



New England (HHS Region 1)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

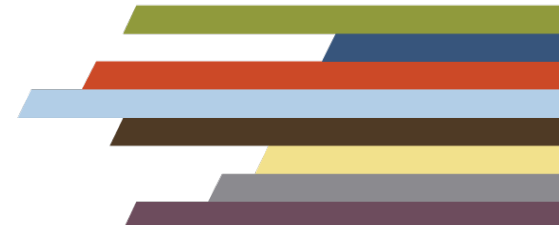
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# Prevention in Pictures: Using Graphic Novels to connect with youth

NH Juvenile Justice 2025 Conference

Presented by:

Sarah Harlow, MA, PS-C – New England PTTC Co-Director



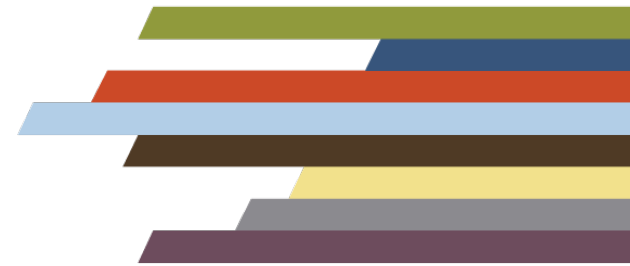
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The use of affirming language inspires hope.

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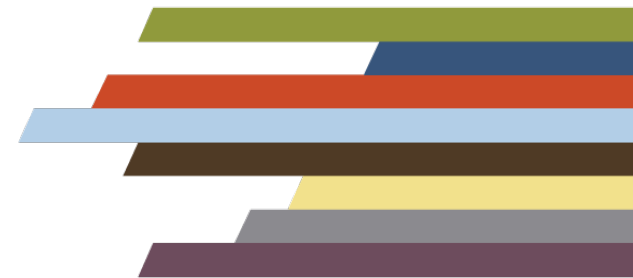
LANGUAGE MATTERS.

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**Words have power.**

PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.



# What do you use to talk to students about vaping? Problem Gambling?

**What tools have you or your organization used?**

**What is successful in talking to students?**

**What is challenging?**



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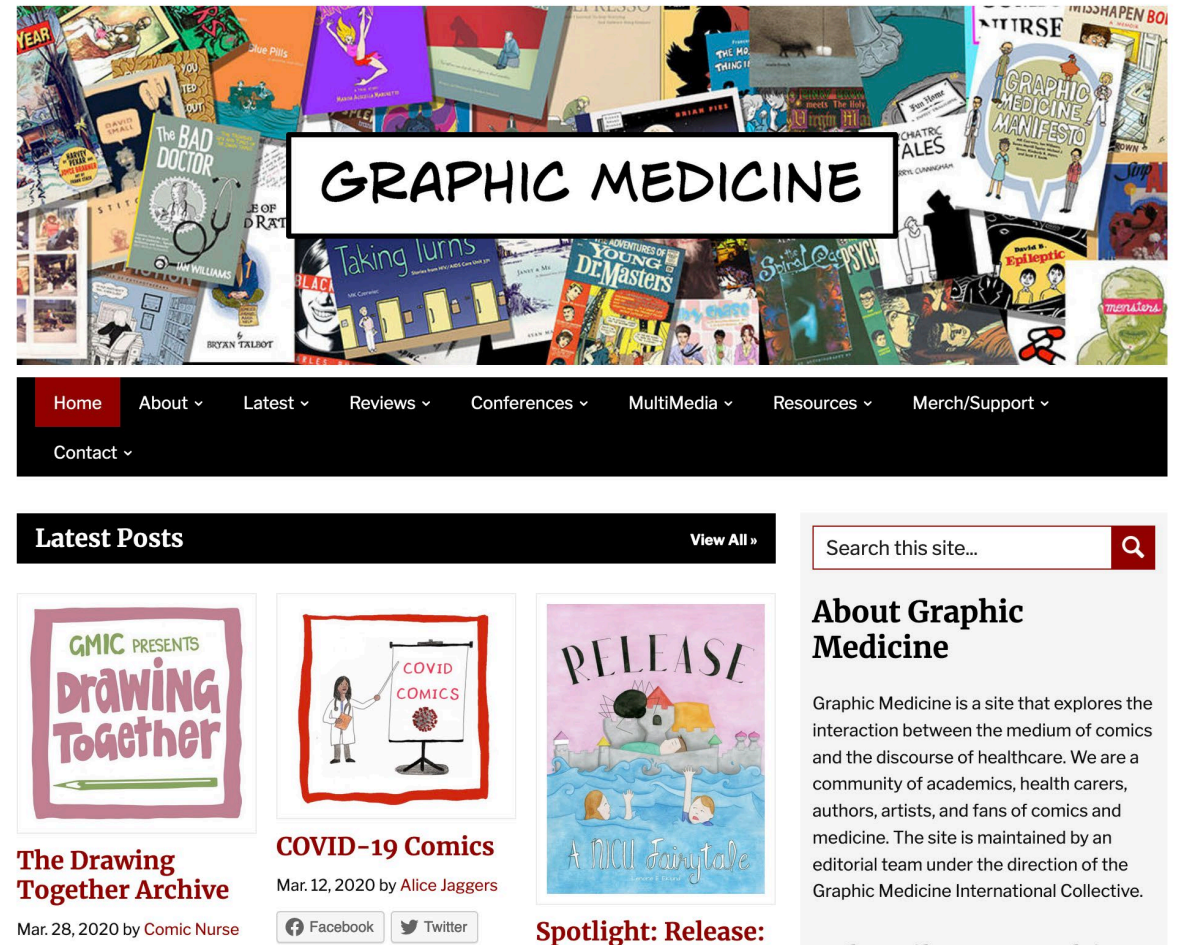
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# What is a “graphic medicine”?

