



Gambler's Help Southern
(03) 9575 5353
gamblershelpsouthern.org.au

Wise Choices Group

Gretta Daley – Therapeutic Counsellor

Fiona McBain – Therapeutic Counsellor

Check in



Take a moment to check in
with yourself.

In 1 or 2 words,
name what you are:

thinking, feeling or sensing

Our 'Wise Choices' Journey



Evidence base for group work



- 'All in the same boat' - less stigmatised and marginalised
- 'Strength in numbers' - less alone and vulnerable
- Become more sure of themselves, more bold
- Change feels possible
- Sense of worth and self-respect
- Self-assurance grows through: supporting and challenging one another, acquiring new ways of thinking about and solving problems; proving to themselves they can do things differently when given a chance to rehearse in a group

Evidence base for group work



Brene Brown:

“There's such a powerful relationship between shame and addiction, that most researchers can't figure out which came first... And yet we still live in a society where people try to shame people out of addiction. It makes no sense”

“Empathy is a hostile environment for shame. Shame cannot survive empathic connection”

“Shame leaves us feeling unlovable. We are wired for love and belonging. We are wired to be in connection”

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)



In a nutshell

Accept your feelings and thoughts and be present

Choose action that is in line with your values

Take action

Remember, it's what you do that counts!

6 core processes of ACT



- Contact with the present moment
- Self as context
- Defusion
- Acceptance/Willingness
- Identifying values
- Taking committed action

These processes were incorporated in the group through discussion, metaphor, experiential exercises, and written activities

Session topics covered



- Experiential and emotional avoidance
- Willingness and acceptance
- Awareness of and ways of relating to thoughts
- Mindfulness
- Awareness and responding to emotions, sensations and urges
- Acting on values
- Obstacles and choice points

Session Structure



- Mindfulness practice
- Check-in
- Review of home practice
- Activities/Discussion
- Break
- Activities/Discussion
- Ideas for home practice, 'values in action'
- Check-out
- Evaluation forms

Key Concepts from Wise Choices

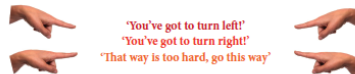


Passengers on the bus

Imagine you've been driving a bus called 'My Life' and the road you've decided to take is towards a full, rich and meaningful life. As you drive along, you pick up passengers – memories, emotions, thoughts and so on. Some of the passengers you like – friendly ones, funny ones and supportive ones. You hope they will sit up the front, near you. Some passengers you don't like at all. If only these passengers had taken another bus!



Sometimes difficult passengers come up the front of the bus and start trying to get you to go a different way:



If you do what they say and turn the bus in the direction they want to go, they quieten down and you might feel better for a while. However, giving in to them means you are driving your 'life bus' in a direction you don't really want to go. You can end up focusing on how to keep these difficult passengers quiet and completely lose your way. After a while, you are likely to feel worse.

Naturally, you would really like the difficult passengers to get off the bus, but because they are your thoughts, feelings and memories, there is no way to get rid of them. Even turning around to argue with them distracts you from driving where you want to go. In the end, to have the life you want, you will need to find ways to take all the passengers — the likeable and difficult ones — along for the ride. You will need to find a way to stop making deals with them, which turn control of the bus over to them.

Can you find a way to drive your bus in a direction that makes your heart glad?

Key Concepts from Wise Choices



Caught in an avoidance loop?

Who is in charge of your bus –
you or your difficult passengers?

My values: Being a good friend – reliable,
caring, open to giving and receiving affection

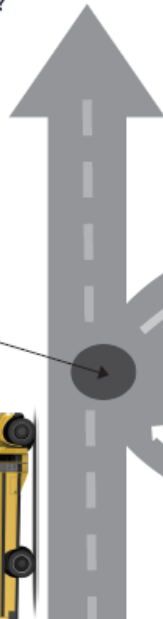
Choice point

Typical triggers:
Going out to see
my friends

Difficult thoughts:
'What if I have a
panic attack?'
'They will
laugh at you.'
'They don't like you.'

