

A hiker in a red jacket and yellow helmet stands on a rocky mountain peak, raising their arms in celebration against a warm, orange-hued sky. The hiker is wearing a red backpack and has climbing gear attached to their belt.

30 YEARS OF RECOVERY MILESTONES

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INTRODUCTION

2022 is a special year for Algamus - it's our 30th anniversary year. This anniversary is not only a moment to reflect on and celebrate our past, but also a chance to look to the future. After three decades of treating gambling disorders, we are more knowledgeable, more passionate and more ready than ever to fight problem gambling.

We have experienced incredible change in these 30 years both within the business and across the gambling industry. While we don't know what the future holds for us, we do know that we will continue to deliver our treatment programs with the level of passion and commitment that has made Algamus what it is today.

In this short ebook, we'd like to share with you 25 Recovery Milestones – positive and negative – that we've seen in the last 30 years.





Our Humble Roots

Every story has a beginning and ours, like so many others, is a very humble beginning with one man and his recovery journey. Following his own experiences with gambling addiction, Rick Benson saw the opportunity to share his experiences and help others on their recovery journey. It was in his own home in Florida, running a small Gamblers Anonymous meeting, that the roots of Algamus began.

Upon meeting fellow gamblers in recovery, Rick decided to make his spare bedrooms available to gamblers, and from there he went on to receive proper training to become an internationally certified gambling counselor.

Mending relationships damaged by addiction and working with others to face their financial problems head-on were key cornerstones of the program in early years. As Rick completed his clinical training, he was able to expand his service offerings and Algamus was born in 1992 with just six beds and a passion for recovery.

30 years later, Algamus is now located in the scenic town of Prescott, Arizona, and has helped thousands of men and women overcome their gambling addiction.



1. Building Solid Roots to Weather the Storm

Algamus is proudly the oldest privately-funded, gambling-specific, residential treatment facility in the United States. We've outlasted other treatment centers because of our continued dedication to those impacted by gambling disorder.

2. Gambling-Specific Treatment is Key

Our specialized program treats only gambling addiction which is important because those with gambling addiction often present strong denial of their addiction when they are integrated with those struggling with drug and alcohol addiction.

There is a tendency for people to say, "I'm not like them" and no longer self-identify as struggling with addiction.

However, when in a gambling-specific program, patients are able to see themselves in the struggles of their peers and to more successfully discover, experience, and practice the important skills required to achieve a life free from gambling.



3. The Power of Connection

When you're in recovery, having friends who know where you've been and sponsors who can assist in your focusing towards the future can make a huge difference in your success. Having a strong support network is important.

This also holds true for a recovery treatment center – being in a network of professionals can help you navigate the rough seas of patient treatment and keep abreast of advancements in the industry.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) and Gamblers Anonymous have been strong allies on our quest for recovery.

Working together, we're setting a higher bar and building a stronger fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others in recovery.

4. We are Stronger Together

We are not alone in our quest to help people change their lives and get control of their compulsive gambling behaviors.



Recovery Roadblocks

No recovery journey is without a bump in the road. Just as the individual recovery journey has its battles, the industry and our company have faced difficult challenges along the way as well.

5. Not Everyone is Insured Equally

For many people who struggle with compulsive gambling, the pain and effects of this disease on the individual and to the family are as real and apparent as any other chronic disease. However, many insurance providers do not cover treatment for the gambling disorder as they would other medical treatment and procedures.

At Algamus, we do accept most commercial insurance providers, and we do everything we can to ensure that individuals get the treatment that they need in order to overcome their gambling disorder.

However, the gap between insurance coverage for gambling disorder and other medical procedures is still significant. For those who do have treatment coverage, some providers only cover 5 days of treatment which is just not enough to make effective progress.

6. The Persistence of Denial

Clients arrive at our treatment center in various stages of resistance or acceptance to the treatment process. Some are almost completely realizing and accepting the severity of their gambling disorder and are, therefore, extremely motivated and embracing of the treatment program.

Others may not be entering gambling treatment on their own initiative and may be feeling “forced” into treatment. They might be going through the motions to appease someone else but do not feel like they should be there. They are somewhat (or even vehemently) resistant to the process, perhaps feeling that their family and their treatment provider have “conspired” to assure their program entry.

