

Blending Consumer Informed Interventions for Comorbidity & Gambling

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- Consulting Fees: VRGF, SA Govt, NSW Govt, AUT University.

Access to venues was facilitated by ALH Group and Crown Casino. Without their support this research would not have been possible.

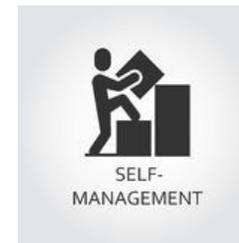
Aims of the session today

1. Identify self-management approaches to reduce gambling harm.
2. Present the results of a brief intervention in gambling venues that uses self-management strategies.
3. Compare self-management strategies across addictive behaviours.

How do people change their gambling in the absence of a psychological intervention?

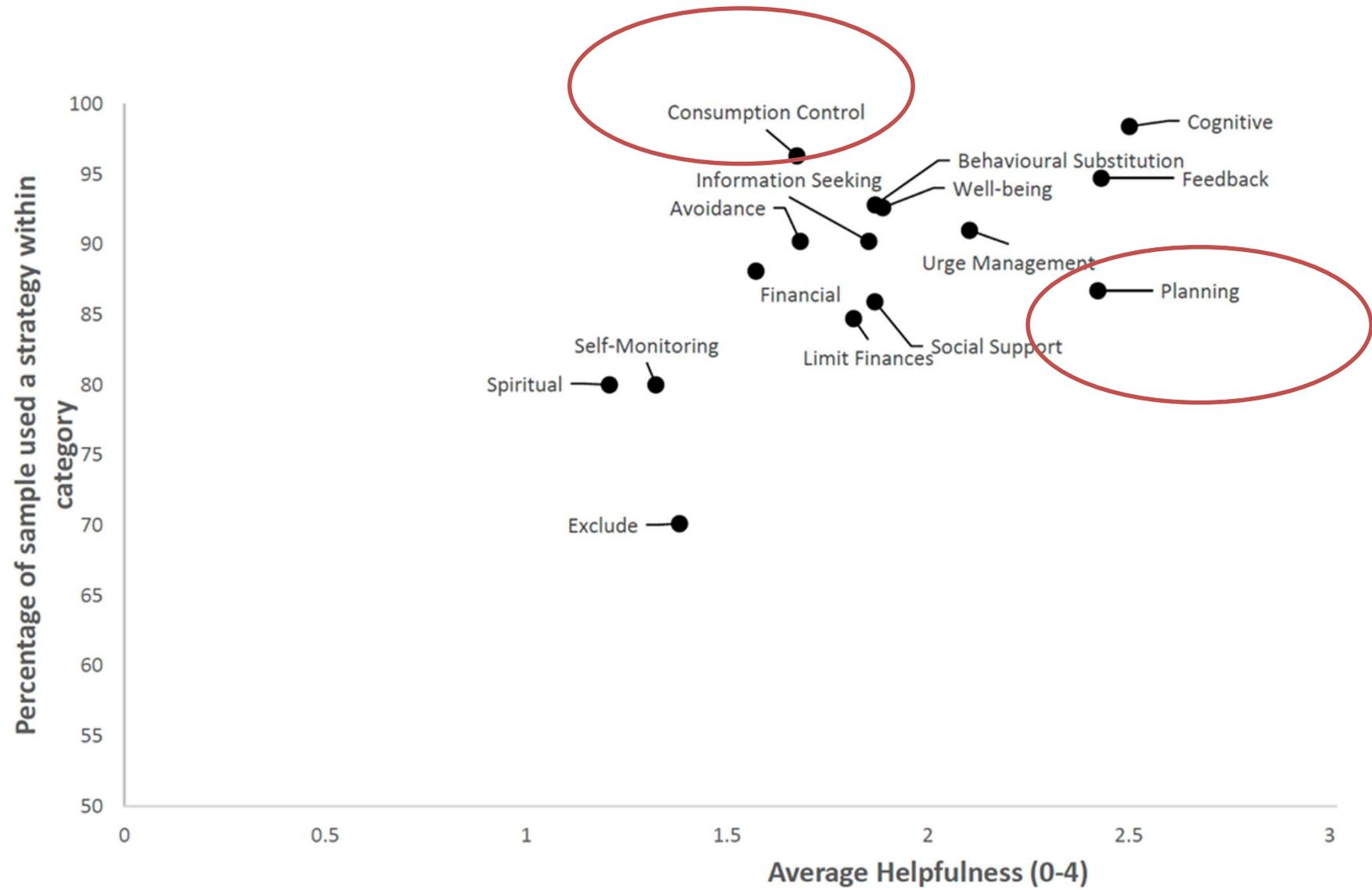
Research now indicates unassisted recovery does not happen without intentional action, rather people engage in a selection of behaviour change strategies.

- These strategies include actions or resources that are used to reduce consumption.
- They may be applied with or without professional oversight and are largely self-directed.

