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Crossing the line: When gamblers turn to crime

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By Hale Humphrey-Jones and Melvin A. Slawik. (2008). iUniverse Inc., New York. 120pp. 9780595495337, \$12.95 USD (paperback).

Crossing the line: When gamblers turn to crime, by Hale Humphrey-Jones and Melvin A. Slawik, is a fascinating, case-study-based account of the varied ways in which pathological gamblers cross the line into criminal behaviour. It is important to note that this book is not intended as a scientific account of the issue. Rather, it is a guide to counsellors, teachers, and students who are interested in the broad scope of criminal involvement in pathological gambling. In addition, the book has many of the qualities of a self-help guide for problem gamblers who wish to avoid turning to crime and for families dealing with the aftermath of the disorder (including a list of indicators of victimization).

This short book is organized into five main parts: (I) Phases and stages, (II) Why can't I control this, (III) The addictive brain, (IV) The criminal mind, and (V) Treatment. Each section contains between three and seven case descriptions. Most of these descriptions are composites of actual cases in order to protect the anonymity of individual clients. Each case is followed by a brief description of the legal, social, medical, and/or theoretical issues related to the case.

The book also includes brief descriptions of various interventions, including cognitive behavioural therapy, motivational interviewing, gambling court, pastoral counselling, and Gamblers Anonymous. There is also a short and easy-to-follow description of the neuroscience of pathological gambling, as well as of personality disorders that are often associated with pathological gambling.

The one criticism I have pertains to the formatting of this book – the introduction for each case is usually positioned in the final paragraphs of the prior chapter, rather than as the introduction to the next case.

Overall, this is an excellent and comprehensive (albeit short) account of the manner in which gambling and crime can become entangled.

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