- Graphic medicine is a sub genre of Graphic Novel.
- Graphic medicine is an evidence-based way to communicate health information through illustration
- Illustrations + Health information
- <https://www.graphicmedicine.org/>



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# Graphic Novels and Reluctant Readers

- **Complicated themes, visual aids**
- **Relationship between words and images**
- **Increase understanding and memory**
- **Culture, norms, and behaviors communicated through images.**
- **Images can convey ideas better than words alone**

[http://minnetesoljournal.org/journal-archive/mtj-2018-2/reading-comprehension-through-graphic-novels-how-comic-books-and-graphic-novels-can-help-language-learners/#:~:text=A%20graphic%20novel's%20ability%20to,comprehension%20\(Eisner%2C%201998\).](http://minnetesoljournal.org/journal-archive/mtj-2018-2/reading-comprehension-through-graphic-novels-how-comic-books-and-graphic-novels-can-help-language-learners/#:~:text=A%20graphic%20novel's%20ability%20to,comprehension%20(Eisner%2C%201998).)



# Graphic Novels and Reluctant Readers

- **Decoding** – images support the written language to help decode otherwise difficult linguistic implications
- **Engagement** – reluctant readers may be more engaged by images with text than text alone
- Images support development of plot, characters, and ideas
- Feel more approachable than a wall of text – yet help prepare students for more text heavy reading.

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/3-reasons-graphic-novels-can-be-great-young-readers.html>

<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/5-reasons-graphic-novels-can-help-kids-with-reading>

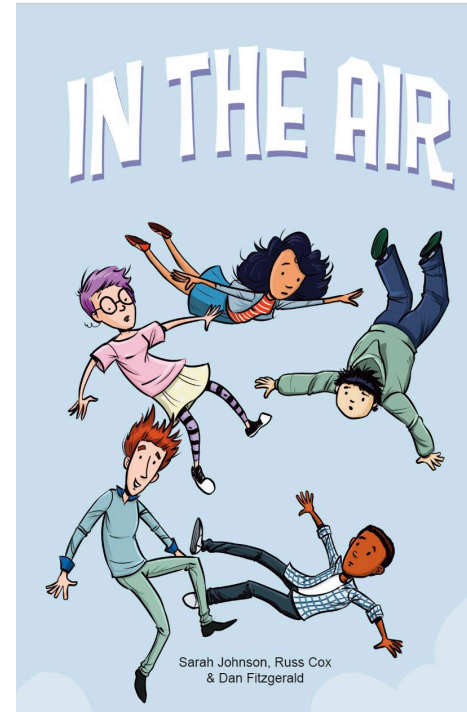


# About our Graphic Medicines

- Available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.
  - PDF available anywhere
  - Paperback in ME, MA, VT, CT, NH, and RI.
  - Spanish and Portuguese paperback copies still in printing process (ATO only)