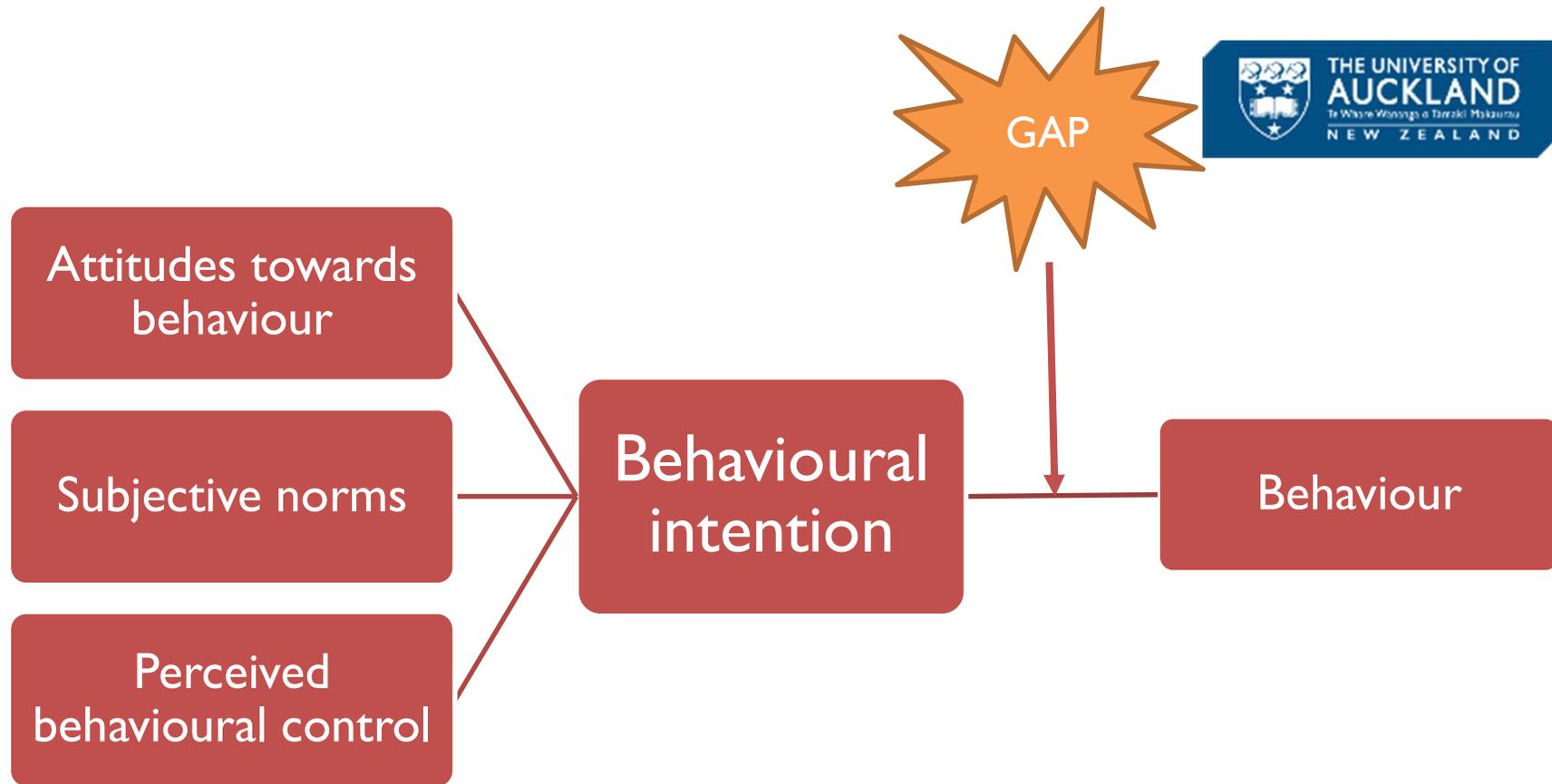


Literature on behaviour change strategies & gambling

	Number & description of actions	Number participants
Hodgins & el-Guebaly, 2000 (CAN)	12 broad actions for change 13 maintenance actions	43 recovered gamblers open-ended interviews
Hing et al., 2011 (Aus)	9 strategies to limit or restrict gambling	242 Survey regular gamblers 280 Helpline and F2F PG survey
Moore et al., 2012 (Aus)	20 self-regulation strategies half of which were in-venue (PBS or RG)	303 gamblers; 21% problem gamblers
Rodda et al., 2016	Six broad categories raised (i.e., cash control, social support, avoidance, alternative activities, cognitive, self-monitoring).	149 counselling transcripts
Rodda et al., 2018 (Aus)	27 different strategies (more data = more strategies).	2937 strategies which were extracted from 1370 online posts
Knaebe et al., 2018 (Aus)	Current and past PG similar across subtypes (i.e., accept that gambling needs to change, remind yourself of the negative consequences). Non-PG most helpful setting financial limits.	Current PG (n = 128), past PG (n = 131) or no PG (n = 126).
Rodda et al., 2018 (Aus)	Factor analysis identified 15 categories of strategies from 99 strategies	489 at risk or PGs (n=333)



Uptake versus helpfulness of behaviour change strategies used to reduce or quit gambling



Theoretical rationale.

Action and coping planning have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the intention-behaviour gap. This is even more so when participants develop their own plans.

Action planning Linking a goal intention (such as ‘I want to stick to my gambling limits’) with an action plan specifying how to respond (i.e., leave my cards at home on Fridays and only carry enough money for coffee) can assist in reducing the intention-behaviour gap (Sniehotta, et al., 2005).

Coping planning

- Action planning is strengthened when accompanied by a coping plan (or back-up plan).
- This plan pre-empts obstacles and identifies opportunities to act (i.e., if X happens, then I will do Y: *if I go to the venue with friends after work then I will not borrow money or gamble*)
- Knowing exactly what to do when specific situations arise has been shown to improve willpower and make it easier to respond automatically in the heat of the moment.



Can we support the use of behaviour change strategies for sticking to limits in gambling venues?

This project was funded by the VRGF and carried out at Turning Point with Kathleen Bagot, Vic Manning and Dan Lubman.

Methods: Conducted in **11 venues** in Victoria. Access was negotiated with management as well as venue staff.

- Approached 360 gamblers with 261 screened for **eligibility**. This was intention to set a limit, gambling in the next hour and having gambled at least once in the past month.
- 184 gamblers were interviewed before gambling and 155 returned to complete the post-gambling survey.

Measures

- Timeline follow-back, GISC, self-efficacy and intentions administered pre-and post. PGSI delivered to 104 gamblers at 30 days follow-up.

The characteristics of participants

- 81 males (44%) and 103 females (56%).
- Aged between 18 and 86 (M=56, SD=16 years).
- Many had not completed high school (41%) with around 1/3 a post high school qualification (34%).
- Participants were full-time or self-employed (31%), part-time or casual (13%) retired (27%) or not in the labour force (30%).
- NP/LR (65%), MR/PG (35%) on PGSI

Methods



Intervention: The intervention was one 20-minute session of action and coping planning. The control group was an assessment only.

Evaluation

- The main outcome measures were adherence to goal intentions (spend) during the gambling session and adherence to intentions at 30-days post-intervention (measured by the Time Line Follow-Back).
- Post-gambling evaluations were conducted in the gambling venue at the conclusion of the episode of gambling.
- 30-day follow-up evaluation was conducted via telephone or online.

Results



Total sample

Most rated their intention to stick to their limit as 7/7 with an intended median spend of \$50.

Gamblers spent as intended with the spend ratio =100% But fewer MR/PG (74%) stuck to limits than NP/LR (91%).

