



# Recovery in gambling disorder

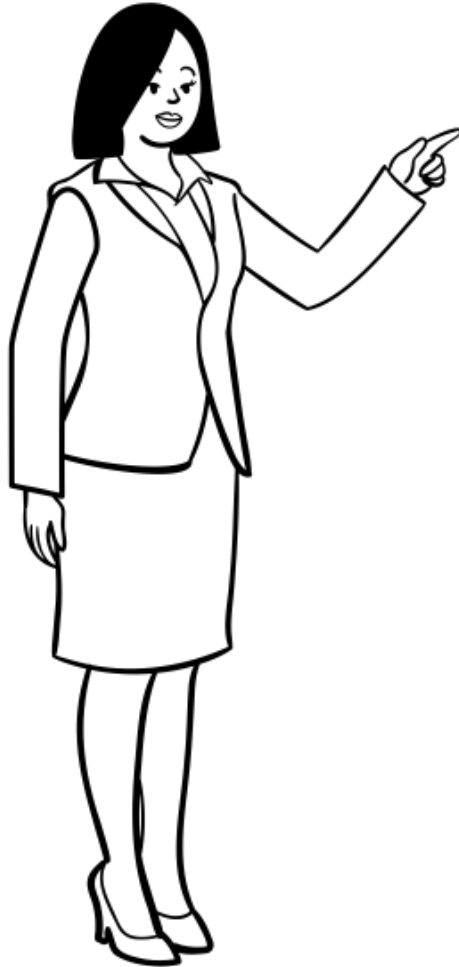
## Remarks on financial issues

Maria Heiskanen, senior researcher

14/09/2022

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare

# Outline



- Broad understanding of recovery in gambling disorder
- Service system for gambling disorder
- Remarks on financial issues



# Understanding recovery



# Recovery

- The process of becoming well again after an illness or injury
- The process of improving or becoming stronger again
- The action or process of getting something back that has been lost or stolen

(Oxford English Dictionary)



# Recovery orientation



- Traditional way to think of recovery: an outcome in certain point after illness, when person's health is regained

*“In this expanded usage, recovery is a process representing the belief that all individuals, even those with severe psychiatric disabilities, can develop hope for the future, participate in meaningful activities, exercise self-determination, and live in a society without stigma and discrimination” (Resnick et al., 2005, pp. 119–120).*

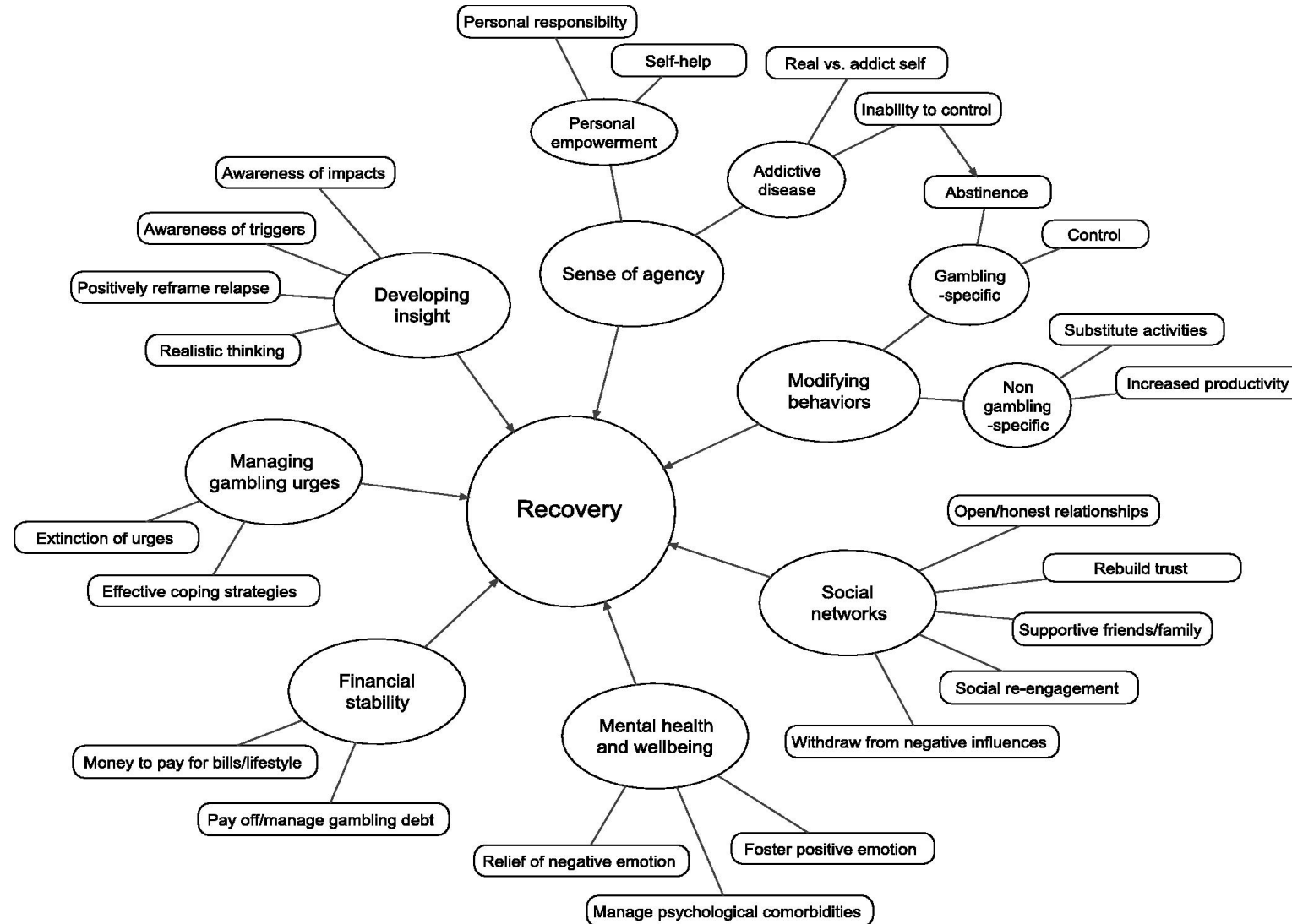
- A unique and personal process; the journey, not the outcome
- Five processes: Connectedness; hope and optimism about the future; identity; meaning in life; and empowerment (Leamy et al., 2011)