The denial component of gambling disorder is one of the greatest barriers to successful treatment. Our experienced treatment staff has developed various modalities to assist in diminishing of this denial. Many of our clients are able to come to terms with their addiction throughout the treatment process, and hearing from fellow gamblers in recovery.

7. Relapses Happen

Relapse is something that often occurs for those in early recovery. Many relapses are initiated as a result of not following the written, negotiated aftercare plan nor maintaining regular contact with the program staff and others in recovery, post-treatment.

When a relapse occurs, post-treatment denial often rears its ugly head again, sometimes with patients blaming other people for driving them into it, and feel frustrated that their treatment provider has not “cured” their disease.

When faced with these obstacles, it’s important to remember that gambling disorder is a chronic illness that must be continuously monitored and treated – not a temporary illness with a quick fix.

8. Longer Treatment Durations Increase the Likelihood of Success

Many gamblers are working professionals who find it difficult to devote at least 30 days away from their workplaces. This creates a challenge as we have observed that gambling treatment has a greater chance of success when it is prolonged.

Research has confirmed this and has shown that success rates for those who underwent a standard 30-day treatment program were 55+% while that success rate increased to 84% for those whose treatment programs lasted more than 30 days.



9. Gambling is the Problem, Never the Solution

Over the years, we have encountered people who seem to believe that gamblers can't win. Gamblers *can* win. "Problem gambling" is not the inability to win, but the inability to stop when they should. Compulsive gamblers can't stop, whether they win or lose.

Unlike other addictions, gamblers may erroneously believe that gambling is both the problem and the solution. The treatment team thereover focuses on assisting the gambler to correctly view gambling as only the problem, NOT the solution.

10. Address the Financial Crisis First

Most compulsive gamblers seek treatment only when they are in huge financial difficulty. We have found that for treatment to be effective, the client should somewhat address their financial situation.

Something as small as a specific financial plan can initiate the process toward a healthy financial condition.

We have found that if the financial crisis is not addressed first, the gambler won't be able to focus on anything else during the early phases of treatment.



11. Addiction is a Family Disease

Gambling, like any addiction, has a ripple effect on the family unit. A parent, a spouse, a child, or an extended family member struggling with gambling can directly impact the entire family.

30 years of clinical experience with disordered gamblers has taught us that it is important to treat not only the gambler, but the whole family unit.

Counselling and therapy services that involve the entire family during treatment and post-treatment can be incredibly effective.

12. It Takes One to Know One

Compulsive gamblers are the most complex liars (it takes one liar to recognize another).

Some of them are very intelligent, and experts at manipulation. Be firm, and set healthy boundaries with these individuals.



Gambling Addiction Trends

13. More Women Are Seeking Treatment

Back in the 90s, 90% of our clients were male. That number has since changed significantly. There has been an increase in the number of female compulsive gamblers and a higher incidence of emotional and physical abuse than we have seen before. Gambling disorder destroys lives equally, regardless of gender.

14. The Legalization of Sports Betting

Today, there is an extreme proliferation of gambling, partly because of the legalization of sports betting. The Supreme Court has unlocked the doors to state-sanctioned sports gambling and empowered states to pass legislation legalizing sports betting, thus changing the gambling landscape in the USA.

Legitimizing an activity that often becomes highly addictive can open a gateway for those who are on the threshold of becoming addicted. When more gambling options are offered, participation tends to increase as well, thereby triggering an upsurge in gambling addictions.



15. The Emergence of "Professional" Gamblers

We have seen an increase in the number of young poker players, who are usually in their 20s and 30s, surfacing and posing as professional poker players. The glamorization of professional gamblers is a very dangerous message to send to young adults.

When a person believes they are a professional gambler, they believe that they have a skill that other gamblers don't have. At Algamus, we work to remove this false belief and show gamblers that gambling is not based on skill.

16. The Rise of Online Gambling

Technological advancement has also made gambling more easily and readily available and is really enhancing the gambling arena with enticing enrichments.

The rise of Fantasy Football and online sports betting means that all aspects of a game can be used in a gambling setting, with wagers being placed at both team and player level. Live betting also adds an extra level of thrill for those engaged in sports betting.



17. Gambling Myths

Over the past decades, we've seen a significant misconception among most people, many believe, "gambling addiction won't kill you, only drug addiction will."