Difficult feelings:
Heart racing, sweating,
panicking

Skills available:
'Just noticing'



It is a relief to stay home.
Drinking cheers me up for a while.

Feel better for a while

Avoidance loop
Stay home, withdraw,
drink alcohol

... then feel worse

I miss my friends. Each time I don't go, it's harder the next
time. I get depressed. Sometimes I self-harm if I drink a lot.

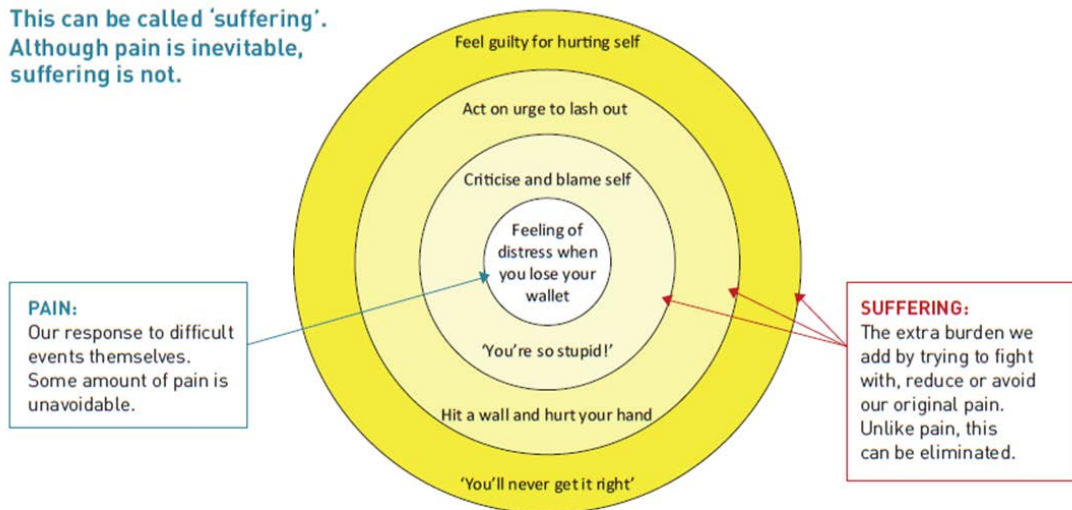
Key Concepts from Wise Choices



Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional

There is no avoiding pain – life serves it up to all of us in one way or another. However, when we try to fight with pain or push it away, our discomfort levels tend to decrease for a bit and then they increase again. Our fear of pain, anger at pain, or efforts to deaden pain, all tend to create MORE pain.

This can be called 'suffering'.
Although pain is inevitable,
suffering is not.



Key Concepts from Wise Choices



Caught in a tug-of-war
with a monster?



Just drop the rope!

Key Concepts from Wise Choices



'Hooked' and 'unhooked'



