

# **Families included**

- integrating family therapy in treatment program for problem gamblers

Antti Palmu | Family Therapist | Peluuri, Sininauhaliitto  
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# Peli poikki / Time to fold-program



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8 weeks, weekly modules and contact with therapist

Follow-ups after 8 weeks

Based on CBT and Motivational Interviewing

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Started 2007, over 3000 clients have completed the program

Created by Sustainable Interaction and further developed with our Peli poikki team

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Several studies made

Effective according to research

(Palomäki, Heiskanen, Castrén 2022, Castrén 2013)

# Why family therapy?



Impact of problem gambling on families:

Emotional harm and problems in relationships, communication and parenting

Financial troubles: insecurity and distress

(Castrén, S., Marionneau, V., Lind, K., Salonen, A.H., 2022)

Need for stronger support for affected family members, **need to talk about the problem together**





**The program has always included a family interview task for the client, but not direct contact between the therapist and affected family members**



### **New interventions:**

1. One family session included in the program, allowing PGs to invite a family member: **Chance for a different kind of conversation**
2. Family therapy project: 5 additional family sessions with a family therapist after the program: **focus on communication and recovery**



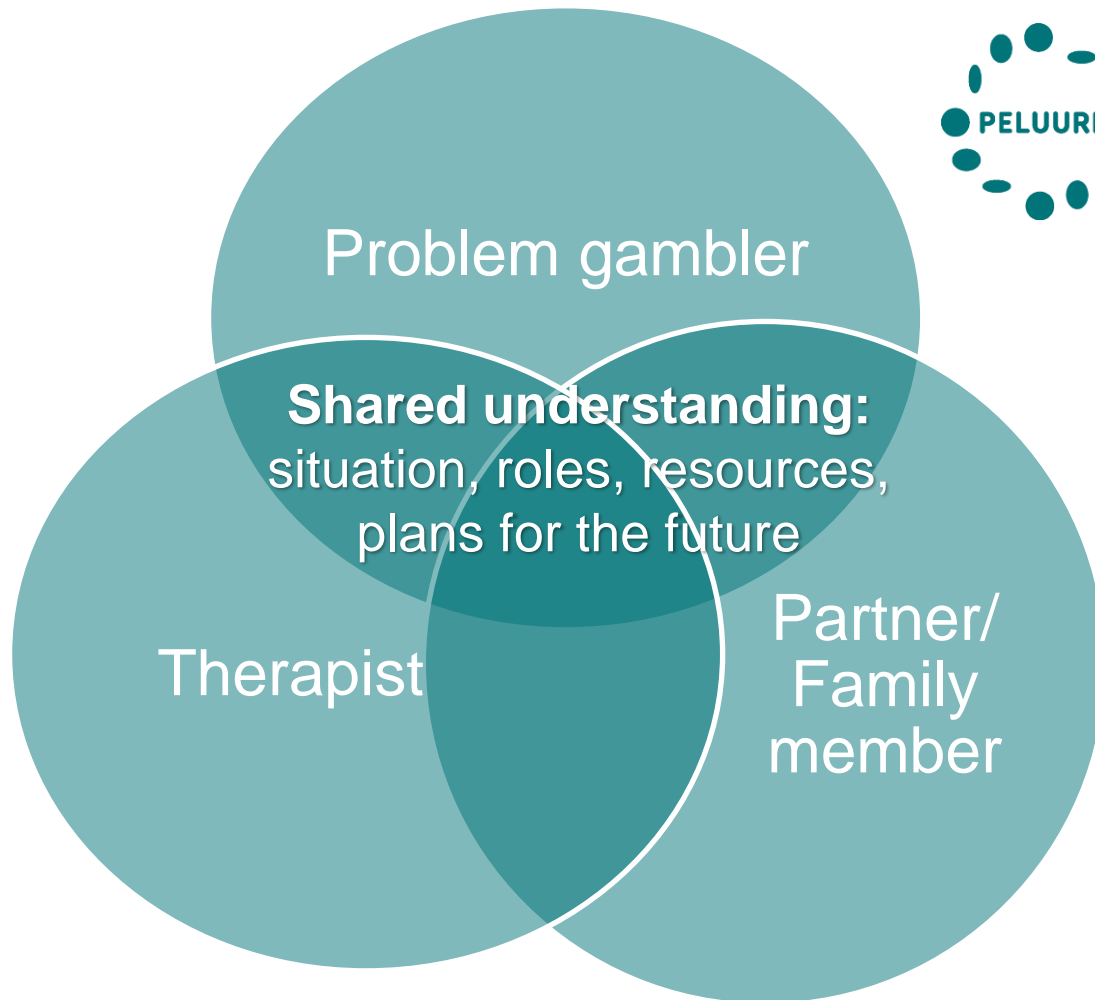
## Family session in the program

*"Not like at home"*

PG and family member bring their stories: thoughts, emotions and concerns

Therapist

Listens and reflects, supports constructive communication, and gives psychoeducation when needed



# Common themes in family sessions



Understanding of gambling problem  
Chances of recovery/ fear of relapses  
Taking responsibility and giving support  
Honesty / Trust Issues  
Financial distress  
Wellbeing of children and all family members  
What next? Making plans together

# Results: family session as a part of program



- 61 sessions (2024) 1h video or phone call
- Partners, parents, friends
- 25 % of program participants

**Family therapy project: 5 sessions after the program (1,5 h video call)**



Focus on communication and the dynamics of relationships



Building trust

Identifying and breaking of negative circles

Always searching for resources and supporting motivation to change!



## Results from Family therapy -sessions after the program Survey 2023-24



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17 couples and 1 family

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Increased understanding of  
gambling's impact

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Improved communication

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Reduced tensions

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PGs reported more positive out-  
comes than their family members.

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# Client comments /feedback



- *It was easier to talk ...and listen*
- *Theres no wall between us anymore*
- *Remote connection works well, makes things easier (especially for parents with small children)*

# Meeting couples/ families -What to expect?



- Often big differences in point of view
- Negative circles of communication
- Building trust takes time
- Trust issues are linked with intimacy and sexuality



# Meeting couples/ families -What to expect?



- Strong emotions are present, but usually people are constructive
- It's rarely just about gambling — usually, there's a mix of problems that affect and reinforce each other
- Talking about children can be difficult, but it is important

# Closing remarks



- Services should involve a chance to meet couples/ families
- Some criteria for participation is needed (no domestic violence!) otherwise low threshold
- Communication is one of the key factors of recovery
- Therapy can improve interaction and build trust
- Interesting and rewarding work for the therapist!





# References



- Castrén, S., Marionneau, V., Lind, K., Salonen, A.H. (2022) Rahapeliongelma läheisnäkökulmasta: Haittojen ymmärtämisestä tuen ja hoidon suunnitteluun. Tutkimuksesta tiiviisti 40/2022. Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, Helsinki
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- Palomäki, J. & Lind, K. & Heiskanen, M. & Castrén, S. (2022). Predicting Online Problem Gambling Treatment Discontinuation: New Evidence From Cross-Validated Models. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors. 10.1037/adb0000875



**Thanks for listening!**  
**[antti.palmu@peluuri.fi](mailto:antti.palmu@peluuri.fi)**