



PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

The Intersections

Problem Gambling and Suicide Prevention
March 11, 2026 | 1 pm – 3:30 pm

Sarah Jerome MPH, PhD ABD | Technical Assistance Provider

Lauri Solomon EdD | Technical Assistance Provider



EDC.ORG

About the Center and Today's Training



About Us

- We are the Massachusetts Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling Prevention (MCOEPGP)
- Funded by: the MA Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services.
- We provide **training, capacity-building, and program development** to support the prevention of problem gambling and related health issues.



About This Training

- Part of the **Health Equity Academy**, designed to strengthen individuals' and organizations' capacity to advance health equity
- Today's session is in the Intersections of **Health Equity Track**

What to Expect Today



Participation

- Please keep your **webcam on** if you're comfortable. It helps us connect!
- You're muted on entry; feel free to **unmute anytime** to contribute
- Use the **chat** or **raise your virtual/physical hand** to ask questions or share ideas
- **Please stay engaged.** Your experience enriches the conversation.

Introducing Today's Presenters



Sarah Jerome, PhD
Trainer



Lauri Solomon, EdD
Trainer



Objectives

The Intersections of Problem Gambling and Suicide



Describe a public health approach to problem gambling and suicide

01



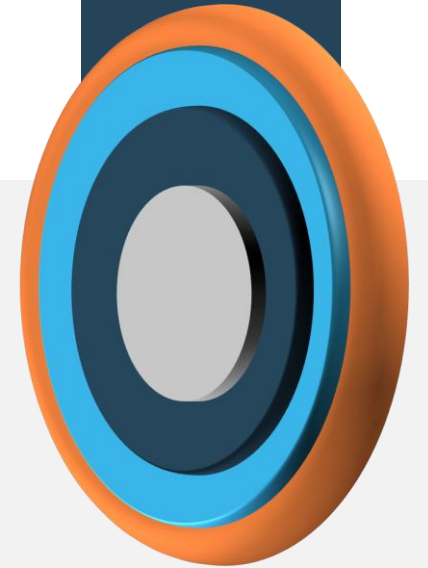
Identify risk and protective factors for problem gambling and suicide

02



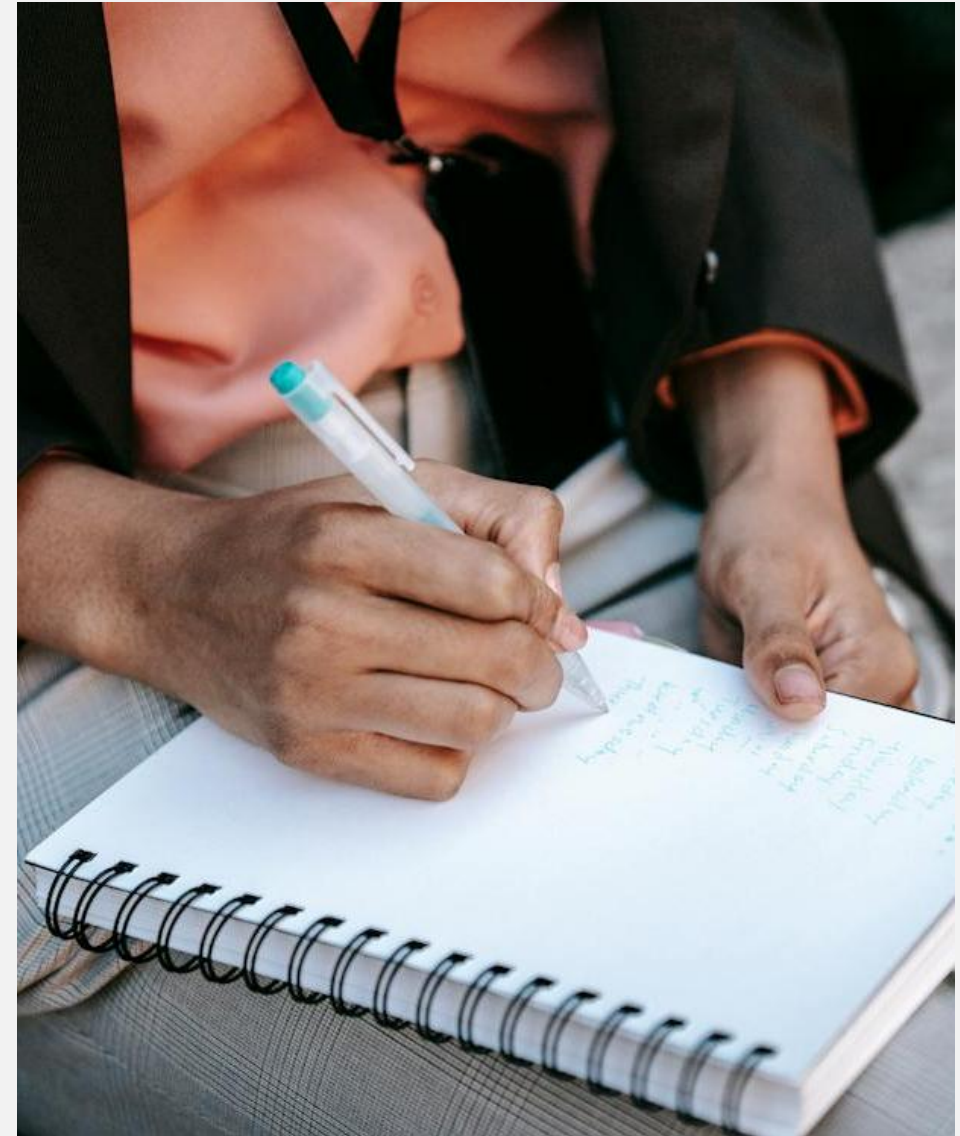
Discuss connections between problem gambling and suicide prevention

03



AGENDA

- Public Health Lens
- Introduction to Problem Gambling
- Introduction to Suicide
- Intersections of Problem Gambling and Suicide



POLL

What category do you identify with?

Experience/expertise with gambling and problem gambling

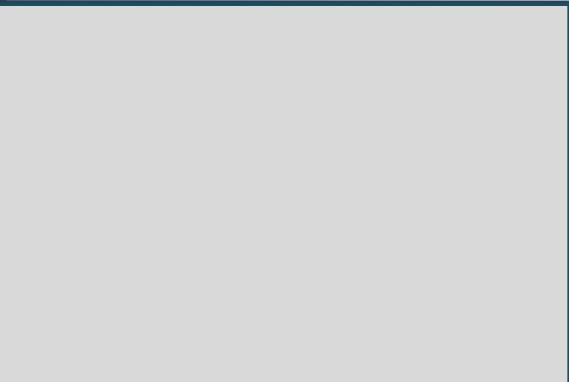
Experience/expertise with suicide prevention and suicide

Experience/expertise with both topics

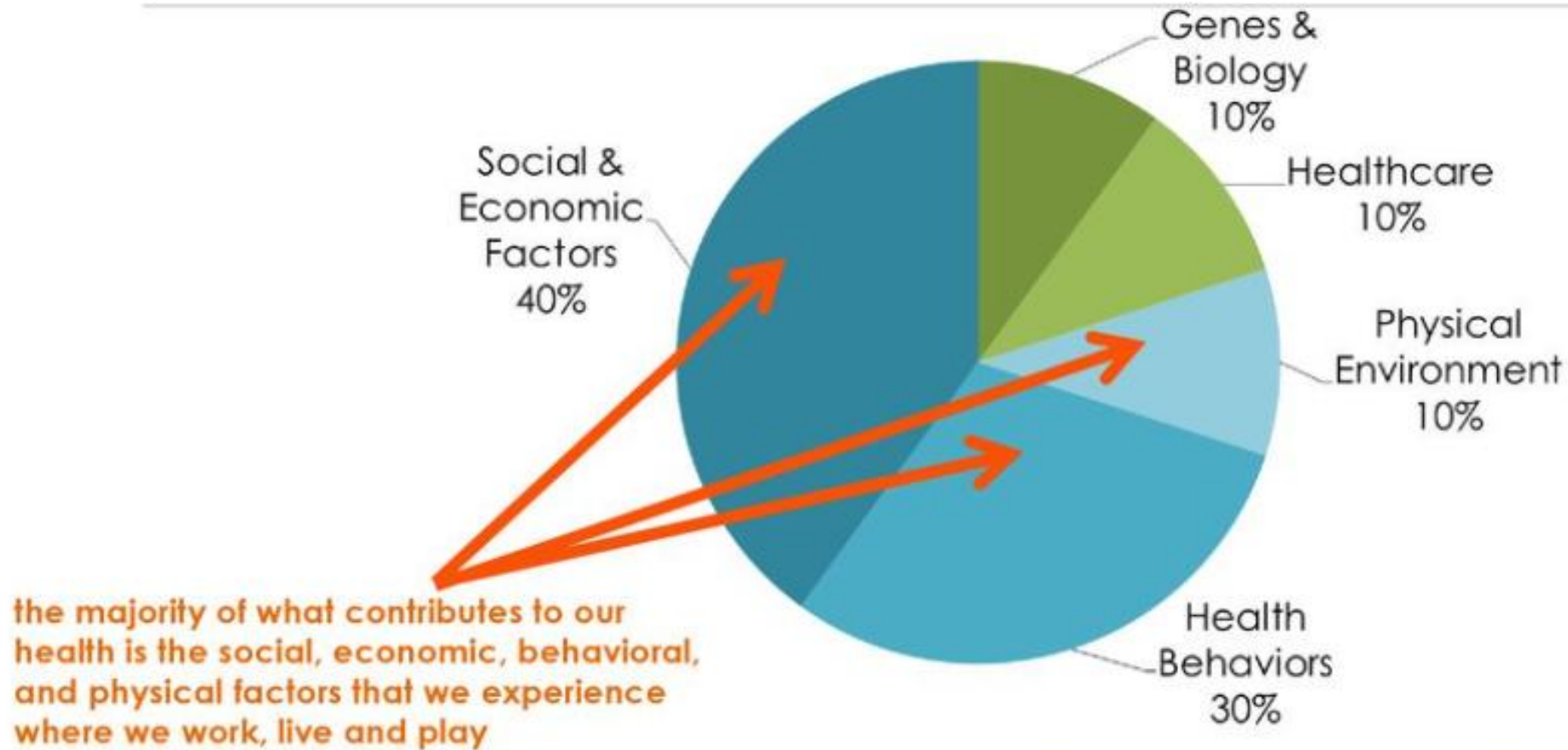
No experience/expertise with either topic