Hooked

**Awareness of thoughts
(unhooking)**

**Totally
unhooked**

Key Concepts from Wise Choices



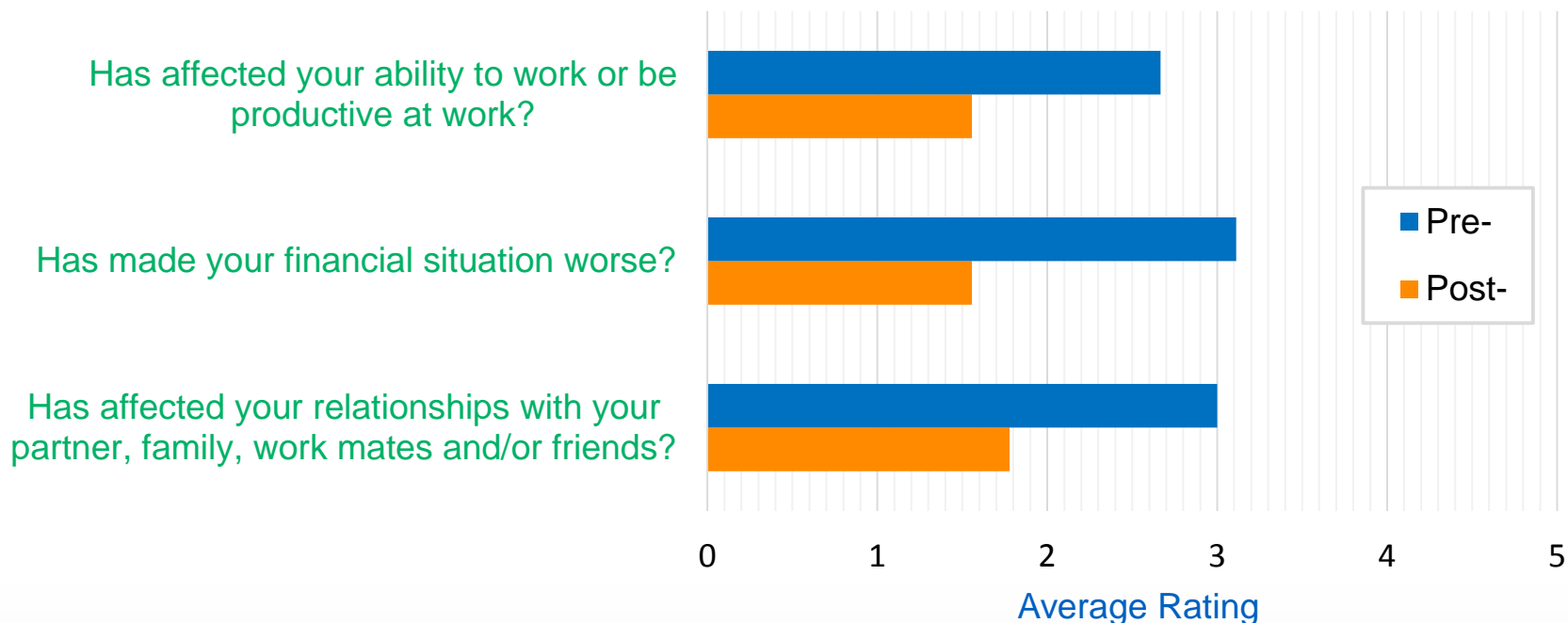
Values are like lighthouses in the distance ...



... they guide us through emotional storms.

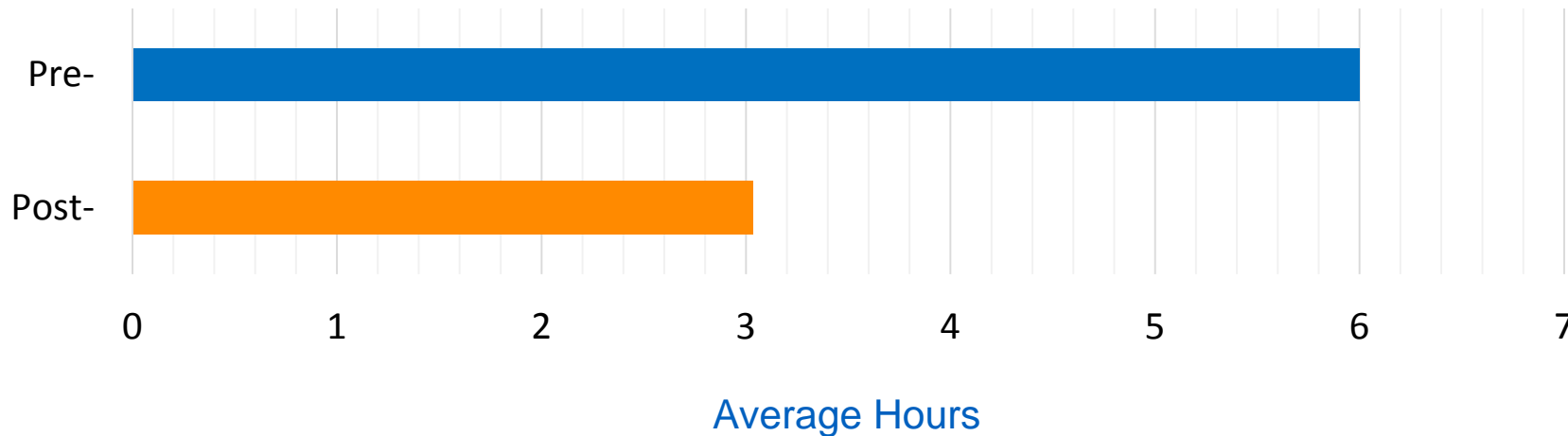
Client Outcomes Survey (COS)

