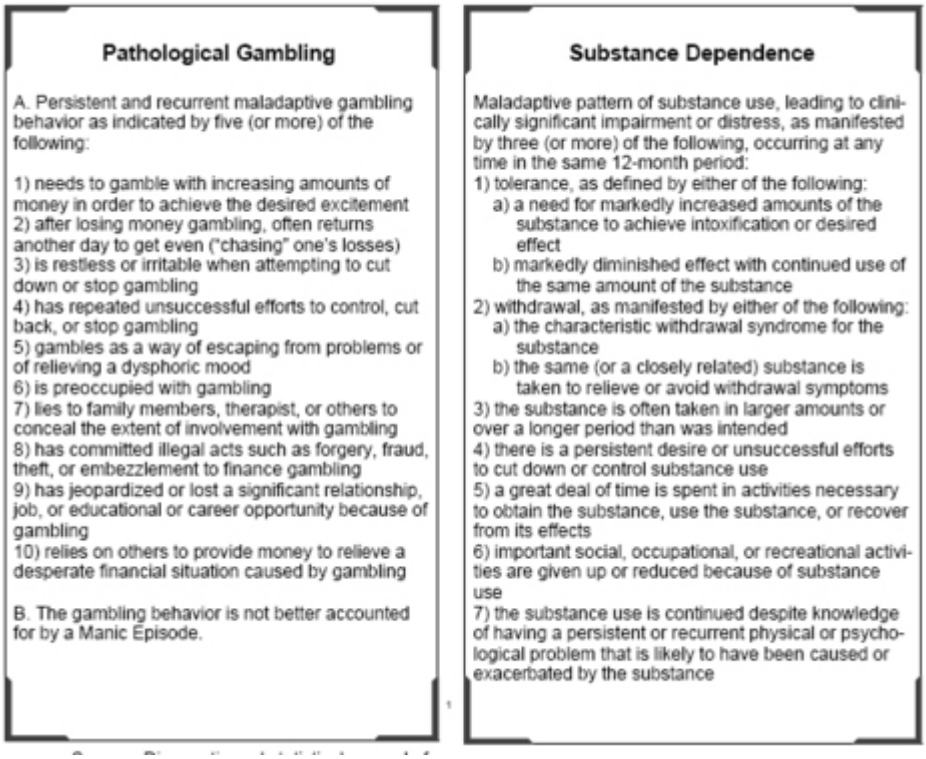
The following items represent the current American Psychiatric Association (A.P.A.) criteria for determining a diagnosis of pathological gambling or substance dependence. Since 1980, the A.P.A. has considered pathological gambling to be an impulse-control disorder. However, in spite of similarities, the A.P.A. categorizes substance dependence as a substance-related disorder. It is interesting to consider the similarities and differences between these sets of criteria given the psychological, biological and social factors that contribute to these two disorders.



Pathological Gambling

A. Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

1) needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement
2) after losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even ("chasing" one's losses)
3) is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
4) has repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
5) gambles as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood
6) is preoccupied with gambling
7) lies to family members, therapist, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling
8) has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling
9) has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling
10) relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling

B. The gambling behavior is not better accounted for by a Manic Episode.

Substance Dependence

Maladaptive pattern of substance use, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring at any time in the same 12-month period:

1) tolerance, as defined by either of the following:
   a) a need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxification or desired effect
   b) markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance
2) withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following:
   a) the characteristic withdrawal syndrome for the substance
   b) the same (or a closely related) substance is taken to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms
3) the substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended
4) there is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
5) a great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance, use the substance, or recover from its effects
6) important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use
7) the substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance

Source: Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, Fourth Edition. (1994). Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.

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For more information contact the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling, 190 High Street, Suite 6, Boston, MA 02110.