# Recovery capital

*“Conceptual framework in the addiction field that pinpoints the internal and external (i.e., human, community, cultural, social, financial) resources individuals can draw on throughout the recovery process” (Gavriel-Fried & Level 2020)*



# What does it mean to recover from a gambling disorder? Perspectives of gambling help service users (Pickering et al., 2020)





# Service system for gambling disorder





# How the services are used?

- 16 interviews with people who have themselves experienced gambling problems, used services and trained as people with lived experience
- Encounters with many professionals in social and health care as well as in financial and legal services
  - Health and mental health services
  - Substance use and addiction services
  - Social services: e.g. social work, family work, child welfare services, housing services
  - Non-governmental organisations and church: mutual support, food aid, crisis work
  - Financial and legal services: financial and debt advising, legal help, police, prison and probation services, bank, district courts, enforcement authority etc.



# Services responding to the needs in gambling disorder

- Many kinds of service needs during the recovery in gambling disorder
- Timeline of the recovery is not straightforward and the services should respond to this
- The nature and length of the client relationships vary from longer relationships (e.g. psychotherapy, addiction worker) to single or few encounters (e.g. financial and debt advising)

# Service system in gambling disorder: on a path to a stronger medical emphasis?

- In Finland, gambling disorder is typically treated within substance use and mental health services
- Addiction treatment has a strong tradition in social care; mental health services are part of health care
- Social and health care have different traditions and cultures
- Treatment – rehabilitation?
- New proposal for legislation in Finland recognizes the strengths of both and the need for a variety of services in addictions, and tries to clear the roles – concerns expressed about the role of social care in addiction treatment (rehabilitation?) in the future
  - The proposal includes gambling problems / gambling disorder by name



## Remarks on financial issues

# Gambling problem is a financial problem

- Gambling problem often (almost always?) is also a financial problem: e.g. people seeking help often have debt
- The financial situations vary: with smaller income smaller losses create bigger problems; with good financial resources the drop may be higher but the resources to survive also better
- Effects on families – spouses, underage children, adult children, parents, siblings, parents-in-laws, as well as to employers and in the society
- Gambling problem may be an addiction with double stigma: from gambling and from financial troubles

# Financial recovery



- Stabilizing the financial situation
- Sorting out the debts
- Living with scarcity

# Stabilizing the financial situation

- (Financial) social work: housing, family work, social allowances
- Control of money: closing gambling accounts, moving the control of money to someone else
- Budgeting the everyday life
- Quitting gambling is the precondition for stability



# Sorting out the debts

- Supporting the client as an actor, encouraging to seek the solutions
- The fear of enforcement, the wish for quick solutions, the shame and the worry about the closed ones
- Sorting out the amount of debt and finding solutions – when?





# Living with scarcity



- Financial and legal consequences may follow after a long time
- Discussing the possible scarcity in life
- Supporting meaningful life despite the gambling debts: hope, positive changes – a big win does not solve any problems
- Understanding money: gambling may have changed the way money is used



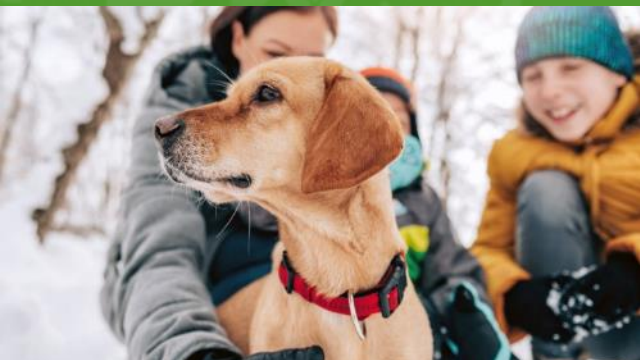
## Conclusions



# Supporting sustainable recovery

- Understanding the recovery in gambling disorder from a broad, recovery-oriented perspective, including different dimensions of recovery capital
- Organising the service system from this broader understanding, including financial recovery: the need for social and health care as well as financial and legal services – being careful with over-medicalisation
- Financial, social, cultural capital (Bourdieu): the status and power – the recovery capital is not only an individual asset, it exists in the context of the society
- Reducing the double stigma
- The journey, not the outcome – supporting hope





**Thank you!**  
**[maria.heiskanen@thl.fi](mailto:maria.heiskanen@thl.fi)**  
**Twitter: @mheiska**