The truth is this: gambling is an invisible addiction that can and *does* kill. When faced with financial distress and strained family relationships, the gambler at their lowest may be unable to see a way out of their situation, and decide to give up on life altogether. The incidence of suicide attempts in gambling addiction is geometrically higher than any other addiction.

This is why we believe that gambling addiction must be treated with the same urgency as any other addiction.



Advice for the Next Generation

Significant prevention initiatives orchestrated by the National Council on Problem Gambling and its state council affiliates have been effective, but there is still more to be done to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of gambling addictions.

18. Continue to Erode the Stigma Surrounding Gambling Disorders

There seems to be an unwillingness from the public to accept that gambling is a valid addiction. Most people seem to think that it's easy to just stop a gambling problem. One of the biggest myths of compulsive gambling is that its hazards are only financial while, the effects of compulsive gambling can be just as devastating in a variety of areas.



19. Understand and Accept that Gambling Addiction is as Serious as Drug Addiction

Gambling is wreaking havoc on individuals and their families just as drug addiction does, it's just not as visible.

Unlike an opioid overdose, where the immediate negative consequences of such unhealthy behaviors can be quite severe and instantaneous, gambling addiction is progressive, and the consequences can become just as destructive in the long-term.

20. Remember that Compulsive Gamblers Do Recover

Not everyone will get it right the first time, but many do eventually.

A gambling addiction relapse is not a failure. It does not mean that treatment has failed, nor does it reflect lack of will power from the recovering person.

21. Old Habits Die Hard

If one slips back into their old habit, it's not the end of their recovery journey, but a sure sign that it's time to re-evaluate and change their strategy. The main goal should be to stop gambling as soon as possible.



How to Stay on Track and Maintain Sobriety

22. Discover New Highs

There is a widespread misconception that a compulsive gambler in recovery might never experience the high “highs” one gets from gambling once recovery begins. As your recovery begins, you will discover other gambling-free experiences that will give you ‘highs’ that are more meaningful than gambling. For us, it’s the spiritual highs of witnessing and being part of a miraculous change for our clients as they lead purposeful lives in recovery.

23. Start Your New Chapter

We have witnessed complete 360-degree change in people’s lives, some have even become addiction counselors themselves and are excelling in every area of their lives. Knowing that we contributed to someone else’s successful recovery journey gives us spiritual gratification that far surpasses gambling highs.



24. Stay Connected to the Recovery Process

One of the most effective ways to deal with gambling addiction relapses is to identify common relapse triggers. Our 30 years of experience have taught us that tense relationships and finances tend to be major relapse triggers. However, perhaps the most significant trigger seems to be isolation, which is why it is crucial to remain connected to the recovery community.

25. Know That Your Life Can Change

Our most significant milestones are the lives that are changed because of their treatment experiences; the relationships that have been restored and the lives that have been transformed.

We have been privileged to be a part of and witness firsthand the power of gambling treatment. We are proud and grateful to have been part of thousands of lives that have been transformed by Algamus. We now have clients who have been experiencing recovery for decades. It's amazing!

CONCLUSION

This historic 30 year milestone would not have been possible without the amazing dedication, hard work, and expertise of our staff. Many of our staff members are recovering gamblers themselves, therefore they fully understand the unique issues surrounding the gambling disorder.

Our biggest "thank you" goes to our incredible clients. Your loyalty and trust over the years has allowed us to push our boundaries and has challenged us to go beyond and excel in all that we do. Thank you for being part of the Algamus family. We look forward to helping you celebrate your own gambling recovery milestones.

If you've gone through a gambling treatment program before and have not sustained recovery, or if you're concerned about a loved one who doesn't seem to want to get help, we can help. The best thing you can do is to contact one of our gambling treatment professionals who can empower you to overcome your gambling addiction.



ABOUT ALGAMUS

Algamus is one of the few gambling-specific addiction treatment centers in America. We've helped thousands of individuals face their addictions and regain control of their lives.

We offer a variety of treatment methods including individual counseling, group counseling, yoga and meditation, ecotherapy, and more.

If you feel like you've been digging a hole that's getting harder to get out of or if you can't stop chasing the next win to set everything right, contact us.

Call us anytime at: 941-260-0405

Or visit our website: www.algamus.org

