BOOK REVIEW - A COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY PROGRAMME FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING

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This book is a practical guide which supplies detailed information to help the therapist worldwide and the gamblers understand gambling behaviours.

The cognitive behaviour therapy programme provided in this manual reflects the findings of a comprehensive literature review of the treatment of problem gambling.

A cognitive-behavioural therapy programme for problem gambling is written for professional health workers with some training and knowledge of cognitive-behavioural therapy.

This practical guide has fifteen chapters which contains ten core and three election sessions and includes handouts and exercises that can be downloaded and provide helpful guidance for addiction counsellors. In this book the authors use a cognitive-behavioural approach and provide a session by session guide for overcoming problem gambling.

The first chapter is an “Overview” with three main points: the programme contents and goal, the structure of the programme and sessions and guidelines on using the treatment programme. There are four parts to the programme: the first one’s aim is to assess the client’s problems and needs; the second’s phase aim is to provide the client with basic strategies to help stabilize compulsive gambling; the third teaches the client a range of coping skills and the last teaches strategies to maintain therapeutic gains and minimize relapse in the future.

The second chapter, “Introduction” offer us a review of the problem gambling treatment literature which aim to provide the factors associated with the development and maintenance of problem gambling, a summary of the currents treatments for problem gambling, the evidence for the efficacy of CBT for problem gambling and the rationale and evidence of the effectiveness of the CBT programme contained in the book.
Chapter 3 “Session one: Assessment” provides the session content and goals: discuss aim and rationale of the session; conduct an assessment; devise a case formulation and treatment plan; provide treatment rationale and plan; introduce home exercises.

Chapter 4 “Session two: Psycho-education and self-management strategies to stabilize gambling” has two parts: the first has the aim to educate the client about the problem gambling and the aim of the second part is to teach the client self-management skills to stabilize his gambling and to discuss about strategies to cope with urges to gamble.

Chapter 5: “Session three: Cognitive-restructuring I - identifying” aims to identify the gambling specific thinking errors using cognitive-behavioural strategies; there are two categories errors among problem gamblers: gambling specific errors and other thinking errors. The gambling specific errors can be divided into three categories: illusion of control of gambling, predictive control and interpretative biases.

Chapter 6 “Session four: Cognitive restructuring II - challenging gambling specific thinking errors” starts with the psycho-education of the client and aims to generate rational self-statements, such as: gambling outcomes are more determined by luck than skill; gambling outcomes are not related to previous outcome; gaming machines are set in such a way that they pay less than the stake.

Chapter 7 “Session five: Cognitive restructuring III - identifying and challenging other/general thinking errors” has the aim to replace these errors with more realistic and rational thoughts. The general thinking errors include the following: all or nothing thinking; overgeneralization; mental filter; jumping to conclusions; should statements; magnification or minimization; emotional reasoning; labelling and personalization.

Chapter 8 “Session six: relaxation and imagination exposure” introduces the client to some relaxation exercises and imagination exposure techniques based on the technique of systematic desensitization developed by Wolpe.

The ninth chapter, “Session seven: Problem solving and goal setting skill trainings” aims to teach the client the usefulness of problem solving as well as the steps involved in a problem solving approach.

Chapter 10 “Session eight: Management of negative emotions” help the client understand the role negative emotions may play in the maintenance of gambling problems, assist the client to explore his negative emotions and teaches him strategies of coping with negative emotions. The negative emotions that are common among problem gamblers are: anxiety, guilt, anger and depression.

Chapter 11 “Session nine: Relapse prevention and maintenance of therapeutic gains I – balanced lifestyle” discuss about the importance of a balanced lifestyle in minimizing lapses and aims to explore the client’s own lifestyle and help him to change his life.
Chapter 12 “Session ten: Relapse prevention and maintenance of therapeutic gains II – coping with high-risk situations” provides the possible high-risk situations that could lead to lapse and the strategies to avoid them.

The last three chapters present the three elective sessions of the programme: assertiveness and skills training; getting out of debt and teaching significant others strategies to cope with the gambler’s behaviours.

A *cognitive-behavioural therapy programme for problem gambling* is designed for psychologists working in addiction area and highlights the efficacy of cognitive-behavioural therapy in the treatment of pathological gambling.