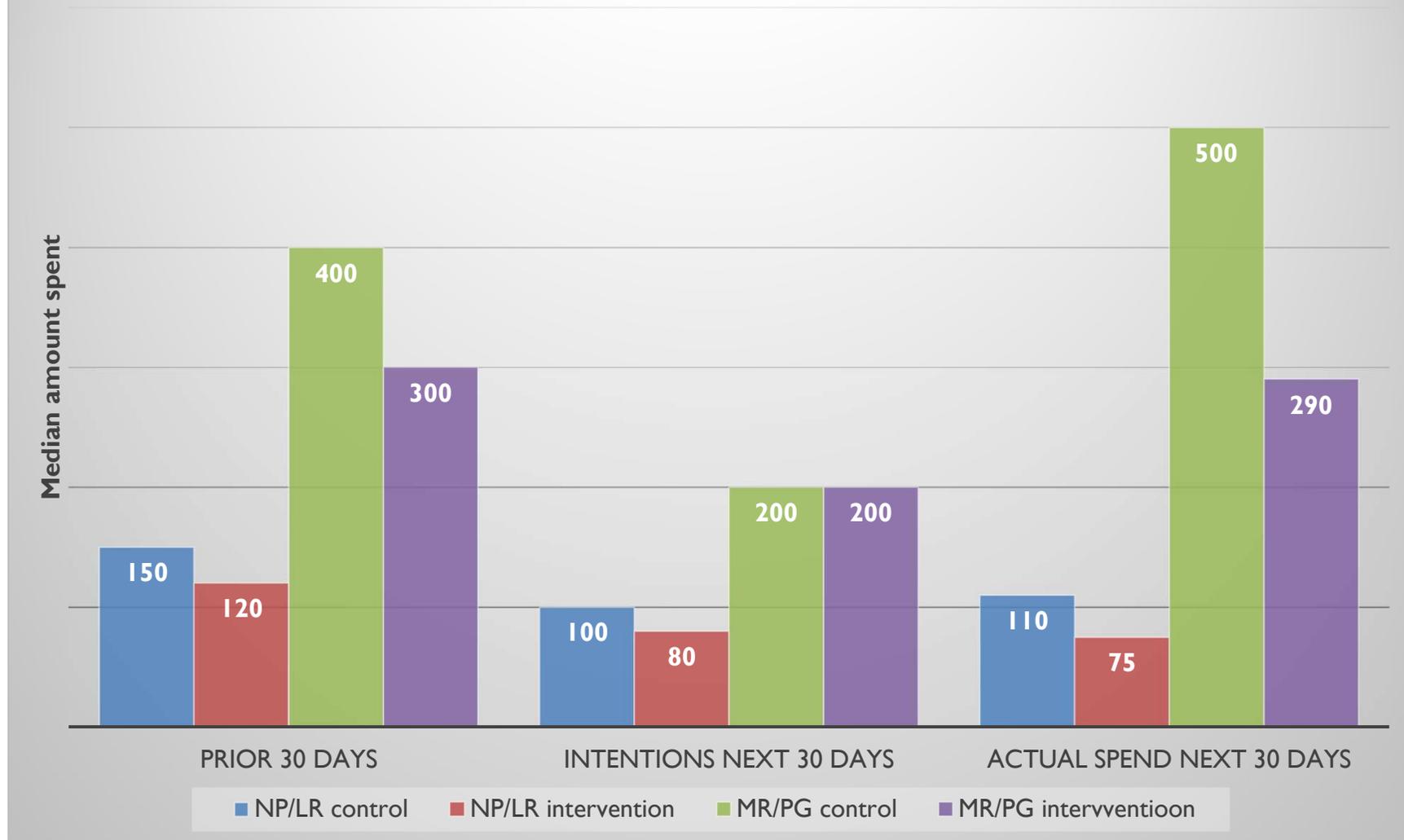
Difference by intervention group (pre-post)

No difference in ratio of intentions to \$ spent

No difference in ratio for NP/LR gamblers

MR/PG in the intervention intended to spend more (median \$100) but actually spent less than intended (median \$40).

Intended and actual spend by group and severity



Sig difference NP/LR intervention at 30 days. MR/PG intended vs actual & pre-post (n=104)

- Gamblers used an average of 14 different strategies over a 30-day period. Two strategies were used by 90% of gamblers: use only the money brought into the venue and only play low denomination machines.
- Qualitative analysis of recommended strategies revealed the top strategies were bring in the exact amount of cash and not taking cards and setting a money limit.

Compared to PGs, low risk/no PGs more frequently avoided chasing losses, set cues to keep track of time, used only the money brought into the venue, planned in advance their spending, and also viewed gambling as entertainment

Making sense of these findings

Brief intervention using behaviour change strategies is feasible in gambling venues. It may be especially helpful for moderate/risk and problem gamblers.

Why?

Consistent with the literature action and coping planning bridge the gap between intentions and behaviour.

Unanswered problems

Half of the sample had a plan in place before coming into the venue. What happens before coming to the venue?

Those with plans made in advance frequently could not come up with a back-up plan. Needed to have prompts.

Table I: Situations (adapted from Maddock et al., 1999) and Solutions (adapted from Cancer Prevention Research Center (2010) from the binge drinking VHS and active control task

Situations	Solutions
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am excited	then I will avoid situations that encourage me to drink
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am with others who are drinking a lot	then I will use reminders to help me not to drink
If I am tempted to binge drink when things are not going my way and I am frustrated	then I will do something nice for myself for making efforts to change
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am really happy	then I will reward myself when I don't give into my urge to drink
If I am tempted to binge drink when my friends push me to keep up with their drinking	then I will then I will calm myself then I will do something else instead of drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am feeling depressed	then I will seek out someone who listens when I want to talk about my drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am having fun with friends	then I will notice signs in public places trying to help people not to drink
If I am tempted to binge drink when other people encourage me to have a drink	then I will seek out social situations where people respect the rights of others not to drink
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am very anxious and stressed	then I will stop to think about how my drinking is hurting people around me
If I am tempted to binge drink when offered a drink by someone	then I will remember that I have strong feelings about how much my drinking has hurt the people I care about
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am feeling angry	then I will remember the information that people have personally given me on the benefits of quitting drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when things are going really well for me	then I will seek out people who can increase my awareness about the problems of drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when I go to party where there is a lot of drinking	then I will that warnings about the health hazards of drinking have an emotional effect on me
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am anxious about sex	then I will remember that I get upset when I think about illnesses caused by drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when there are drinking games going on	then I will tell myself that I can choose to change or not to change
If I am tempted to binge drink when I have my feelings hurt	then I will tell myself that if I try hard enough I can keep from drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am with someone I am attracted to	then I will remember that I feel more competent when I decide not to drink
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am feeling shy	then I will think about the type of person I will be if I am in control of my drinking
If I am tempted to binge drink when I feel like keeping up with my friends drinking	
If I am tempted to binge drink when I am nervous about being socially outgoing	

Develop a resource that describes ***what*** strategies are used and ***how*** they are best implemented.

This project was funded by Health Research Council New Zealand

A new method to hear the wisdom of a thousand and one stories



The way we have understood lived experience is through focus groups, in-depth interviews or secondary data analysis of help-seeking samples through techniques such as content analysis.

Online there are more than a million stories on exactly how people recover from addiction. This rich and diverse database reflects the struggles and lessons on exactly how addiction can be overcome.

Psychforums has over 100,000 members. It is a community support site in the US for mental health and addictive disorders.

Research design for the synthesis of lived experience in problem gambling.

FROM CONSUMERS ↔ FOR CONSUMERS

Lived experience reported on websites and online forums



Literature review on strategy effectiveness



Data synthesis (content analysis)



Guideline preparation (thematic analysis)