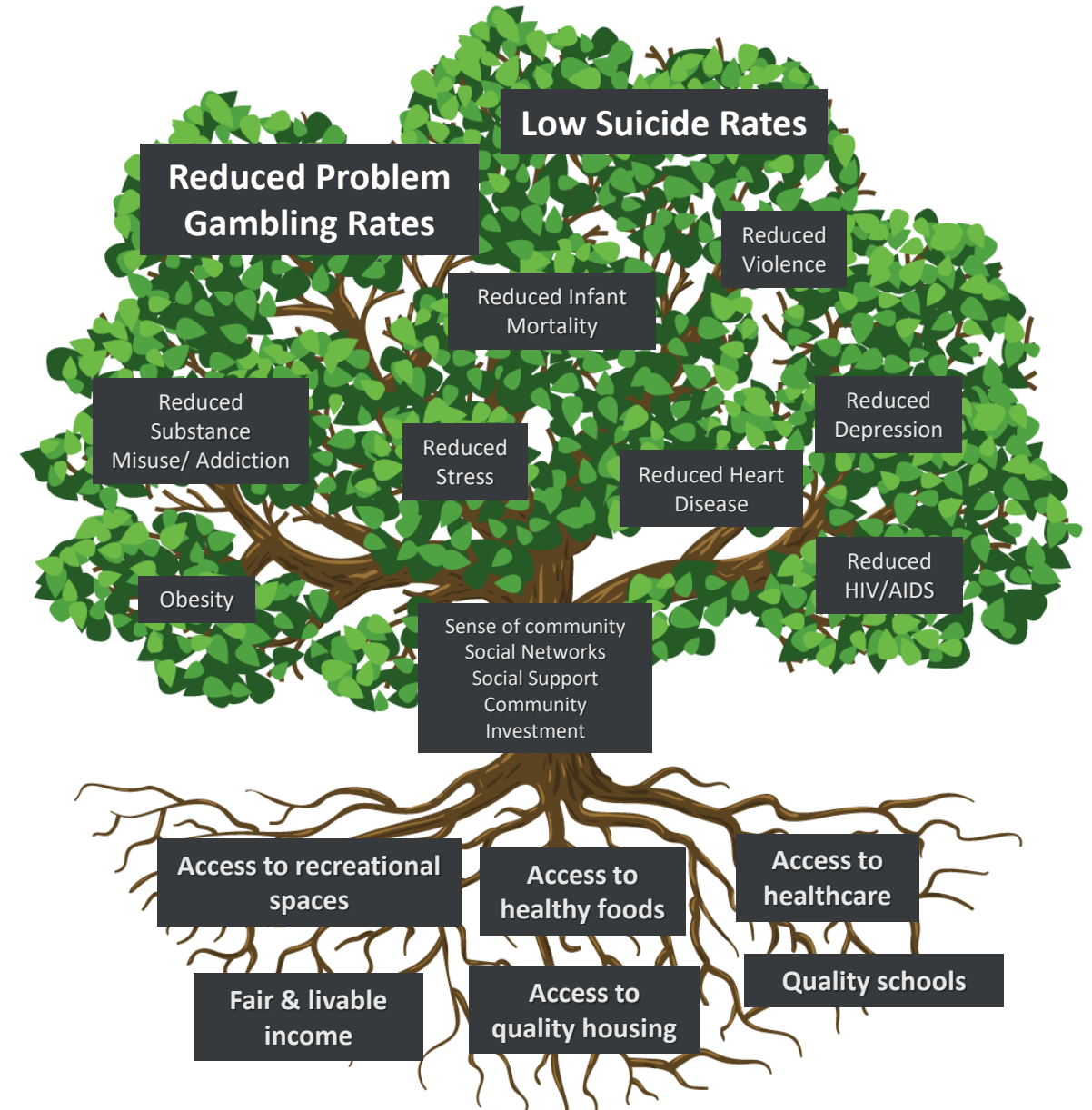
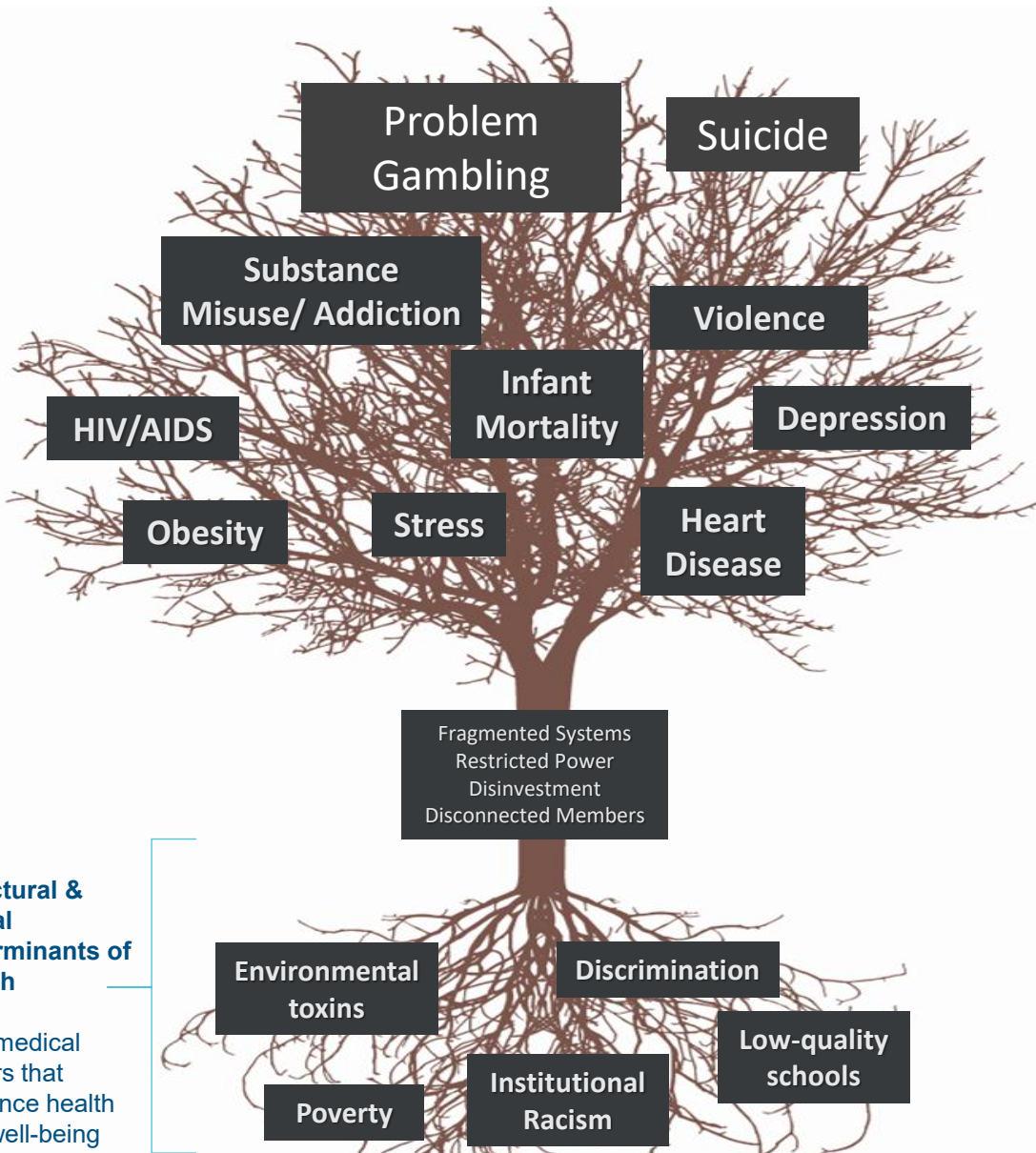
SECTION 1: Public Health Lens