In the past 4 weeks, your own, or someone else's gambling...



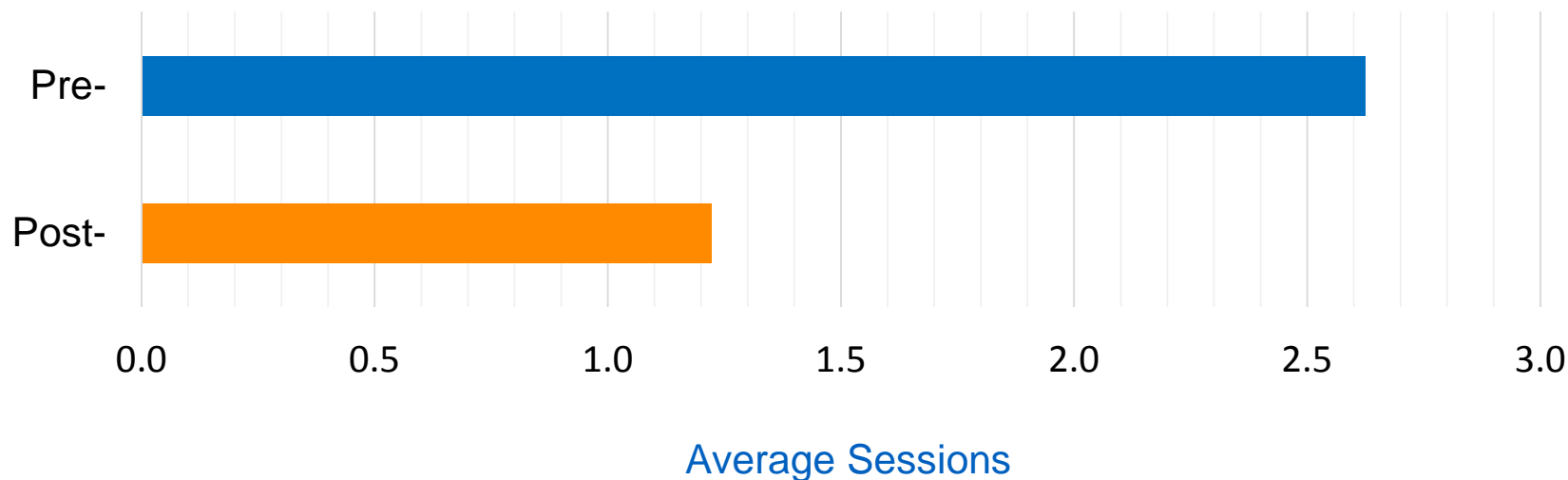
Client Outcomes Survey (COS)

In the past 2 weeks, about how much time did you spend gambling?