Behaviour change guidelines gambling



Behaviour change guidelines alcohol

Behaviour change guidelines internet

Behaviour change guidelines sugar

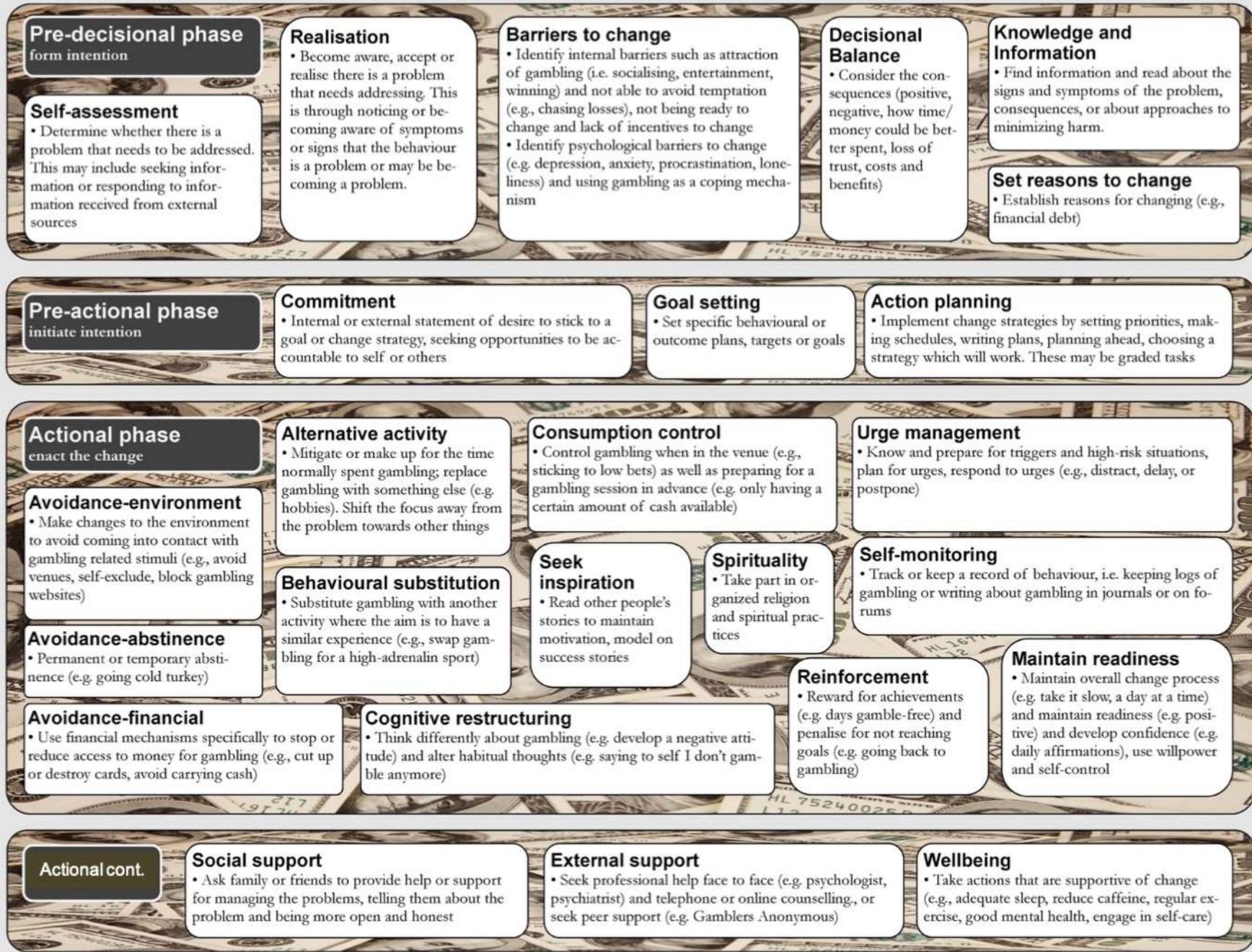
Behaviour change guidelines overeating

Behaviour change guidelines pornography

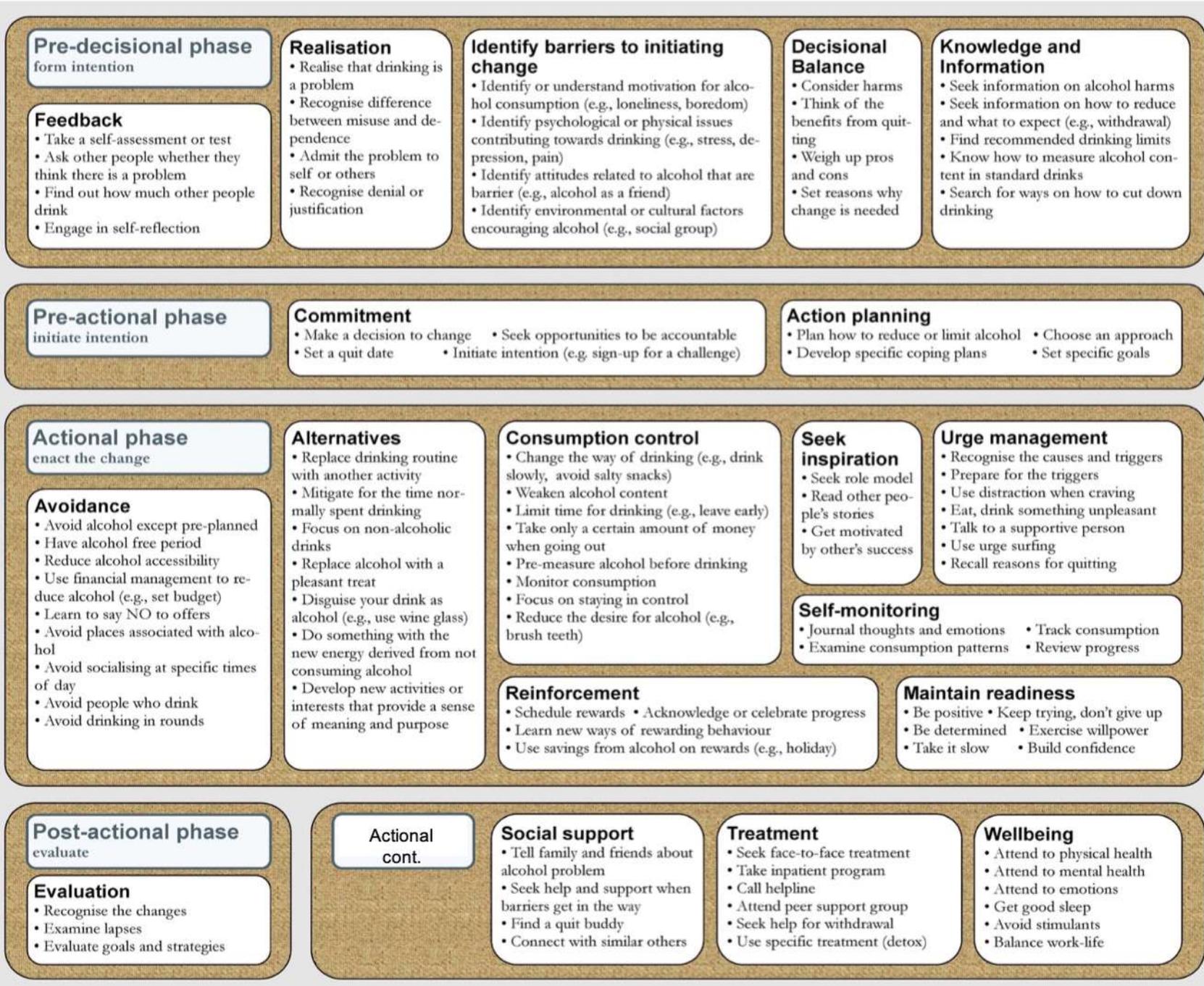
Behaviour change guidelines gaming

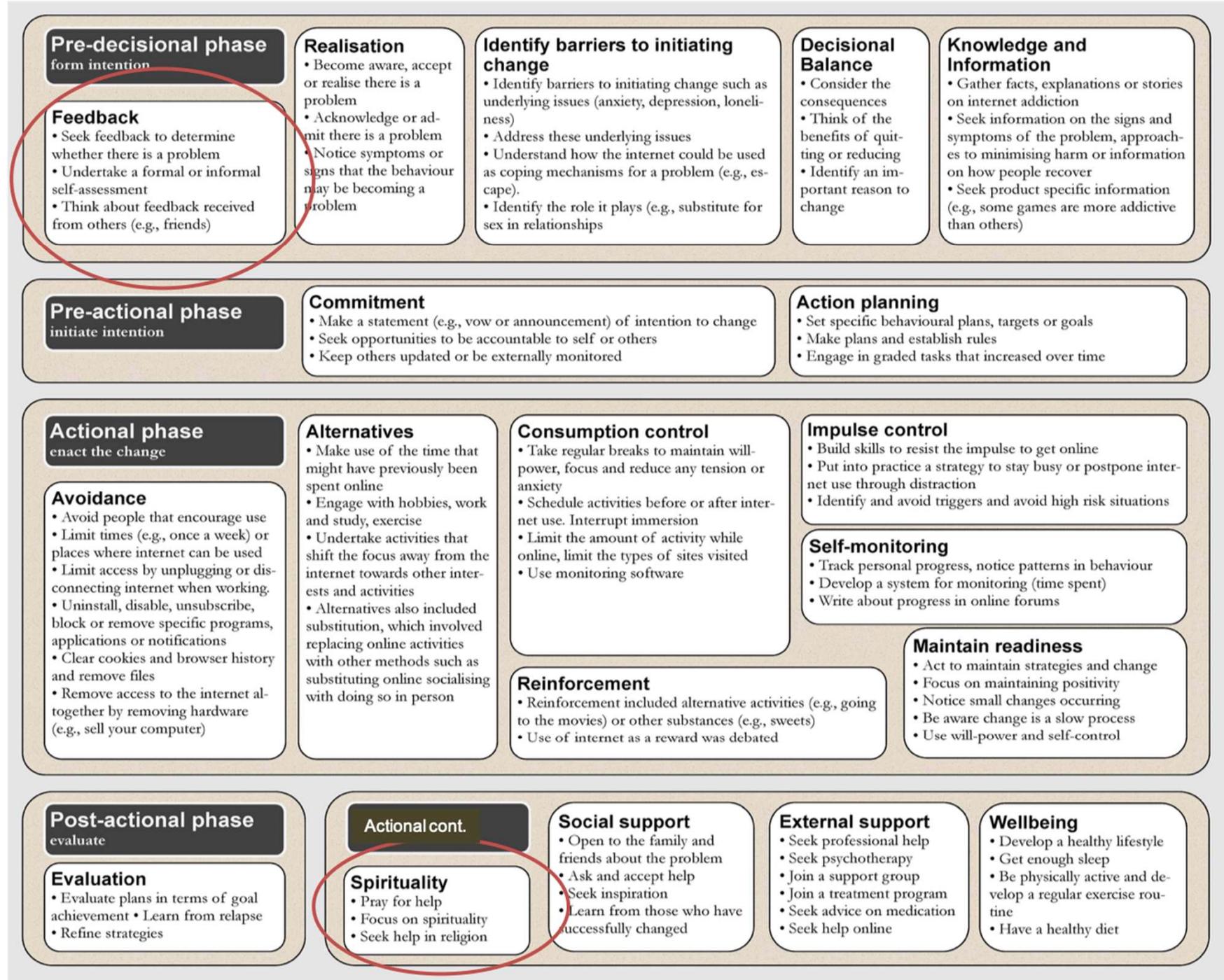
This process depicts a transformation of individual stories into relevant and accessible guidelines that can be widely disseminated.

