

## book review

### *A Clinician's Guide to Working with Problem Gamblers*

Bowden-Jones, H., & George, S. (Eds.). (2015). New York, NY: Routledge, 260 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0415732857.

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Six months ago, I began my master's degree placement at a problem gambling clinic. While I was knowledgeable about general therapeutic practice, I knew little about problem gambling. I wanted to be well informed before I saw my first client. So, I started conducting my own literature review, not really knowing what to research, and I was only partly successful in locating useful information. When I was handed *A Clinician's Guide to Working with Problem Gamblers*, I was eager to begin reading.

*A Clinician's Guide to Working with Problem Gamblers* served as a convenient, one-stop shop for information on problem gambling. Bowden-Jones and George (2015) provide a comprehensive overview of the different facets of problem gambling and its treatment. They explore relevant topics, such as theory, assessment, treatment, and neurobiology. Moreover, the book also addresses problem gambling from a wider perspective, one which includes society's impact on problem gambling and how the family is affected by it. The book was written within a UK context. Each of the fifteen chapters has been written by problem gambling experts in Britain, and the second chapter is dedicated to the history of gambling in Britain. However, the remaining chapters are applicable to a wider audience.

The book takes a decidedly academic tone and is written for a professional audience. The problem gambling research literature is prominently highlighted throughout the book. It allows the reader to acquire a sense of the current research without having to conduct his or her own literature review. It is an ideal book for someone who is just beginning to work in problem gambling or someone who wants a quick refresher on the pertinent literature. The back of the book touts that it could be for lay readers or family members affected by problem gambling, but the book is really geared for the clinician. I think lay readers or family members could easily become lost in the research and struggle to find useful information for themselves.

I appreciated that the book focuses on clinically relevant issues. It provides a solid foundation whereby clinicians can begin to conceptualize their work with problem

gamblers. I think the book helps to answer the key questions clinicians ask about who is the client, how can I assess the client, and what are the evidence-based treatments available. I found the chapter on screening, diagnosis, and assessment to be highly useful. As I had not previously worked with a problem gambling population, it was an invaluable chapter to know what screening tools are available and what areas of a person's life should be evaluated when conducting an assessment. The appendix provides sample assessment forms.

Moreover, *A Clinician's Guide to Working with Problem Gamblers* also provides clinicians with some specialty information about remote gambling, gambling and the family, and special populations such as women and youth gamblers. I particularly enjoyed the chapter devoted to the impact of gambling on families I thought it contained a wealth of information that addressed how problem gambling affects the family financially, relationally, emotionally and physically. A section of the chapter was also devoted to how children are negatively affected by problem gambling. The authors closed the chapter highlighting that problem gambling has a similar negative impact on the family as do other addictions, and maybe even a worse impact, as it can remain hidden for a long period of time. Then, later in the book, a chapter introduces a helpful five-step model for therapeutically supporting family members affected by problem gambling. I enjoyed these chapters as they were easy to read and helped to inform my work with family members of problem gamblers. Additionally, I appreciated the chapters because I had not uncovered this information on my own.

I would say that the book is a good introduction to the problem gambling field, but I am not sure that I would call it a guide. After reading the book, I was left with many questions about working with problem gamblers. For example, what are common challenges working with this population, and how are those challenges overcome? What are specific interventions that are used in the early stages and later stages of problem gambling treatment? The appendix provides a brief outline of a group CBT program used by the National Problem Gambling Clinic but does not provide specifics about the interventions used.

I appreciated that the authors backed up their statements with literature, as it added weight behind their statements. However, certain of the chapters read more like dry literature reviews than chapters in a book, much less in a guide. Furthermore, certain chapters contained much technical jargon and many minute details that made them arduous to read. I am sure these chapters contain a wealth of knowledge; it was simply difficult to wade through the numerous research studies to find the hidden nuggets of information. I found it interesting that in the first chapter of the book Bowden-Jones and George (2015) mentioned, "Nothing teaches you more about a specific psychiatric condition than listening to hundreds of personal accounts of how the illness developed, its impact on the individual, his/her friends and family and his/her career" (p. 1). It seems that nothing could teach and guide clinicians about working with problem gamblers as the firsthand accounts of experienced problem gambling clinicians. I think that presentation of case examples and personal accounts of the authors would have added to the accessibility and applicability of the research

presented. I also believe it may have enriched the discussion and made the book feel more of a tool or a reference point I could use when working with my clients.

Overall, the A Clinician's Guide to Working with Problem Gamblers provides a great snapshot of the current problem gambling literature. It describes a breath of topics related to problem gambling and can serve as a solid foundation for building one's work with problem gamblers. It was a helpful resource for me as I began working in the field, and it ended up being passed on to other clinicians unfamiliar with problem gambling.

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