Client Outcomes Survey (COS)

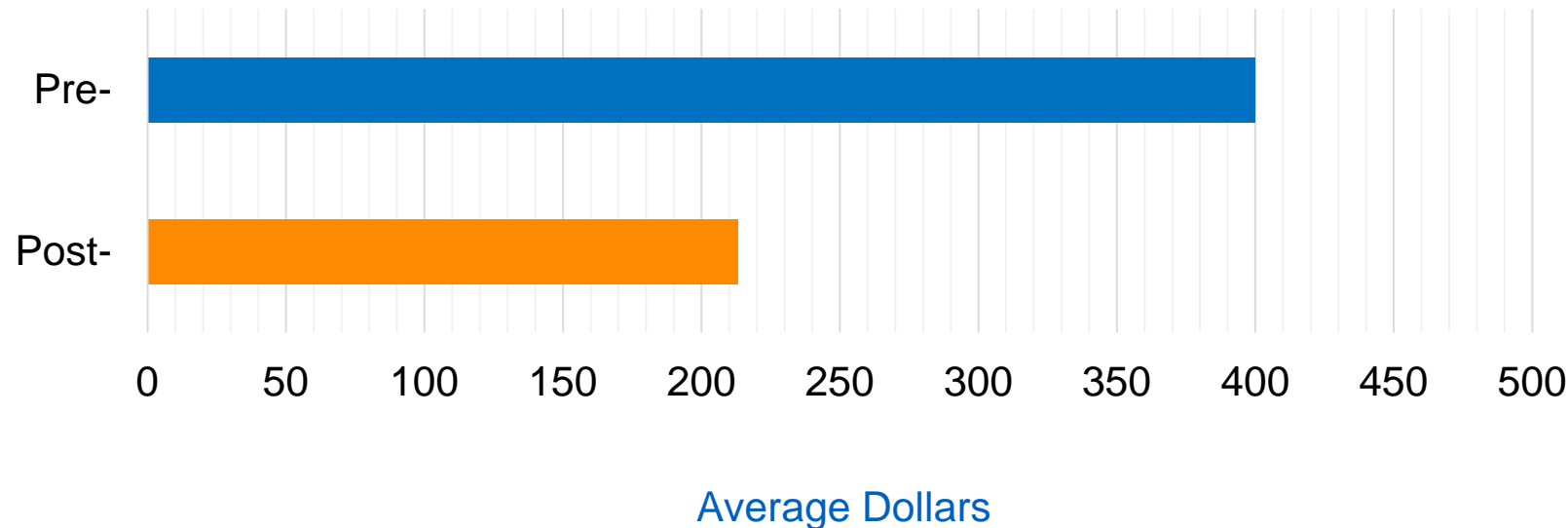
In the past 2 weeks, about how many times did you gamble?



Client Outcomes Survey (COS)



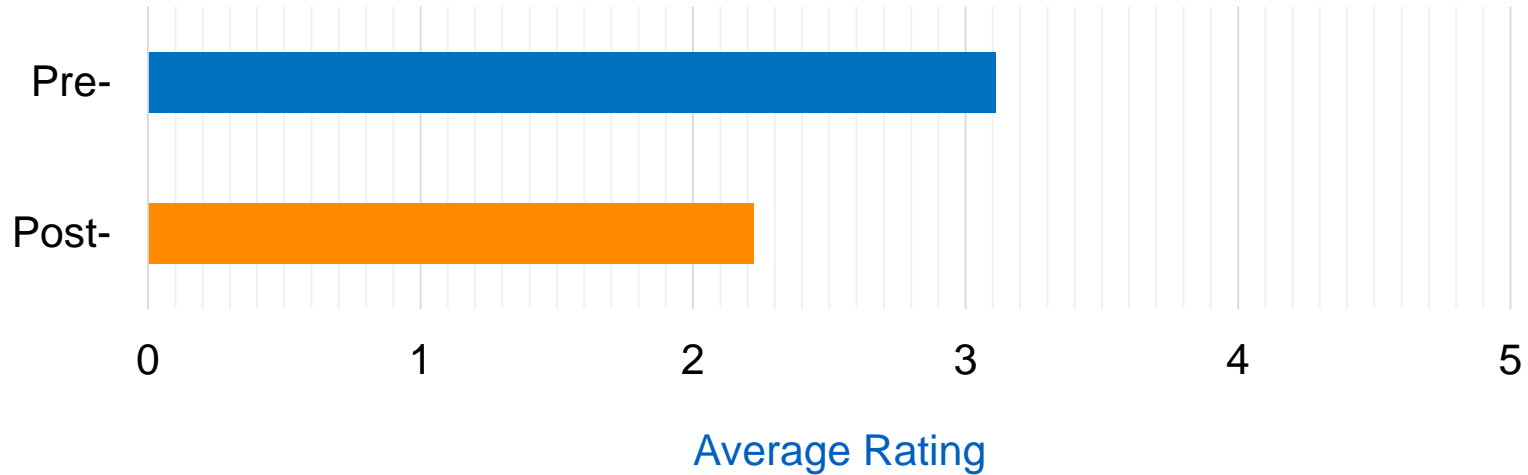
In the past 2 weeks, about how much money did you lose in total?