Behaviour Change Strategies: Gambling

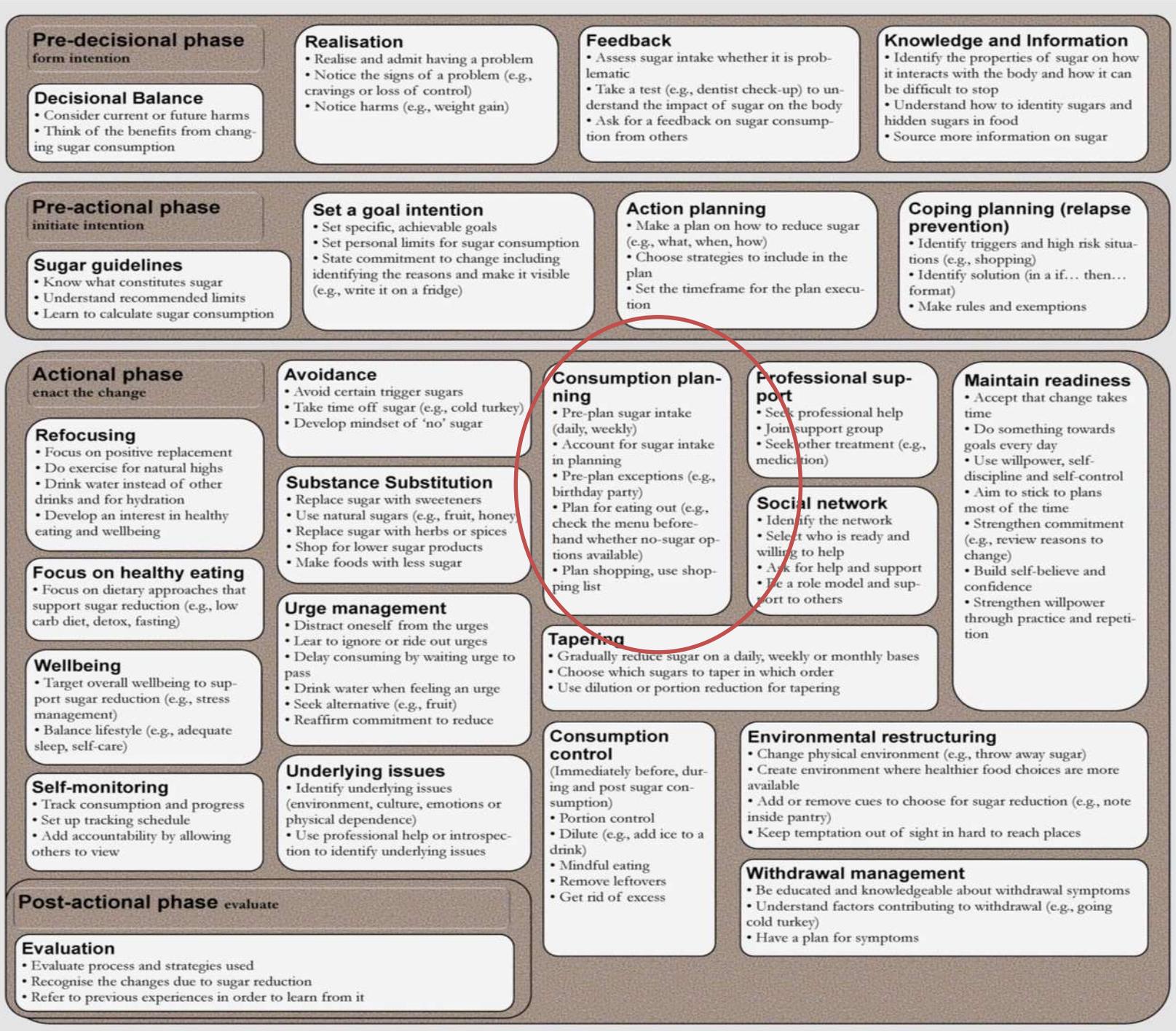


BCS Taxonomy: Alcohol





BCS Taxonomy: Sugar





MENU OF OPTIONS

Tick any options that you think will be helpful...



tips

Pg. TIPS FOR STRATEGY SELECTION
 Choose strategies you actually want to do. Choose strategies that can fit into your daily routine. Choose strategies that you will enjoy. Choose strategies you think are needed to meet your goals. Tick those strategies you think are of interest.