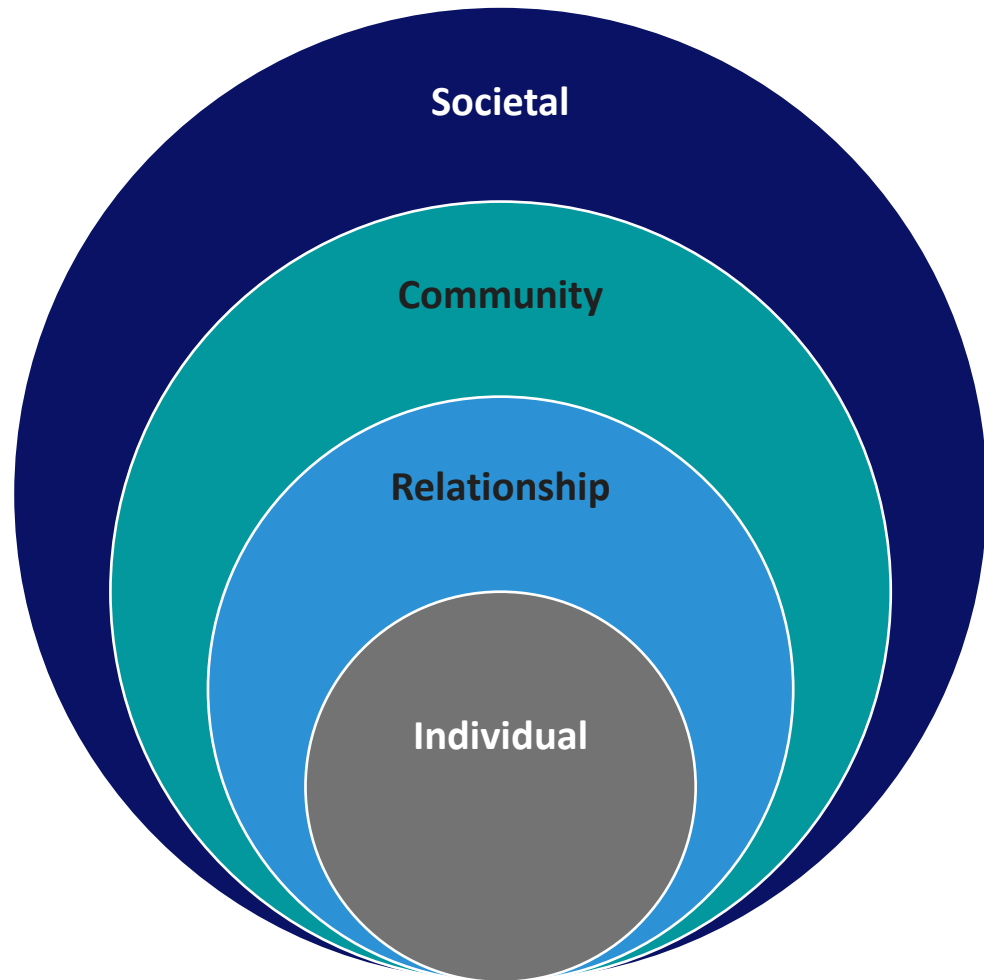
WHAT MAKES US HEALTHY?



Our environments cultivate our communities, and our communities nurture our health.



SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL



- This model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors.
- Helps us understand the range of factors that put people at risk for problem gambling or protect them from experiencing negative consequences of problem gambling.

Source: Centers For Disease Control and Prevention

SECTION 2: Problem Gambling Introduction

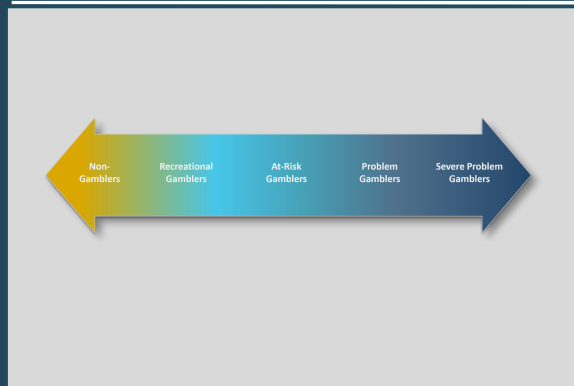


Image Source: <http://www.i-link.com/building-sustainably/>



Case Study

Meet Janice



Janice is a 45-year-old, married woman who has been secretly gambling online for the past year. She used to get together with her girlfriends for trips to the casino a few times a year. She really enjoyed the social aspects of the trips, as well as the high of gambling. Because she works part-time and has limited disposable income, she was usually careful with money. Her father, Luis, was terrible about money. Her mother had to work two jobs because her father routinely blew the family's money on alcohol. This often led to huge arguments between her parents. Sometimes her father would become verbally abusive to anyone who came close to him. It was better to stay away and stay quiet.

Recently, Luis was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and has moved in with Janice and her husband, Rudy. This changed her whole routine and left her with fewer opportunities to see her friends or go on casino trips. She began gambling online to relieve her stress and escape the pressure. Rudy does not know how she spends her time. At first, she won a few times and used that money to take Rudy and the children out to dinner. She told Rudy she had received a bonus at work. It was the first time in months that she had felt close to him.

Over the next few months, Luis' health declined rapidly and he became increasingly belligerent and difficult to care for. It reminded Janice of her childhood. She found herself spending more and more time, up to several hours a day, gambling online. She really has to scramble to find the time to do the other things she needs to get done. A few times she has been very late picking up the kids. And Janice has started losing more than winning.

Definition of Gambling

Betting anything of value on an event with an uncertain outcome in the hope of winning additional money, material goods, or anything of value.

Source: (Williams, et al., 2017)



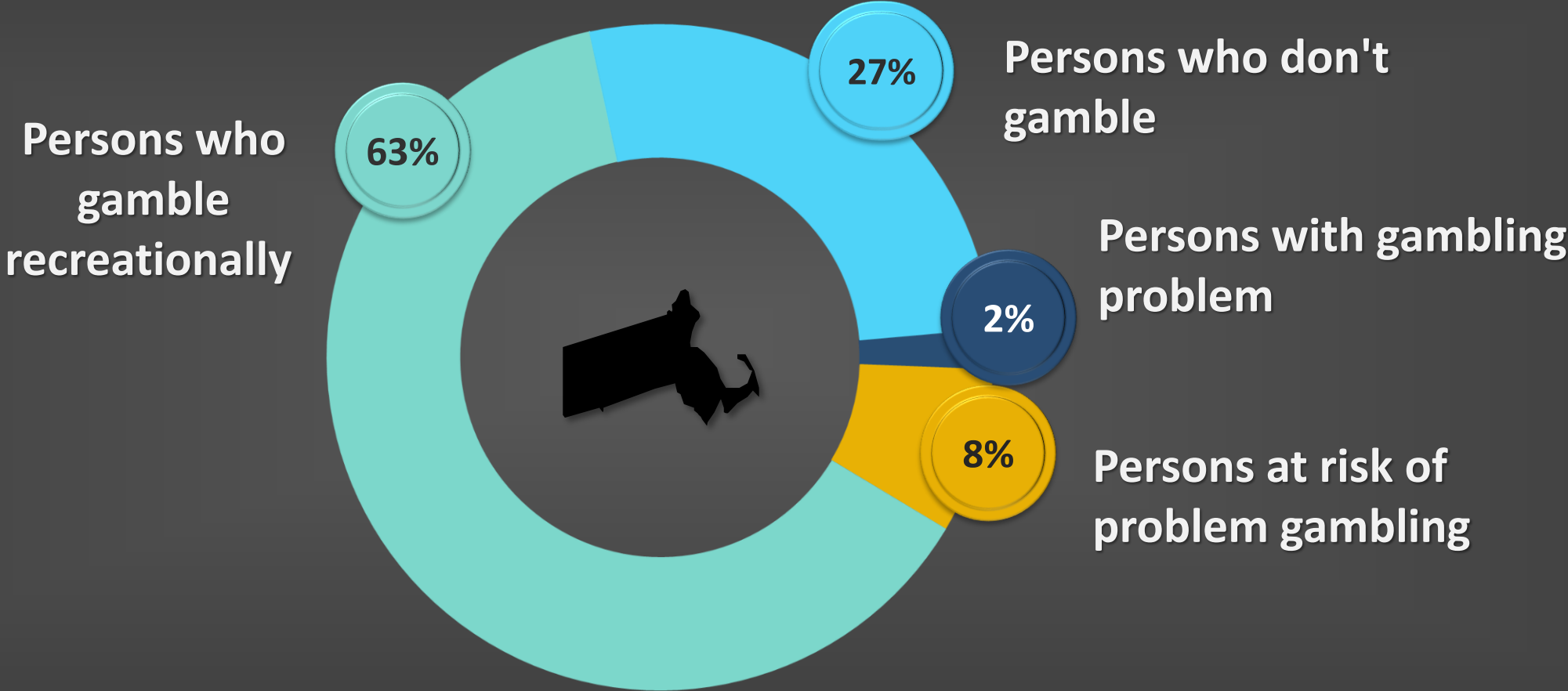
Defining Our Language: The Gambling Continuum



This is the gambling continuum, referred to as a spectrum as participation can range from not gambling to problem and severe problem gambling.