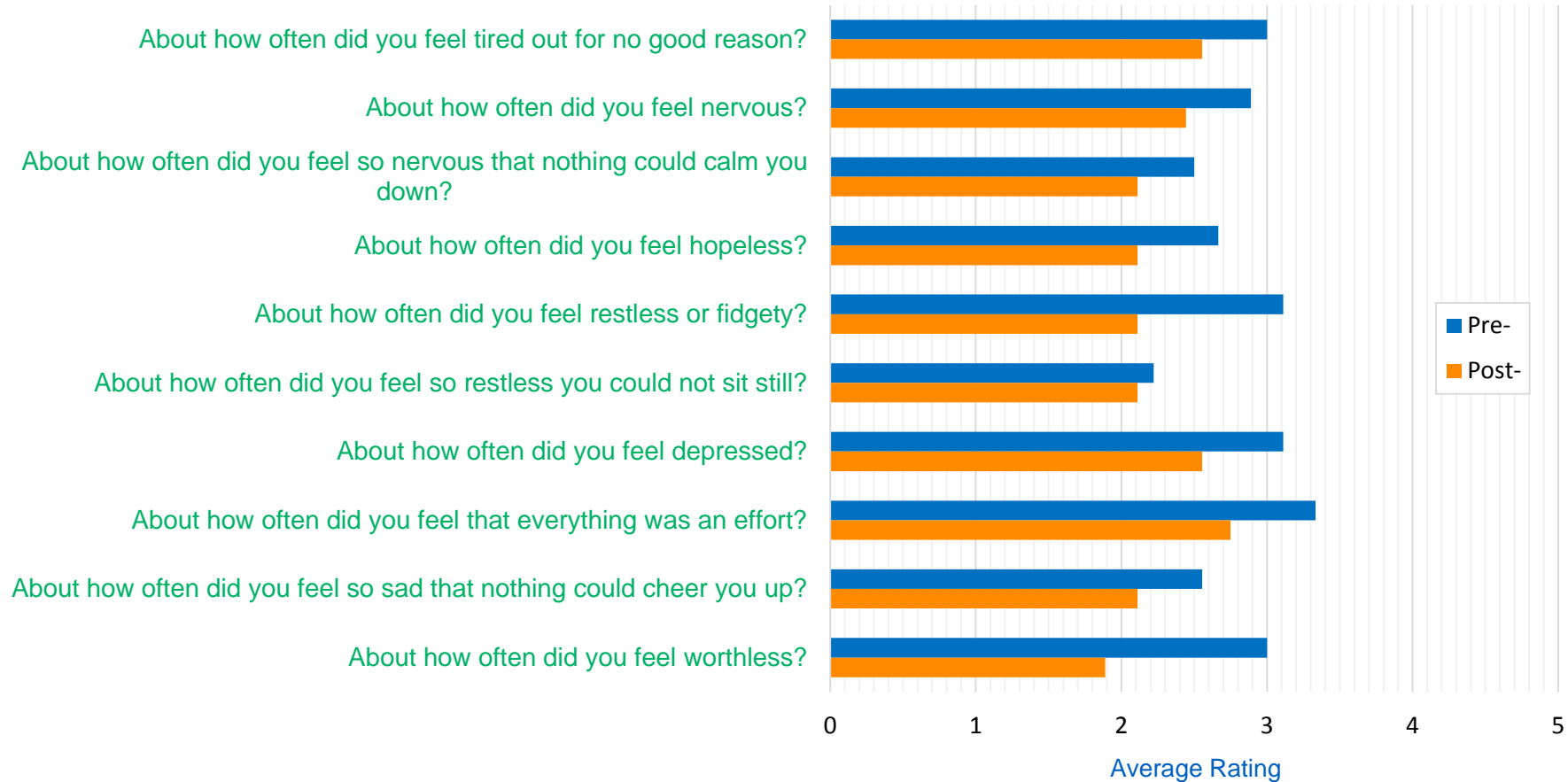
Client Outcomes Survey (COS)