P.2 AVOID SITES, PEOPLE OR DEVICES
 Some people or sites cause a loss of control in some people. Knowing your danger sites is a key to avoiding them. Loss of control can also be associated with specific people. For some, cold turkey is the preferred option which involves an abstinence based approach.

P.6 BEHAVIOURAL SUBSTITUTION
 Understanding why you spend a lot of time playing games means you can substitute gaming with something that provides a similar experience. Find other ways to socialise, entertain yourself and take time out from everyday life which are more aligned with your goals.

P.10 CHANGE THE WAY YOU PLAY
 If your aim is moderation then this strategy is for you. Ways to stay in control include changing the types and number of games played. It also includes being in an environment and taking breaks so as to support strong self-control.

P.14 CLEAN UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT
 Reduce the availability of gaming by removing or changing aspects of your environment. Keep devices out of site, separate work and play and unsubscribe from gaming platforms.

P.18 CURB YOUR URGE
 It's easier to avoid or prevent an urge than to fight it. Get to know your triggers and create solutions to minimise their impact. There are a variety of techniques for managing sudden urges such as distract, delay, recommit through to talking with someone.

P.22 GET INSPIRED
 Seek inspiration from people who have been through successful change. Reading books, blogs, or stories from those who have already changed can be instructional and motivational. This can help you realise what is possible.

P.24 KEEP A JOURNAL
 Writing down your thoughts and emotions can be very informative. It can also help you understand why you game, and how it may be related to your thoughts, feelings and any external cues.

P.28 LIFESTYLE CHANGE
 Change your lifestyle to support reducing your gaming. This could mean trying to be more healthy, switching up your usual routine, making changes to your surroundings, and developing a new perspective on things.

P.32 MAINTAIN MOMENTUM
 Changing a behaviour is all about following through and staying motivated. There will be ups and downs and possible times that plans are difficult to maintain. This can be helped by being prepared and ready. Think positively, take each day as it comes and be strong.

P.36 MANAGE UNDERLYING ISSUES
 Examine underlying reasons for gaming. It could be that gaming is used as a way of dealing with procrastination or emotions. There may also be a desire for perfectionism when in terms of gaming. Sometimes attempts to change are undermined by alcohol consumption.

P.40 PLAN GAMING IN ADVANCE
 This strategy is for those who have a goal of gaming reduction. Consumption planning means setting up rules for gaming such as the use of time keepers and content blockers. It may also require restrictions on when and where you get online.

P.44 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT
 Professional support can come in many forms. It may involve doctors, psychologists, social workers, counsellors or helplines. It could include anything from a one-off appointment to ongoing care.

P.48 REFOCUS TOWARDS THE FUTURE
 There are many activities that can replace gaming. These can change the focus from being stuck in negativity and instead focus on positivity. Refocusing may also help you to discover exciting new passions and break old habits.

P.52 REWARDS AND PENALTIES
 Rewards acknowledge progress in sticking to plans and reaching your goals. Alternatively, by finding ways to apply a penalty for breaking the rules, you'll be less likely to do it again in the future.

P.56 SOCIAL NETWORK
 Know your support network and be selective in who you have on your team. There are lots of ways friends and whanau can help, from emotional support through to the implementation of practical strategies.

P.60 SUPPORT GROUPS
 Join a support group and share your journey with others in a non-judgemental environment. Joining a group gives you access to others sharing your struggle. Other members can provide you with a constant source of encouragement, motivation and hope too.

P.62 TRACK YOUR GAMING
 It's easy to forget how much time you've spent gaming today, and it's even easier to forget how much time you've spent over the last month. Keeping track of your use over a long period of time can be a real eye opener. It can also be a great tool to check your progress.

P.64 WELLBEING
 Focusing on overall health can be the building blocks for gaming reduction. Health includes good quality sleep, regular exercise, good mental health and engaging in routine self-care.

RANK YOUR STRATEGIES

Now, pick your top **TWO** strategies. Look over the items you have ticked in the menu of options. Which ones stand out for you as necessary for reducing your gaming? Rank your strategies, with 1 being your top strategy. These are the strategies that most need to be in your plan because you think these strategies will work best for you.

#1 _____

#2 _____

social network



Know your support network and be selective in who you have on your team. There are lots of ways friends and whanau can help, from emotional support through to the implementation of practical strategies.

What is it?

This strategy is about enlisting the support of others. Support might be a friendly ear willing to listen or a person who you can text when tempted. It might be someone who will respect and support your journey by not tempting you. Support may even come from a buddy who wants to reduce their consumption as well.

how do I do this?

Know your support network.

Your support network may consist of friends, family members, co-workers and community groups.

- Before you reach out, think about those in your environment who are supportive and not supportive. Write a list of these people so you know who to turn to when needed and who to avoid.
- Surround yourself with positive influences and people who make you feel good about yourself. Just knowing you have others to lean on can make the world of difference.

- If you don't have many friends or family around you, grow your social network. Do this by joining a club, sports group, volunteer or community group where you can connect with like-minded people. This may also inspire a bit of a lifestyle change.

Be selective.

- Identify people who have the time, ability and desire to provide support. Some people would like to be helpful but they have competing priorities (e.g., have their own problem). That's ok. Accept that and keep searching.
- Choose different people for different tasks. For example, maybe you have a person to share your thoughts with and a different person to report your consumption and progress. Think about the skills of each person. Someone good in a crisis would be great to call when there is an urge.
- Someone who has a similar problem with gaming can be a good choice. Although friends and family can be supportive, they might not fully understand your personal struggles.

- Sometimes people are very vocal and critical about goals to make a positive health change. They can make it about them, rather than you. Be aware that sometimes people are negative because they may also be worried about their own behaviour. Don't let it discourage you.

Types of help.

Help can be in different forms. Some people may be better helpers on specific problems. The type of help you could ask for includes:

- Someone to talk to and can understand what you are going through.
- Someone to hold you accountable or to provide advice or information.
- Someone to support the implementation of your strategies.
- Someone to just be your friend and not have anything to do directly with gaming reduction.

Let your network know how they can help.

- Be specific on the type of help you want. For example, if you don't want advice but just want to talk, let the person know.
- A support network can help with the implementation of strategies. For example, if you are practicing managing urges through distraction you could ask a friend to go for a walk with you. If you are practicing avoidance you could ask them not to talk about gaming in your presence or to keep it out of the house.
- Accept help graciously. Even if it is not quite the help you wanted.

Open up.

Tell someone from your family or friendship group if you feel able. Then it won't be a secret anymore. Talking about it can make the possibility of solutions more real.

- People are often embarrassed that they game longer than planned. Opening up gives others the opportunity to help and support you.
- Find someone who you can text, call or meet up with for a chat about things. Just the act of talking about what you're struggling with can make the problem seem half as big.
- It may be particularly helpful to tell someone who is around you a lot of the time - someone you live with if possible. This sort of person can more readily recognise when you're slipping or finding things difficult and give you a nudge in the right direction when you need it most.