People can move back and forth across this continuum

Gambling Participation Massachusetts



Why Do People Gamble

Fun

Socializing

Hoping for a big win

The excitement of risk-taking

Trying to win back lost money

Impulsivity

Trying to feel better about themselves

Escaping from loneliness, depression, anxiety and/or other unpleasant feelings

Hiding from life's problems

Distraction from physical and/or emotional pain

Risk and Protective Factors for Problem Gambling

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk Factors

Factors that **increase** the likelihood of developing problem gambling or suicide



Protective Factors

Factors that **decrease** the likelihood of developing problem gambling or suicide



Risk Factors For Problem Gambling

Early Big Win



Early Onset of Gambling



Not Understanding the Odds



Impulsivity



Stress and Coping



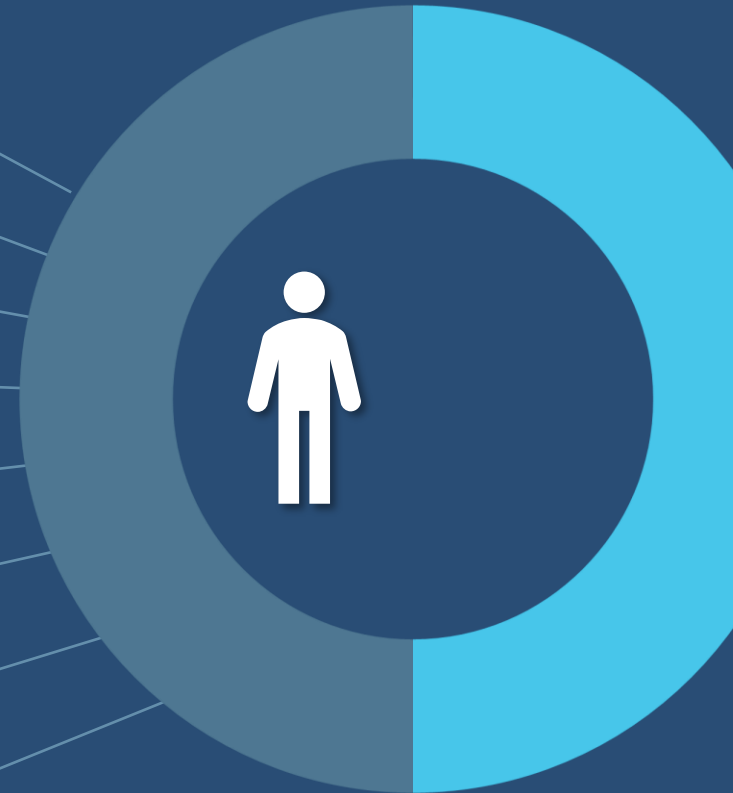
Substance Use Disorder



Mental Health Diagnosis



Family Issues



People Who Are At Higher Risk for Problem Gambling

First, a word about language

AVOID

High-risk people or High-risk population
Vulnerable
Priority
Targeted

INSTEAD USE PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

People who are at increased risk for (condition)
People who live or work in settings that put them at increased risk for...



Support #StateWithoutStigmaMA

People Who Are At Higher Risk for Problem Gambling

Research shows that some groups are at higher risk for developing problem gambling, including:

- Youth
- Men
- People of color
- Older adults
- People with a high school diploma or less
- People with an annual income of less than \$15,000
- People who are unemployed
- People with a disability
- Casino employees
- People with a history of incarceration
- People who misuse substances



Co-Occurring Disorders

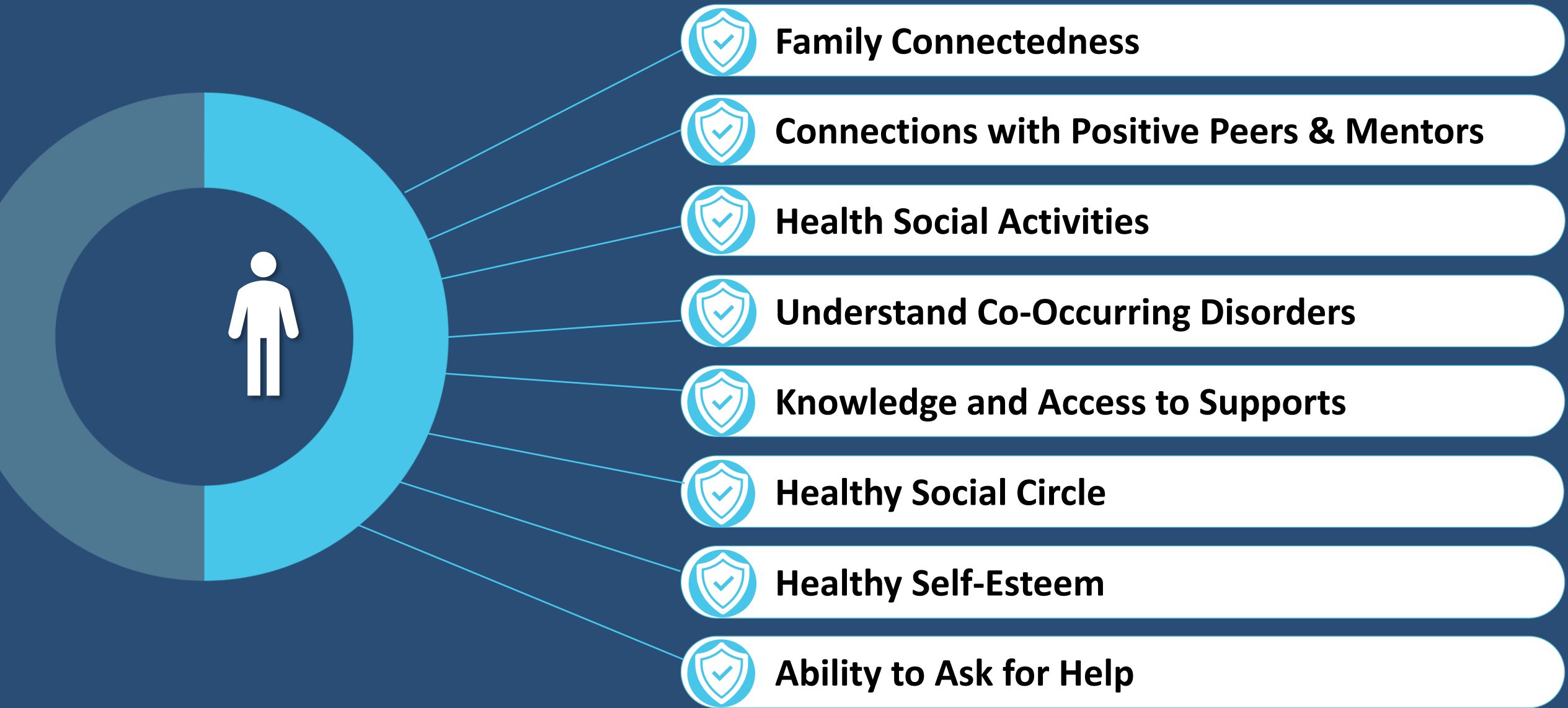
Substance Use Disorders & Problem Gambling

- 72% Alcohol Disorders
- 38% Drug Use Disorders
- 60% Nicotine Dependency

Mental Health Disorders & Problem Gambling

- 50% Mood Disorder
- 41% Anxiety Disorder
- 61% Personality Disorder

Protective Factors (Examples)





5-MINUTE BREAK



Case Study Part I

Meet Janice...Again



Janice is a 45-year-old, married woman who has been secretly gambling online for the past year. She used to get together with her girlfriends for trips to the casino a few times a year. She really enjoyed the social aspects of the trips, as well as the high of gambling. Because she works part-time and has limited disposable income, she was usually careful with money. Her father, Luis, was terrible about money. Her mother had to work two jobs because her father routinely blew the family's money on alcohol. This often led to huge arguments between her parents. Sometimes her father would become verbally abusive to anyone who came close to him. It was better to stay away and stay quiet.

Recently, Luis was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and has moved in with Janice and her husband, Rudy. This changed her whole routine and left her with fewer opportunities to see her friends or go on casino trips. She began gambling online to relieve her stress and escape the pressure. Rudy does not know how she spends her time. At first, she won a few times and used that money to take Rudy and the children out to dinner. She told Rudy she had received a bonus at work. It was the first time in months that she had felt close to him.

Over the next few months, Luis' health declined rapidly and he became increasingly belligerent and difficult to care for. It reminded Janice of her childhood. She found herself spending more and more time, up to several hours a day, gambling online. She really has to scramble to find the time to do the other things she needs to get done. A few times she has been very late picking up the kids. And Janice has started losing more than winning.



- What are Janice's risk factors for developing a problem with gambling?
- What are Janice's protective factors that help prevent problem gambling?

Meet Janice...Again



Janice is a 45-year-old, **married woman** who has **been secretly gambling online** for the past year. She used to get **together with her girlfriends** for trips to the casino a few times a year. She really enjoyed the social aspects of the trips, as well as the **high of gambling**. Because she works part-time and has limited disposable income, she was usually **careful with money**. Her father, Luis, was terrible about money. Her mother had to work two jobs because her father **routinely blew the family's money** on alcohol. This often led to huge arguments between her parents. Sometimes her father would become verbally abusive to anyone who came close to him. It was better to stay away and stay quiet.