In the past fortnight, roughly how much time do you think you have spent thinking about gambling?

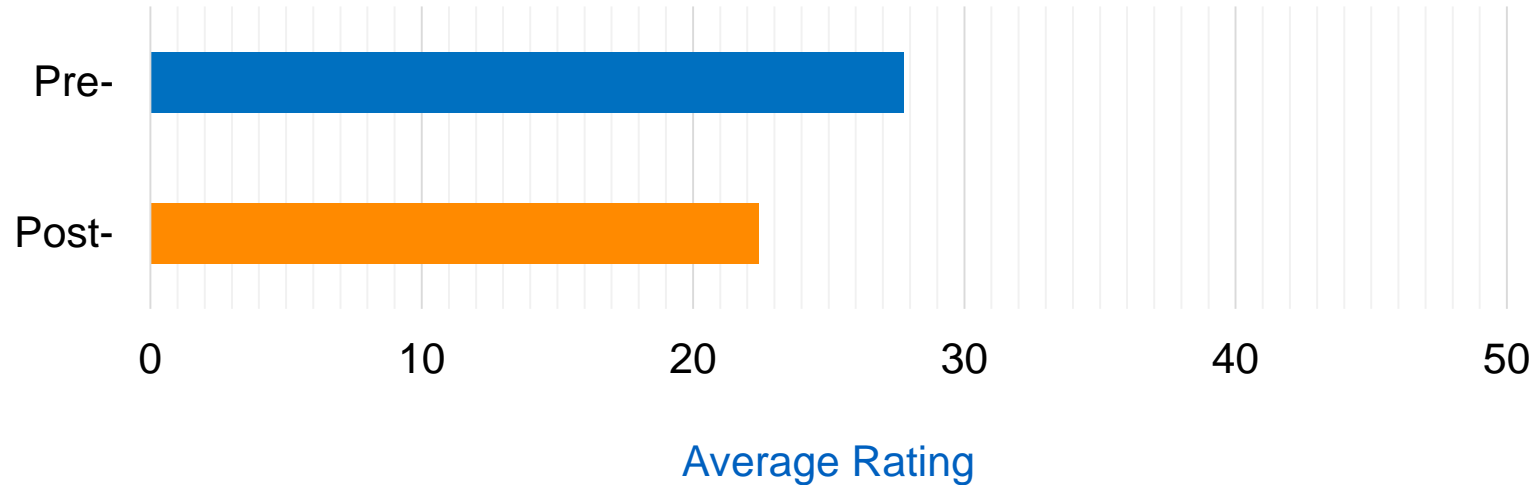


Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) Item Scores



Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) Total Score

10 items, rated 1 - 5



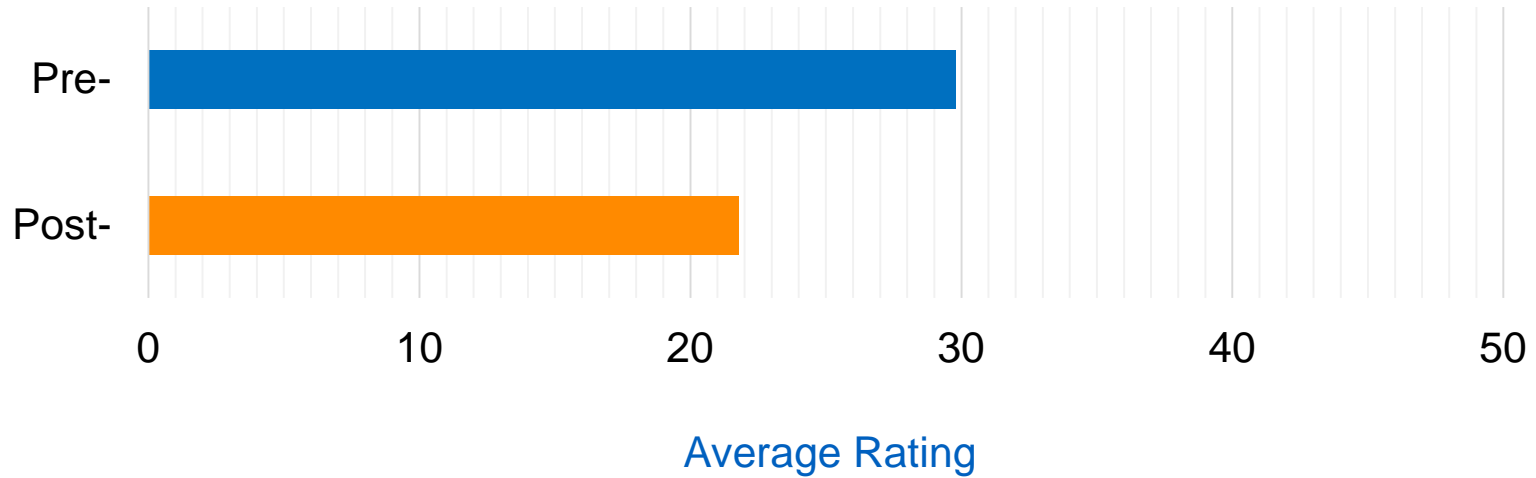
Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II) Item Scores



Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II) Total Score



7 items, rated 1 – 7



Session Evaluation Form



Evaluation form

Overall how would I rate today's session?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not useful

ok

really good

What I liked...

Suggestions for improvement...



Other comments or suggestions



2017 Client feedback



- *'Liked connecting with each other, learning from each other'*
- *'Safe space, respectful'*
- *'I like the honest conversation amongst the group'*
- *'Liked learning different ways/approaches to view your thoughts'*
- *'Getting 'aha' moments reminding me to be aware of my thoughts'*
- *'I appreciated Fee and Gretta being nonjudgmental'*
- *'Liked the discussion of values'*
- *'I liked coming to the realisation that I need to slow down and enjoy the little things in life such as the five senses'*
- *'Liked getting better insight into my emotions'*
- *'Like listening to others, talking and trusting other people'*

2018 Client feedback



- *'Don't let your thoughts take over, give them distance'*
- *'Everyone clicked, I felt really comfortable and could be honest about how I feel'*
- *'Letting go of struggling'*
- *'Clear, great atmosphere, good handouts, really liked the bus handout'*
- *'Gentleness of the facilitators'*
- *'I liked the fusion and defusion, found it really helpful'*
- *'Really welcoming, nonjudgmental, safe group. Highlight of my week'*
- *'The depth of the content'*
- *'Everyone seems to be in a better place than at the start of the group'*
- *'I know that I am going to get my life back'*
- *'I've come back to where I'm supposed to be, that gambling took from me'*

THREE SIDES OF THE COIN

Using theatre to create change



**Let's talk about
the impact of gambling on
our community**

Our experiences of Wise Choices group



Check Out



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with yourself.

In 1 or 2 words,
name what you are:

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Questions?

We'd love to chat further with people about Wise Choices groups, we can be contacted at:

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