Surround yourself with positive influences and people who make you feel good about yourself.

social network CONT.

why do this?

Succeeding at cutting down on gaming can be much easier if another person or people are involved. Having at least one close person in our lives is good for our overall health too. Involving other people in your journey can have the positive/happy side effect of improving your relationship and bringing you closer together. Sharing your struggle can help you realise how great your friends and family actually are.

Involving others in your plans means that you're not only just accountable to yourself anymore, but you're accountable to the commitment you made to your support person too. This means you have an extra reason to stick to your plans.

maintaining this strategy

Get others to keep you on track.

Ask your friends and family to keep you on track by making sure you stick to your plans. This could be with reminders or helping you change things when you don't stick to it.

- Tell your support people your plan and how you are going to do it.
- This not only helps you plan how you will act but it lets others know how to support you and what they can and can't do to help.
- Give your passwords to someone you trust. Let them know that if you break your commitment three times, they have your permission to change them and not tell you what they are for a week.
- If you are struggling to identify a support person consider enlisting a Professional Support person.

Get others involved.

You don't have to change all by yourself – you can get others to follow your plan too. Why not persuade a partner or friend to cut down on their gaming too? Try taking up a new activity together, this will get you out of the routines in which the time you spent gaming played a large part and give you something fun to do with a friend.

Involving other people in your journey can have the positive/happy side effect of improving your relationship and bringing you closer together.

 **One person I can talk to about the plan.**

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 **One person I can talk to when I need help.**

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maintain momentum



Changing a behaviour is all about following through and staying motivated. There will be ups and downs and possible times that plans are difficult to maintain. This can be helped by being prepared and ready. Think positively, take each day as it comes and be strong.

What is it?

Maintaining readiness is all about momentum. Have you ever started a plan or a programme and then after a few days let it go? This strategy is about harnessing your motivation so that you stick to your plans and goals.

how do I do this?

Ups and downs.

Changing a behaviour is rarely straightforward. You will experience ups and downs across the days and weeks ahead. This is to be expected, but stay strong, and keep going.

- The **first few days** after initiating change are the toughest. However, it gradually gets better. Take the first day slowly and take one day at a time. Focus on being positive to get through these hard few days.
- **After the first few days** it gets easier. It also gets easier the longer you stick with it. You still need to be very careful not to let your guard down. Realise you always need to be

conscious of your temptations, and that barriers could be encountered at any time. Remain determined and avoid situations where temptation may be too strong.

- **Slips and falls:** Understand that you will experience many ups and downs and that relapse is something that is almost inevitable. However, it is just a part of the process of change. When this happens, focus on recommitting to your goals and taking small steps to get back to your plan.

Build self-belief and confidence.

- Self-confidence is an amazing feeling. It is the sensation that you are mastering the task and that it is becoming easier. Every time you say 'no' to pornography you are building self-confidence. This will make you mentally strong.
- Acknowledge good things. One way to do this is with a daily gratitude journal. Every morning record three things that you are grateful for. In the evening record three good things that happened that day. Over time, positivity and self-confidence will be strengthened.

MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

Self-confidence is an amazing feeling. It is the sensation that you are mastering the task and that it is becoming easier.

- Celebrate your progress. Notice how far you have already come and how many days or weeks have passed. Even if it's just one day - it's still an achievement to be proud of.

Use emotions to bolster motivation.

To do this close your eyes and imagine how it will feel to be free of pornography. Imagine yourself growing in confidence at saying 'no'. Imagine yourself not being tempted. Let excitement build in your stomach, heart and mind. Use this for motivation.

Take it day by day.

Make progress by focusing on the here and now rather than getting overwhelmed by the future.

- Set small milestones. It is easier and much more achievable to aim for smaller targets. This allows you to step back regularly to look at what you have achieved.
- Tell yourself that you don't want to watch any pornography today. Deal with each day as it comes.

Make your commitment stronger every day.

- Remind yourself of the reasons to change. This can be done by reviewing the harms caused by pornography and the benefits of change.
- Restate your goals and make them visible. Perhaps draw or write them down and keep it in your wallet.
- Check how far you have already progressed. To do this, review your tracking tool. You could also consider any physical, mental or emotional changes that have happened since you started to reduce pornography.

Don't get discouraged if you don't reach your goals straight away! Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, and your addiction won't go away in a night!

- 2022

maintain momentum CONT.

why do this?

Willpower is the ability to override natural responses to triggers with a preferred or new response. If you normally load some pornography to feel good, you need willpower to change what you normally do. It takes time, repetition, commitment and confidence to keep making different choices and use willpower. Over a few weeks or months the new way will become a habit with less effort needed.

There are going to be times when you feel it is harder and harder to say 'no' to pornography (like at the end of a long day). Making numerous decisions requiring willpower can cause fatigue where we get worn down for a while. Willpower is like a muscle and it can fatigue so build recovery time into your schedule (e.g., relaxation days). The good news is, that just as with a muscle, the more we practice using willpower the stronger it gets.

maintaining this strategy

Have days when **willpower is not required** so that your muscle gets a chance to rest. This could be a day spent with family where you know it is a safe environment.

Alternatively, take yourself to a temptation-free zone such as the gym, swimming pool, cycling track, or dog park.

Focus on your plans over the next 30 days. If you focus fully on implementing your plans, then you will reach your goal. Ways to focus on your plans include:

- Read and re-read your action and back-up plans.
- Do your self-monitoring every-day.
- Regularly remind yourself how far you have come.
- Keep a gratitude diary every day.

Get excited about your plans. Remind yourself why you are doing this and what you can achieve. Keep looking forward and not back.