Recently, Luis was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and has moved in with Janice and her husband, Rudy. This changed her whole routine and left her with fewer opportunities to see her friends or go on casino trips. She **began gambling online to relieve her stress** and escape the pressure. Rudy does not know how she spends her time. At first, she won a few times and used that money to take Rudy and the children out to dinner. She told Rudy she had received a bonus at work. It was the first time in months that she had felt close to him.

Color Codes:

- **Risk factors for PG**
- **Protective Factors for PG**

Over the next few months, Luis' health declined rapidly and he became increasingly belligerent and difficult to care for. It reminded Janice of her childhood. She found herself **spending more and more time, up to several hours a day, gambling online**. She really has to scramble to find the time to do the other things she needs to get done. A few times she has been very late picking up the kids. And Janice has started losing more than winning.

SECTION 3: Suicide Through a Public Health Lens

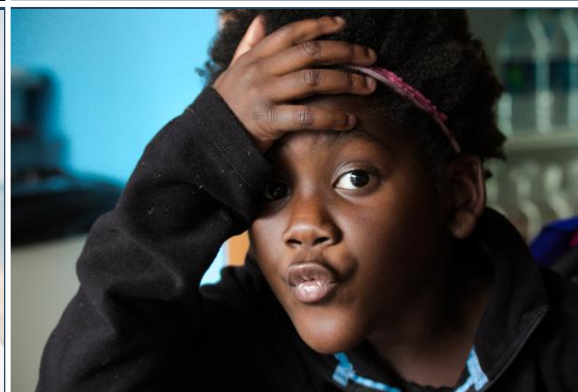
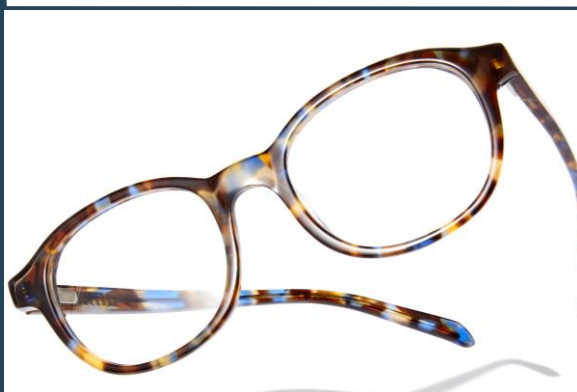


Image Source: <http://www.i-link.com/building-sustainably/>

This material can be hard for
some people.

Take care of yourself!



Case Study Part II



Six months later, Janice has lost all the family's retirement money and then some. Her husband Rudy recently discovered this when the bank called about late payments on their mortgage. He threatened to leave her and take the children unless she stopped gambling. She did. She has not gambled in the past month, but her relationship with Rudy and the children remains strained. He wants results, with no room for discussion.

Janice is consumed by guilt over what she has done and often thinks about suicide. She has begun walking the neighborhood for an hour or more after work, dreading her return to the constant mistrust and questioning at home. Of course, her husband accuses her of gambling again when she doesn't come right home. She is overwhelmed by the tension in the house. She feels trapped, with nowhere to go and no way to repair the damage. She fears the constant tension and fighting with her husband are affecting the kids.

This reminds Janice of what her parents were like, and she swore she would never let that happen to her family. She is so embarrassed that she has stopped answering calls from her friends and family. Her friends keep trying to get her to go to the casino with them because that always used to cheer her up.

Increasingly, Janice has been thinking about her favorite uncle who died by suicide when she was a teenager. He was the only person who she felt really "got" her. She has started walking near the train tracks more and more often.

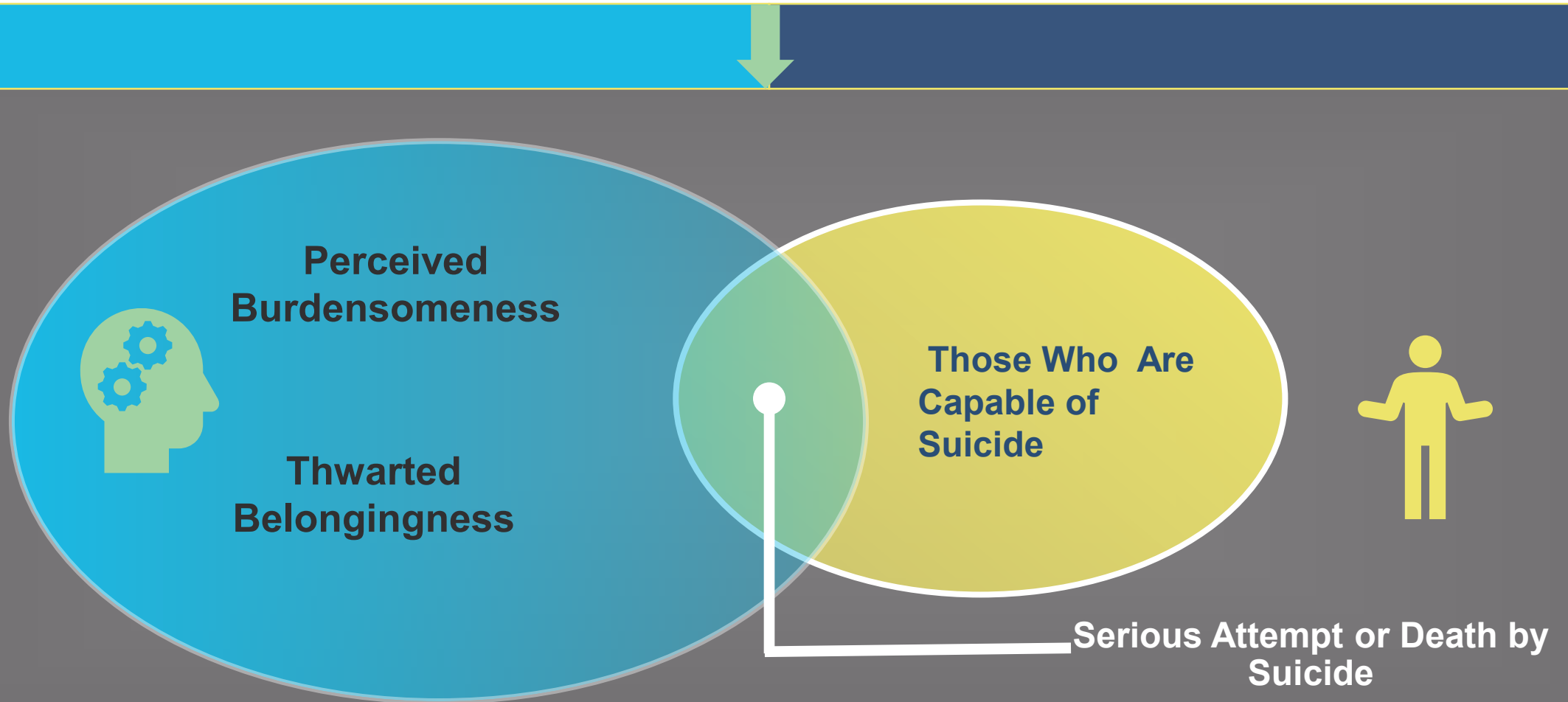
Sensitive Language

The language we use about suicide can affect our attitudes toward people who think about, attempt, or die by suicide.



Avoid:	Use this instead:
Committed	Died by suicide
Completed	Suicide death
Suicided	Killed themselves
Successful	
Failed attempt	Suicide attempt
Suicide gesture	Suicidality
Suicide threat	Suicidal intensity
	Describe behavior

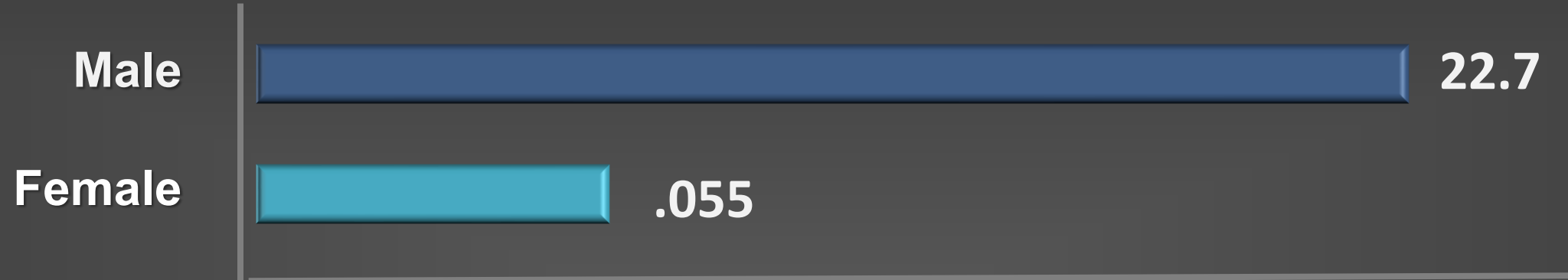
Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior



Demographics of Suicidality

2023 Suicide Deaths Nationally by Gender

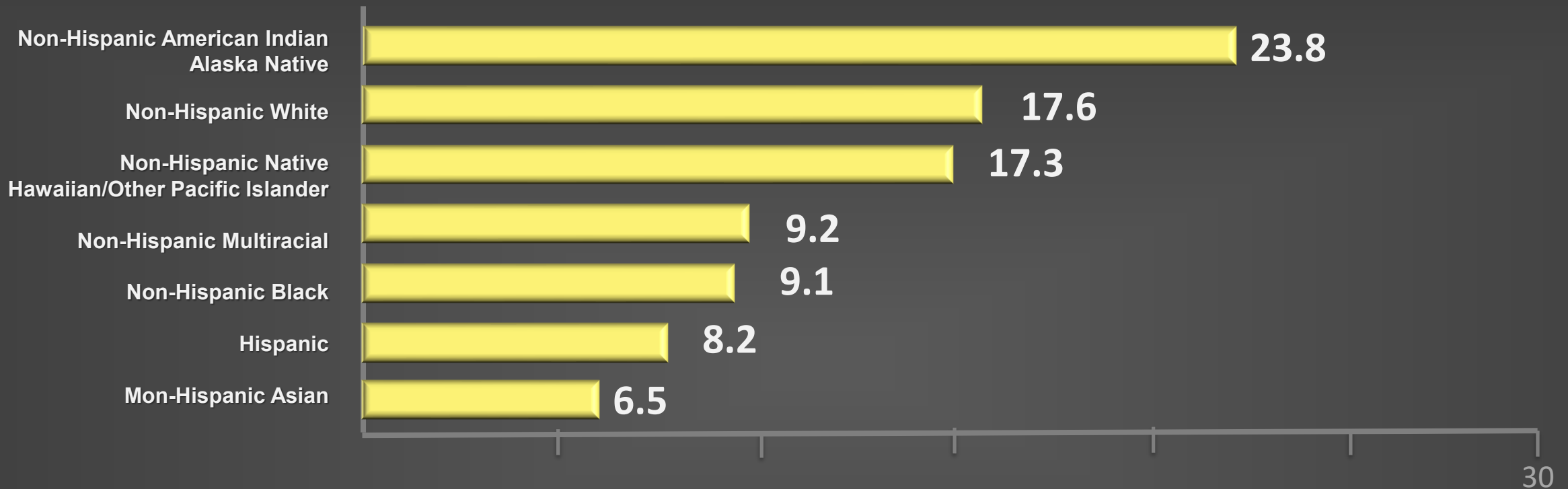
(Per 100,000) ←



- The suicide rate among males in 2020 was **4 times higher** than the rate among females
- Men die more, women attempt more
- Men use more lethal means

2023 Suicide Deaths Nationally by Race & Ethnicity

(Per 100,000*)

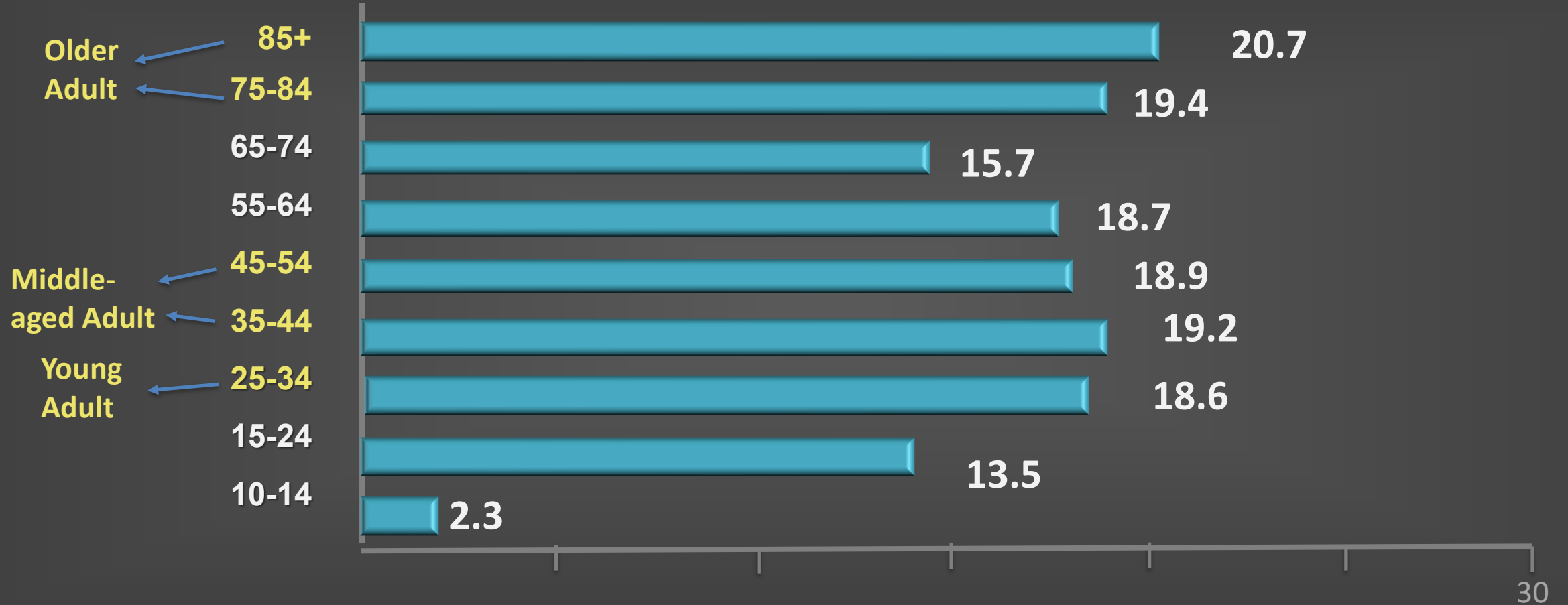


Rate of deaths vs. percentage of overall deaths

- When you look at the racial group with the highest rate of suicide, it's Indigenous people
- Funding the groups with the highest number of deaths ensures the group with the highest rates does not receive adequate funding

2023 Suicide Deaths Nationally by Age

(Per 100,000*)



Suicide Deaths Nationally – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity



Considered suicide in the past year

- 39% of LGBTQ+ Youth
- 46% of Gender Expansive Youth

LGBTQ youth who felt high levels of social support from their family reported attempting suicide at less than half the rate

Attempted suicide in the past year

- 12% of LGBTQ Youth
- 14% of Transgender Women
- 18% of Transgender Men
- 13% of Nonbinary/Genderqueer
- 11% Questioning

Trevor Project 2024:

18,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13-24

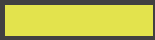
People Who Are At Higher Risk for Suicidality

Research shows that some groups are at higher risk for developing problem gambling, including:

- Older Adults (75+)
- Middle-Aged Adults (35-54)
- Young adults (25-34)
- Men – deaths
- Women – attempts
- Indigenous People
- People experiencing homophobia
- People experiencing transphobia
- Veterans
- Rural



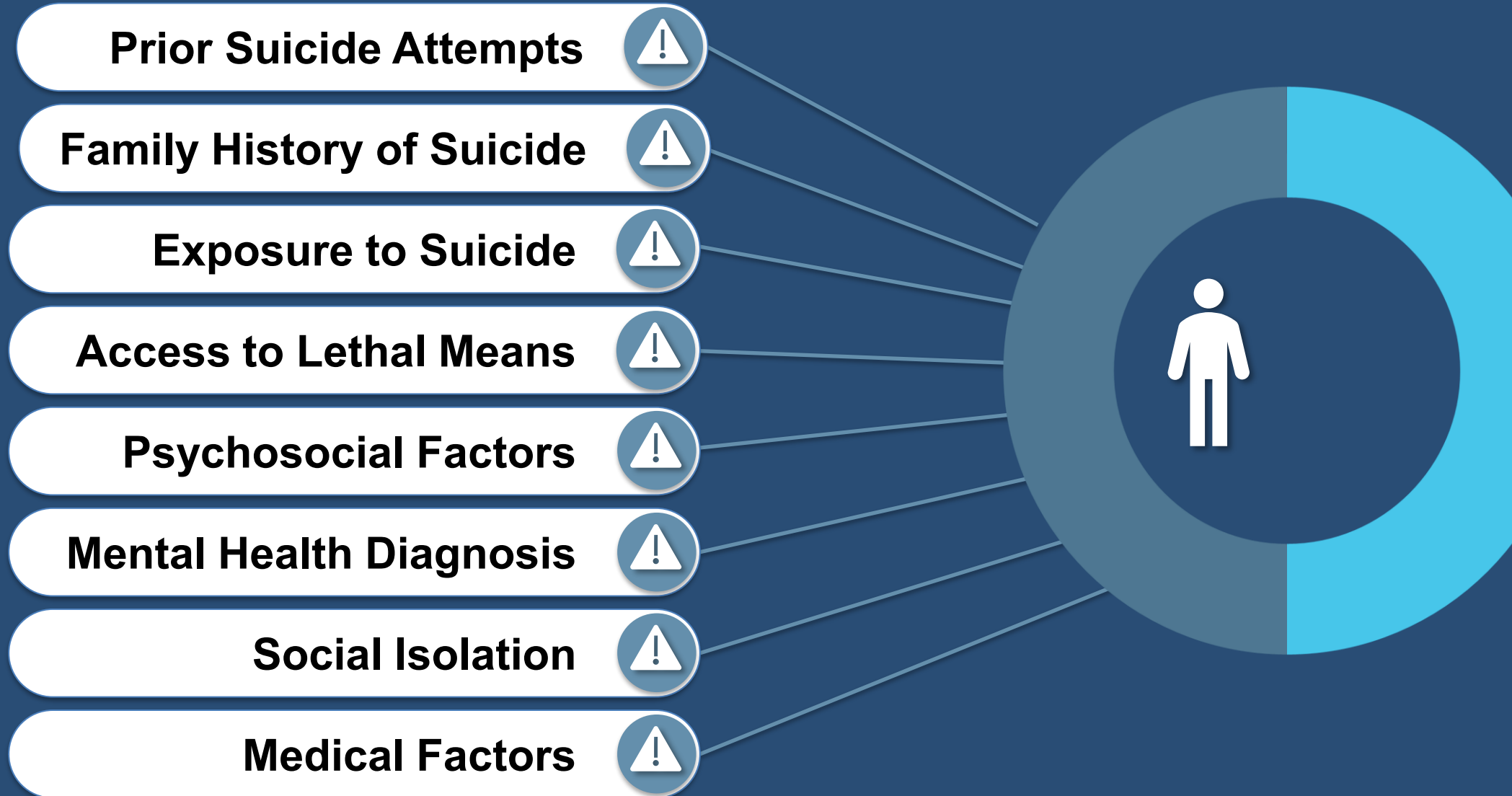
Risk and Protective Factors for Suicidality



What would
you guess are
risk factors for
suicide?



