

There's always hope: My 38 years in recovery from gambling disorder

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Editor's note: This story was written by Ed Talbot, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Council on Problem Gambling. We appreciate Mr. Talbot's contribution to our [Special Series on Gambling and Addiction](#).

November 30, 1977 was the final night of racing at the Taunton (Ma.) dog track. I gathered what little money I had left and wagered it on a greyhound named Perfect Treasure in the last race. The starting box opened and the 8 dogs began pursuit of the mechanical rabbit and symbolically Perfect Treasure tumbled to the turf. My dream world had crashed as well. The bet would never have erased the mountain of debt I had created. It may have fostered another opportunity to chase my losses at a new venue.

Four days later I contemplated ending my life to escape my misery. I was a failure; as a father, a husband, a son, an employee, a student, an athlete and now as a gambler who was going to solve all his problems with his winnings. Fortunately, I turned to a local priest who recommended a 12 Step program and professional help. I met with a psychologist who also referred me to the program. Reluctantly, I attended my first meeting still convinced I didn't have a gambling problem, just a money management problem. I saw several men I knew from school, sports and the track and they guided me through the first few weeks of recovery with their phone calls, coffee visits, meetings, meetings and more meetings.

Friends and family had tried for years to convince me I had a gambling problem and I even made several attempts to stop but it never lasted. A year before I quit, my mother on her deathbed uttered her final words to me: "If you don't stop gambling, you will lose everything". She passed away the next morning and my response over the following year was to prove her right.

On November 30, 2015, I celebrated my 38th year without a bet at a meeting with 10 others who seek to refrain from gambling one day at a time. I am asked frequently how I do it and it begins with asking for help. I was never able to stop

on my own; willpower wouldn't work. What works for me is a four pronged approach. The 12 Step Fellowship, professional help, an intimate relationship with my Higher Power who I choose to call God, and a change of lifestyle have combined to bring me to a serenity I could not imagine.

At my first G.A. meeting, I heard that if I stopped gambling and followed suggestions in the program that my life would get better. That promise has been fulfilled, personally, professionally, spiritually and financially. I like myself today and am very grateful for the path my recovery has taken. A loving and caring family, devoted friends, professional satisfaction and a passion to bring the message of hope to those fighting to recovery enrich my life on a daily basis. Life is not without bumps along the road, but today they are confronted and handled rather than offering a justification to escape.

I look forward to working with the New Hampshire Council on Problem Gambling to bring an awareness of this addiction, its prevention, treatment and recovery and silencing the stigma. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

For more information: You can reach the National Problem Gambling helpline calling 1-800-522-4700 or visiting <http://ncpgambling.org/chat>. Click [here](#) to learn about anonymous, free self-help resources.

-Ed Talbot

What do you think? Please use the comment link below to provide feedback on this article.

Ed Talbot is the Executive Director of the [New Hampshire Council on Problem Gambling](#). Previously, he served as Chief of Staff of the Bristol County (Ma.) Sheriff's Office and as a Community Services Representative with Ad Care Hospital in Worcester.