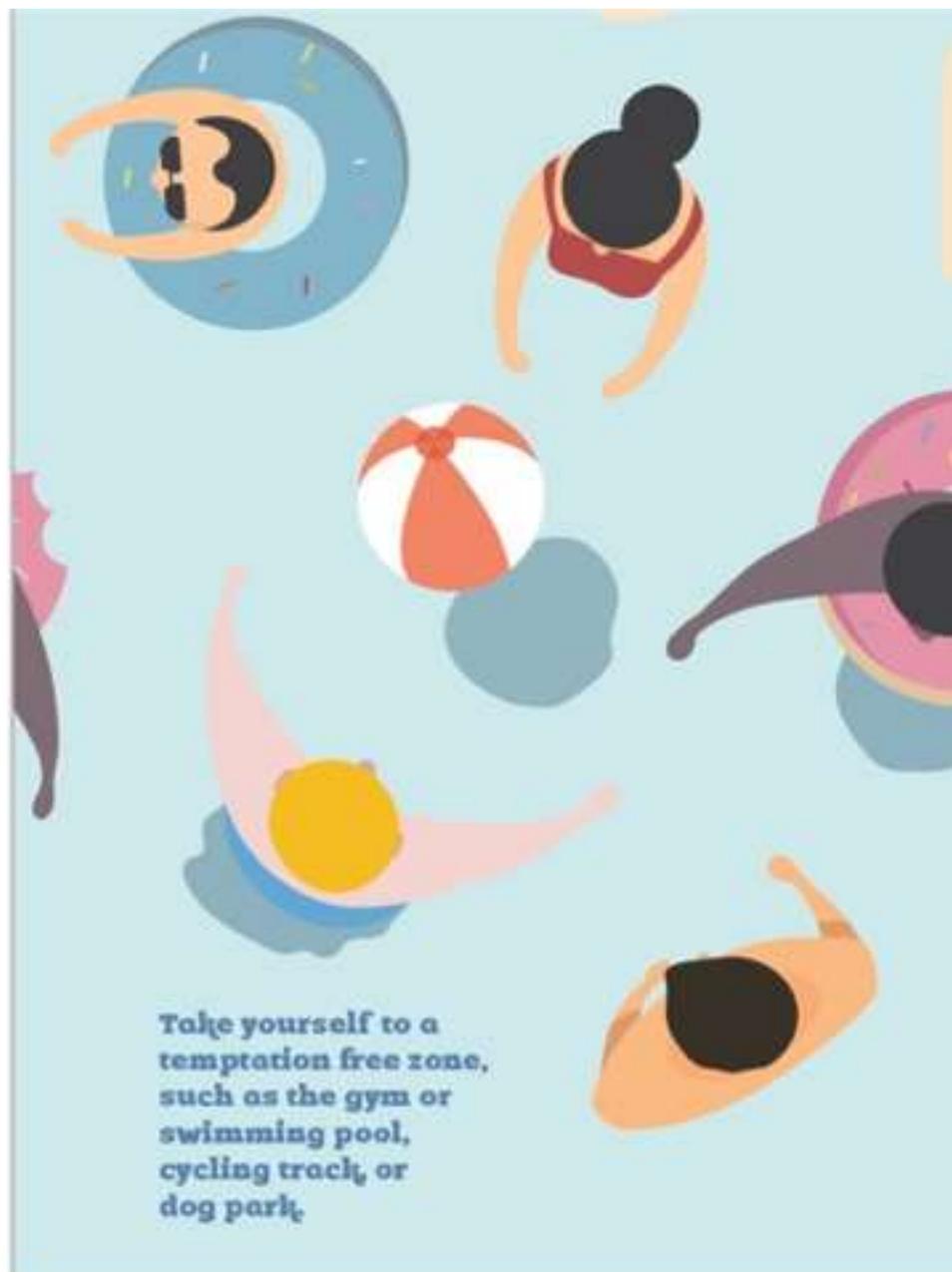
- Reward yourself and acknowledge your process.
- Keep reminding yourself why you're doing this to keep you moving forward.
- Reflect on what you're doing well when you're using your plan.
- Be proud of yourself and think optimistically about the future.



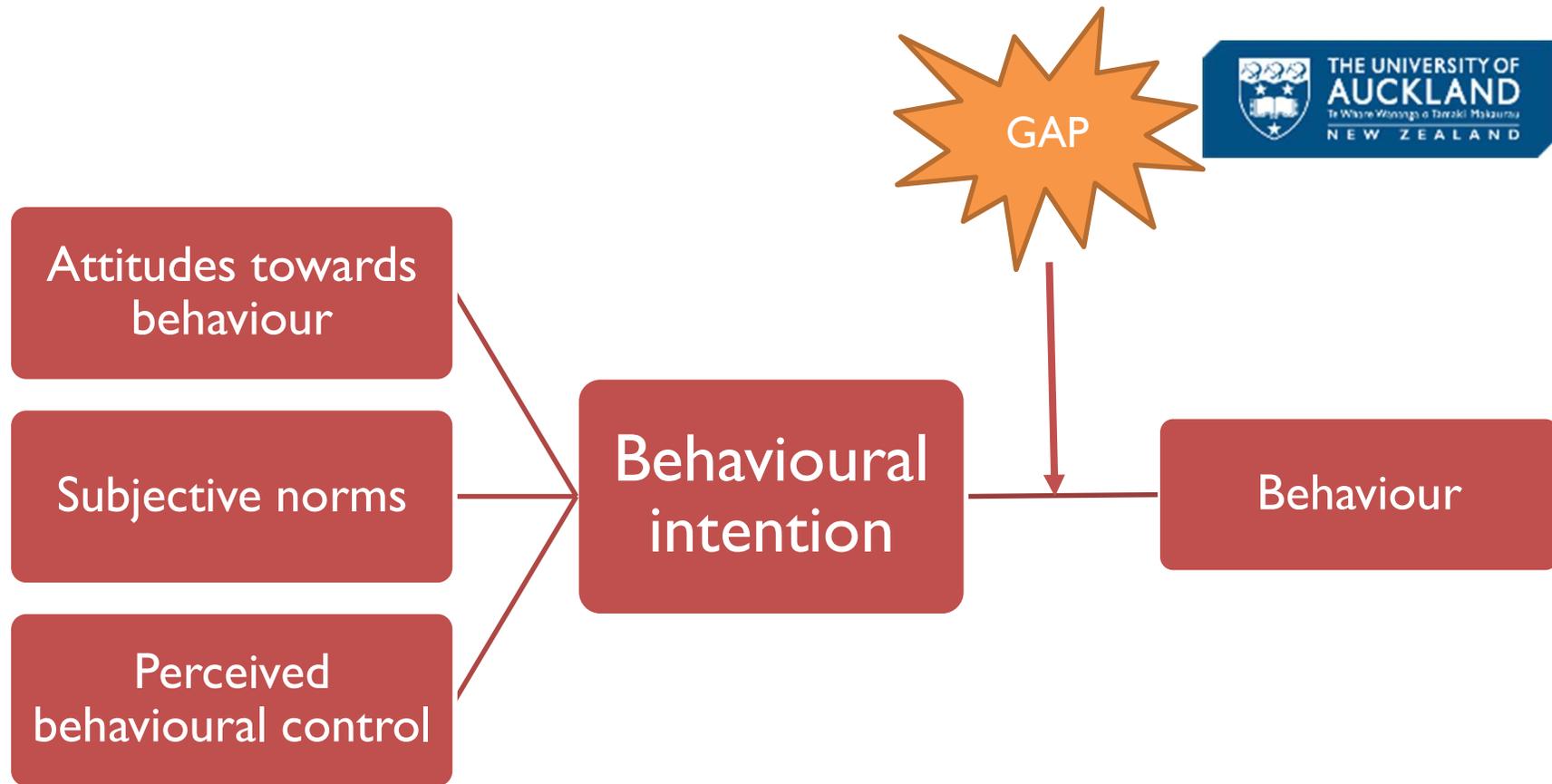
Three things I am grateful for...

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How could you incorporate the use of these strategies into your practice?



Action and coping planning have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the intention-behaviour gap. This is even more so when participants develop their own plans.



Implications for policy, regulators, treatment providers and intervention developers.

Currently develop gamblers guidelines, EGM & family.

Take away points

- A new type of intervention or support is needed for those who prefer self-management.
- Behaviour change strategies are what gamblers actually do to change behaviour and this needs to be supported. The focus should be on **what** and **how**.
- These consumer based approaches are not in themselves evidence based. Use an evidence based technique to deliver them.
- We have proposed a simple technique that can be used to blend gambling treatment and comorbidities.
- This tailored and personal approach works well with MI.

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