Risk Factors for Suicide




Precipitating Events for Suicide

End of a Relationship 

Death of a Loved One 

Serious Financial Problems 

Arrest 





What would
you guess
are protective
factors for
suicide?

Protective Factors for Suicide





Case Study Part II



Six months later, Janice has lost all the family's retirement money and then some. Her husband Rudy recently discovered this when the bank called about late payments on their mortgage. He threatened to leave her and take the children unless she stopped gambling. She did. She has not gambled in the past month, but her relationship with Rudy and the children remains strained. He wants results, with no room for discussion.

Janice is consumed by guilt over what she has done and often thinks about suicide. She has begun walking the neighborhood for an hour or more after work, dreading her return to the constant mistrust and questioning at home. Of course, her husband accuses her of gambling again when she doesn't come right home. She is overwhelmed by the tension in the house. She feels trapped, with nowhere to go and no way to repair the damage. She fears the constant tension and fighting with her husband are affecting the kids.

This reminds Janice of what her parents were like, and she swore she would never let that happen to her family. She is so embarrassed that she has stopped answering calls from her friends and family. Her friends keep trying to get her to go to the casino with them because that always used to cheer her up.

Increasingly, Janice has been thinking about her favorite uncle who died by suicide when she was a teenager. He was the only person who she felt really "got" her. She has started walking near the train tracks more and more often.



Six months later, Janice has lost all the family's retirement money and then some. Her husband Rudy recently discovered this when the bank called about late payments on their mortgage. He threatened to leave her and take the children unless she stopped gambling. She did. She has not gambled in the past month, but her relationship with Rudy and the children remains strained. He wants results, with no room for discussion.

Janice is consumed by guilt over what she has done and often thinks about suicide. She has begun walking the neighborhood for an hour or more after work, dreading her return to the constant mistrust and questioning at home. Of course, her husband accuses her of gambling again when she doesn't come right home. She is overwhelmed by the tension in the house. She feels trapped, with nowhere to go and no way to make it right. She fears the constant tension and fighting with her husband are affecting the kids.

This reminds Janice of what her parents were like, and she swore she would never let that happen to her family. She is so embarrassed that she has stopped answering calls from her friends and family. Her friends keep trying to get her to go to the casino with them because that always used to cheer her up.

Increasingly, Janice has been thinking about her favorite uncle who died by suicide when she was a teenager. He was the only person who she felt really "got" her. She has started walking near the train tracks more and more often.

Color Codes:

- Risk factors for suicide
- Protective Factors for suicide

A close-up photograph of a classic blue alarm clock. The clock has two bells on top and a white circular face with black numbers. The numbers 11, 12, and 1 are clearly visible. The clock is set against a soft, light pink background. The text "Break Time" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image, overlapping the top of the clock's bells.

Break Time

SECTION 4: Intersections of Problem Gambling and Suicide

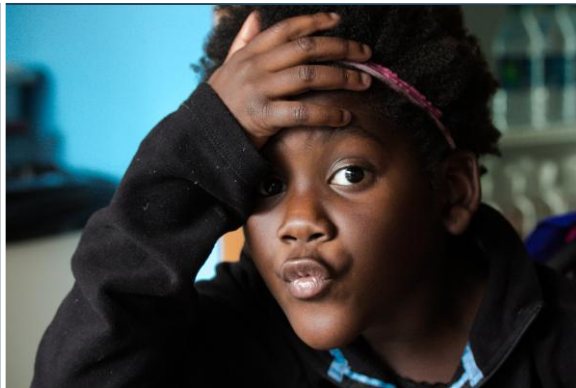
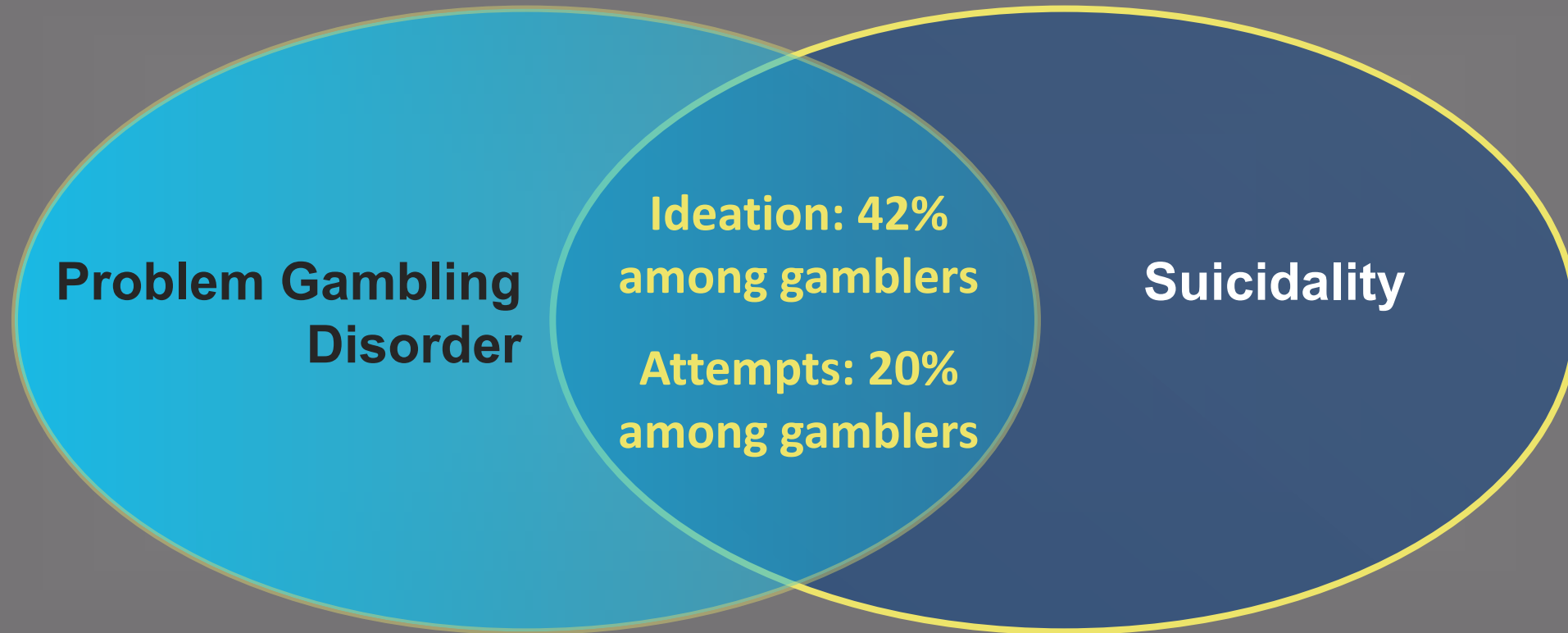


Image Source: <http://www.i-link.com/building-sustainably/>

Co-occurrence Rates

Problem Gambling







Suicidality

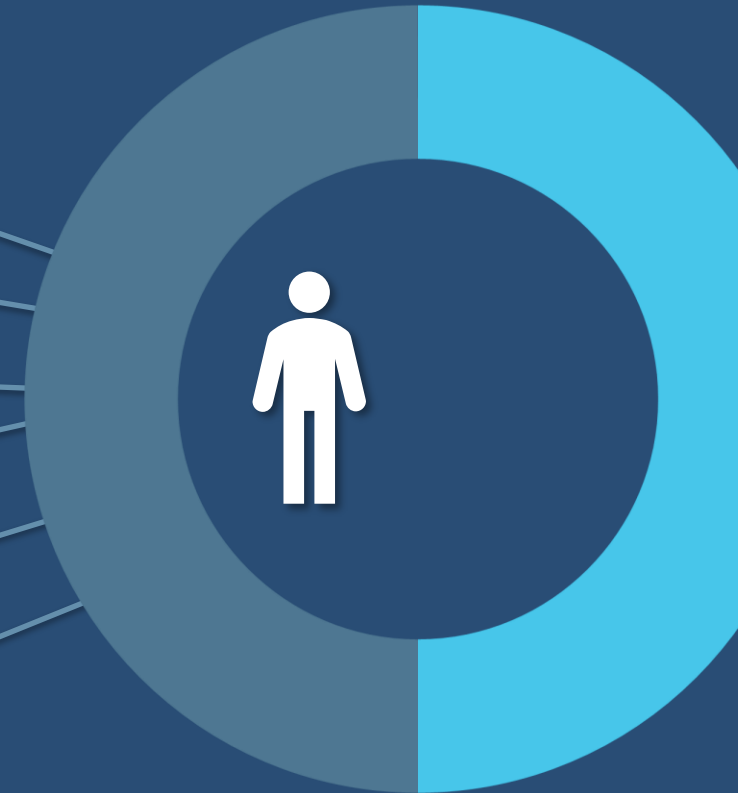


People with Problem Gambling Have Among the Highest Rates of Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors

- In a 2019 study, people diagnosed with disordered gambling were over 15 times as likely as the general population to die by suicide
- 17-24% of problem gamblers attempt suicide
- The development of problem gambling and suicidality is bi-directional

Shared Risk Factors

- Mental Health Diagnoses** 
- Childhood Trauma** 
- Cognitive Style** 
- Financial Hardship** 
- Legal & Relationship Problems** 
- Social Isolation & Loneliness** 



Shared Protective Factors





Case Study

Small Group



Janice is a 45-year-old, married woman who has been secretly gambling online for the past year. She used to get together with her girlfriends for trips to the casino a few times a year. She really enjoyed the social aspects of the trips, as well as the high of gambling. Because she works part-time and has limited disposable income, she was usually careful with money. Her father, Luis, was terrible about money. Her mother had to work two jobs because her father routinely blew the family's money on alcohol. This often led to huge arguments between her parents. Sometimes her father would become verbally abusive to anyone who came close to him. It was better to stay away and stay quiet.

Recently, Luis was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and has moved in with Janice and her husband, Rudy. This changed her whole routine and left her with fewer opportunities to see her friends or go on casino trips. She began gambling online to relieve her stress and escape the pressure. Rudy does not know how she spends her time. At first, she won a few times and used that money to take Rudy and the children out to dinner. She told Rudy she had received a bonus at work. It was the first time in months that she had felt close to him.

Over the next few months, Luis' health declined rapidly and he became increasingly belligerent and difficult to care for. It reminded Janice of her childhood. She found herself spending more and more time, up to several hours a day, gambling online. She really has to scramble to find the time to do the other things she needs to get done. A few times she has been very late picking up the kids. And Janice has started losing more than winning.



Six months later, Janice has lost all the family's retirement money and then some. Her husband Rudy recently discovered this when the bank called about late payments on their mortgage. He threatened to leave her and take the children unless she stopped gambling. She did. She has not gambled in the past month, but her relationship with Rudy and the children remains strained. He wants results, with no room for discussion.

Janice is consumed by guilt over what she has done and often thinks about suicide. She has begun walking the neighborhood for an hour or more after work, dreading her return to the constant mistrust and questioning at home. Of course, her husband accuses her of gambling again when she doesn't come right home. She is overwhelmed by the tension in the house. She feels trapped, with nowhere to go and no way to repair the damage. She fears the constant tension and fighting with her husband are affecting the kids.

This reminds Janice of what her parents were like, and she swore she would never let that happen to her family. She is so embarrassed that she has stopped answering calls from her friends and family. Her friends keep trying to get her to go to the casino with them because that always used to cheer her up.

Increasingly, Janice has been thinking about her favorite uncle who died by suicide when she was a teenager. He was the only person who she felt really "got" her. She has started walking near the train tracks more and more often.



Review



Janice is a 45-year-old, **married woman** who has been secretly gambling on the internet for the past year. She used to **get together with her girlfriends** for trips to the casino a few times a year. She really enjoyed the social aspects of the trips, as well as the high of gambling. She only works part-time and so has limited money to spend, so she would generally be very careful with it. **Her father, Luis, was terrible about money. Her mother had to work two jobs because her father would routinely blow the family's money on alcohol.** This often led to huge arguments between her parents. Sometimes her father would become verbally abusive to anyone who came close to him. It was better to stay away and stay quiet.

Her father was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and has moved in with Janice and her husband, Rudy. This changes her whole routine, and she has fewer opportunities to join her friends on the casino trips. She finds herself turning to internet gambling to relieve her stress and escape from the pressure. Rudy does not know how she spends her time. At first, she won a few times, and with her extra money, she was able to take Rudy and the **kids** out to eat. She told Rudy that she had gotten a bonus. It was the first time in months that she had felt close to Rudy.

Over the next few months, Luis' health declines rapidly, and he has become increasingly belligerent and difficult to care for. It reminds Janice of her childhood. She finds herself spending more and more time, up to several hours a day, gambling on the internet. She really has to scramble to find the time to do the other things she needs to get done. A few times, she has been very late picking up the kids. Now, she is not winning as often. As a matter of fact, she is losing more than winning.

Color Codes:

- **Risk Factors for both**
- **Protective factors for both**



Six months later, Janice has **lost all of the family's retirement money** and then some. Her **husband** Rudy recently discovered this when the bank called about late payments on their mortgage. He threatened to leave her and take the **children** unless she stopped gambling. She did. She has not gambled in the past month, but her **relationship with Rudy and the children continues to be strained**. He just wants results. No discussion.

Janice is fraught with guilt for what she has done and often thinks about suicide. She has taken to walking the neighborhood after work for an hour or more dreading going home to the constant mistrust and questioning. Of course, her husband accuses her of gambling again when she doesn't come right home, but she **can't bear the awful feeling of being in the house**. **She feels she has no place to go** and that there is no way to make this right. She is afraid that the constant tension and fighting with her husband is likely to impact the kids.

This reminds Janice of what her parents were like, and she had sworn that she would never let that happen to her family. She is so embarrassed that she has **stopped answering calls from her friends and family**. Her **friends** keep trying to get her to go to the casino with them because that always used to cheer her up.

Janice has been thinking more and more about her favorite uncle, who died by suicide when she was a teenager. He was the one person who she felt really "got" her. She has started walking near the train tracks more and more often.

Color Codes:

- **Risk factors for both**
- **Protective Factors for both**



Debrief

- Did you notice anything new?
- Was anything applicable to your work?

Social & Structural Determinants of Health



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Shifting the Narrative

Building Protective Factors: Education

Ability to obtain high quality education



- Evidence-based strategies to improve HS graduation
- Build and strengthen opportunities to foster affirming, safe, and connected communities
- Increase school-based pathways to help
- Increase coping and problem-solving skills
- Reduce the stigma of mental illness and addiction (including gambling)

Shifting the Narrative

Building Protective Factors: Healthcare

Ability to obtain high quality health care services



- Increase the availability of supportive health and behavioral healthcare
- Universal gambling and suicide screening tools in primary care and behavioral health care settings
- Communicate broadly that help is available, treatment works, and no one should suffer alone
- Increase the pathways to finding help
- Reduce the stigma of mental illness and addiction (including gambling)

Shifting the Narrative

Building Protective Factors: Built Environment

Ability to have positive relationships and community connection



- Reduce accessibility of lethal means
- Reduce accessibility of and/or exposure to gambling (casinos, sports betting, scratch tickets, etc.)

Shifting the Narrative

Building Protective Factors: Social & Community

Ability to live safely and avoid danger



- Support connections to communities that hold moral or cultural objections to suicide and/or gambling
- Communicate broadly that help is available, treatment works, and no one should suffer alone
- Increase community-based pathways to finding help
- Increase coping and problem-solving skills
- Increase the feeling that life is worthwhile, e.g., caring for pets, connections to family, and future goals
- Support connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions

Shifting the Narrative

Building Protective Factors: Economic Stability

Ability to afford health supporting purchases, such as food and housing



- Economic social safety net
- Increase access to daily necessities, e.g., food, housing, heat, etc.



Case Study

PART 3

Janice meets you at an event that you and your program are facilitating.

What strategies will you employ in engaging her?

RESOURCES


Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline

- Call 1-800-327-5050
- Visit <https://gamblinghelpline.ma.org> to speak with a trained Specialist to receive support. Specialists are available 24/7. Anyone can call including concerned loved one.

Gamblers Anonymous

- <https://gamblersanonymous.org/>

HOW TO GET HELP

- **988** (talk or text) 
 - Resource for people experiencing suicide intensity for themselves as well as people needing help to support someone experiencing suicide intensity
- **The Trevor Project** – LGBTQ2S+ resource
 - Text: 678-678, Voice: 866-488-7386
 - Computer-based chat:
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/>
- **Trans Lifeline** – Will not contact emergency services
 - Voice: 877-565-8860
 - <https://translifeline.org/>
- **Local suicide hotline**
- **911**
- **Go directly to an emergency room**





PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



EDC.ORG

Evaluation

<https://go.edc.org/Intersections-Problem-Gambling-Suicide-Prevention-Eval>



We Are Now on Social Media!

Scan the QR codes below to follow our pages



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn





**PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION**

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

THANK YOU

Sarah Jerome, MPH, PhD ABD

Training and Technical Assistance Associate | Sjerome@edc.org

Lauri Solomon, EdD

Training and Technical Assistance Associate | Lsolomon@edc.org



EDC.ORG