

Client Catherine – 56

Case Study 1

Demographics



Location: Living in rural Devon with her husband.

Family: Married, two adult children, two grandchildren.



Occupation: Advertising, works from home. Full-time.

Traits: Very talkative, bubbly, likes to care and look after her family.



Lifestyle: Active, sociable, enjoys walking, hiking, tennis and travelling. Comfortable financially.

Interests: Family, gardening, reading historical books, being outdoors.



Support System: Husband and children aware of gambling, supportive, good relationships but feels she has let them down. One good friend she has confided in.

Background & History



Gambling since teens, initially linked to social inclusion (arcades, bingo). Has had periods without gambling, was 2 years free before she recently returned.



Has mostly managed to keep her gambling spending within her means but has needed her husband's help on occasion and did take out a large loan in her early 20s. No current debt.

Current Challenges



Triggers: When asked, stated she struggles with emotions and stress, and enjoys the escape of online games, and being 'in the moment' with gambling.



Traits: Often hyper-focuses at work, leads to her forgetting to have breaks, sometimes lunch, can result in high stress levels.



View of Self: Disclosed although she is seen as confident and assured, she has low self-esteem and labelled herself as 'scatterbrained.'



Gambling Harm: Feels worse after gambling, feels guilty over keeping her gambling a secret from her family.

She can also use alcohol to switch off which exacerbates her gambling.



Mental Health: Menopause, has struggled with depression (on maximum dose of antidepressants), poor sleep.



Has recently completed a private **ADHD** assessment.

Entry into Service



- Returned to gambling three months ago, quickly increased. Had to confess to her husband after he suspected something was wrong, as she spent too much, leaving her short for the month.
- Had a therapist when she last stopped and found it helpful.
- Husband encouraged her to call the National helpline again.

Her Goals



To understand why she returned to gambling after two years without it. Find other ways to manage stress. To stop completely and never gamble again.

How a Neurodivergent Affirming Approach Supported Catherine

- **Validated** her struggles throughout her adult life with neurodivergent characteristics, to understand her **unique perspective** – supported **building trust and respect**.
- Focused on **identifying her strengths** and challenging her negative self-talk to support reframing her experience of neurodiversity.
- As can be chatty, asked what she wanted to focus on each session – involving her in **decision making**.
- **Avoided** making the assumptions. Specifically asked about her experience of her neurodiversity – **prioritising empathy and understanding**.
- **Explored** the link to alcohol, as this increased her impulsivity and lowered her inhibition to gamble. Offered to find further support for her in her area.

Demographics



Location: Rents in Cardiff. Lives with wife and children.

Family: Married, three young children (ages 1, 3, 6).



Occupation: Full time self-employed delivery driver (income variable, below average without overtime).



Cultural Background: Indian, moved to the UK in early 20s.

Traits: Quiet, can be withdrawn and reserved, but also impulsive. Stated he finds it difficult to talk about his feelings.



Lifestyle: Limited, says all his time is either at work, (he often works extra hours) or being at home supporting his wife with their young children.

Interests: Family, used to be quite sporty, feels gambling, family and work have taken over and he has no time for anything else.



Support System: Is too ashamed to tell anyone about his gambling. Socially isolated - family in India. Older brother now lives in Canada. Few close friends, mostly met through wife.

Background & History



Introduced to gambling by older brother after moving to London 12 years ago. Had some big wins in the casinos, which got him “hooked.”



Gambling escalated during lockdown as he started online betting. Has had a few breaks but they only last a few months.

Current Challenges



Triggers: When asked he is focussed on getting a big win to clear his debts and often enters “trance-like” state when gambling.



Gambling Harm: Has had multiple loans and has borrowed from family to cover bills. Relationship with wife strained, she gets frustrated he works all the time, often states she feels she’s raising the children on her own. He worries she will leave him.



Social: Lack of supportive networks, shame about gambling. Feels socially isolated, also reports his in-laws can be quite judgemental and critical and often makes negative remarks about him.



Mental Health: Periods of low mood, he always feels anxious. Feels very ashamed of the impact of his gambling.



He acknowledges he has some **ADHD traits** (impulsivity, difficulty with time, hyperfocus - can forget to eat at work, appointments). Stated he would never get assessed. Feels he would be judged.

Entry into Service



- He deals with all the finances but is finding it increasingly difficult to hide.
- Lied and borrowed from his brother again last month. Spent the rent money on gambling twice in the last six months.
- Feels he can’t continue living this way. Reached out to GamCare via live chat.
- Has not had counselling before.

His Goals



Wants to stop completely but worries that he won’t be able to.

How a Neurodivergent Affirming Approach Supported Virat

- Had **shorter sessions** to fit in with work, often had food/drinks as would forget at work - **supported his engagement**.
- **Information** given regarding debt, helped him start the process in sessions.
- **Explored traits** that linked to gambling behaviour and allowed time to discuss his relationship worries.
- Focused on **practical steps** as was reluctant to discuss his feelings.
- **Time management skills** - looked at his routine, work / life balance, implementing regular breaks.
- To support his **social isolation**, discussed peer and group support.

Demographics



Location: Bath. Lives at home with parents and younger sister. Single.

Family: Close with parents but finds it difficult to talk to them.



Education: A 3rd year biochemistry student and Bath University.

Traits: Quiet, does not always know what to say, but chatty about the things that interest her.



Lifestyle: Mostly stays at home, has a couple of friends she sees, but she prefers speaking to her friends online.

Interests: Live simulation games, drawing, manga, graphic novels.



Support System: One friend knows, but not the full extent. Parents don't know about her gambling. Doesn't want to disappoint them as she feels that they won't understand.

Background & History



Thinks she saw an advert on social media - won a few games and liked the feeling. Plays the same 2 or 3 games and often loses track of time whilst playing.



Has enjoyed university and states they have been very supportive. Is feeling more pressure now she is in her final year.



Is **autistic**, was diagnosed after she went to secondary school.



Gender Identity: Struggled with her identity as a teenager. Identifies as gender queer.

Current Challenges



Triggers: When asked, gambles when she's bored, feeling anxious and overwhelmed. Helps her calm down.



Mental Health: Struggles with her emotions. Reports she gets overwhelmed, anxious and cries easily. Loud noises can upset her – has headphones but can feel self-conscious wearing them, as she wants to fit in and not be different.



Gambling Harm: Spent most of her student loan last month, now struggling until the next payment.



Struggles with sleep, tired, has had difficulty attending morning lectures.

Entry into Service



- Money worries but can't tell anyone. Feels her gambling is getting out of control.
- Used the livechat on the Gamcare website.
- Had some counselling sessions as a teenager but didn't feel her counsellor really understood her.
- Said she's a bit worried that this will happen again.

Her Goals



Not sure, maybe cut down her gambling first and see how that feels.

How a Neurodivergent Affirming Approach Supported Grace

- **Online sessions** in the afternoon to fit around university.
- Struggled with verbalising her emotions – **adapted communication** to use visual aids.
- To **foster empowerment**, exploration around identifying sensory needs to support emotional regulation.
- **Practical suggestions** to stop gambling, finding alternative coping strategies and putting blocks in place.
- **Encouraged** her to prioritise essential self-care tasks / routine, reduce time masking and recognising when she needed to be alone to rebuild energy.