Designed as a platform for people with prevention knowledge to give that knowledge to students through conversations, story telling, and/or a facilitator's guide.

Contains information about behavioral health, but aimed to not include images or information that would easily be outdated.





# Centering Youth Voices

- Focus groups
- Feedback: what students wanted to see





# Variety of Topics

## In the Air

- Risk and Protective Factors
- Social Aspects
- Choice and Consequences
- Making choices doesn't happen in a vacuum

## Against the Odds

- Risk and Protective Factors
- Signs of problem gambling
- Logical fallacies of gambling
- Socioeconomic and environmental factors

### CHAPTER 2: HUCK HACKS THE HECK OUT OF IT



# Content Warning

**The topics are  
discussed to  
varying degrees  
and may be  
more difficult for  
some students.**

## CONTENT WARNING

There are varying themes in this Graphic Medicine which may be difficult or stressful for the audience to view, including substance use, dating violence, teen pregnancy and a teen death. As these topics may be triggering for the reader, care should be taken when reading.

### Pages of particular importance:

Substance use:

Pages 13, 32, 48, 49, 65, 65, 67, 78, 80, 99, 100, 102

Teen Pregnancy:

Pages 30, 31

Dating violence:

Pages 46, 47, 48, 49

Teen Death:

Page 71

## CONTENT WARNING

This graphic medicine depicts several instances of young people gambling via traditional and digital mediums. There are also horror related images that should be appropriate for most middle and high school students. Facilitator and viewer discretion is advised.

# How to use

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

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## As a curriculum:

- Read the book
- talk about it
- complete worksheets
- Check-in about the material and resources
- students and facilitator complete brief surveys.

## Or informally:

Read the book and talk about it!

Talking about the content with students is the vital part of using this tool. It doesn't work on it's own without the necessary component of conversations about the content with a knowledgeable, trusted adult.



## FACILITATOR TRAINING

A facilitator who implements Against the Odds as a curriculum should have training on **fostering conversation** around the content of the story. The story is designed to offer different inroads of conversation, some more subtle than others, over a variety of topics, including Environmental Conditions, connections with family and friends, and signs of problem gambling.

Facilitators should join a [live training](#), or watch a recorded video of a training available at the New England PTTC Youtube channel.

Key understandings for facilitators are:

[Resilience](#)  
[PACES \(Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences\)](#)  
[How ACES impact gambling problems](#)  
[How gambling and substance use can be related](#)  
[Trends](#)  
[Protective/Risk, Signs & Symptoms, and convergence of gaming and gambling](#)  
[General youth-related gambling information for students, parents, educators, professionals](#)

[Substance Misuse Prevention science](#)





# Facilitator's Guide

The Facilitator's guide is designed to support a facilitator who wants to informally have conversations, or who wants to follow the curriculum to fidelity. The guide includes:

- Facilitator training
- Fidelity
- Pre, Post, and Facilitator Surveys
- Conversation topics
- Full and Abbreviated length timelines
- Worksheets and how-to information
- Example page
- Resources included in the Graphic Medicine



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WORKSHEETS

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## WORKSHEET EXAMPLES



### RISK AND PROTECTIVE

What risk factors does Luke experience in his life?

Connection to others can be a risk factor or a protective factor. What do you think about the character's decision to have a connection group to deal with some of their struggles?

What supports did the students have in their lives?

What role does community organizing and self-advocacy play in the lives of the characters?

There are factors in our lives that may put us at greater risk for developing a problem with gambling, and there are things that may protect us from developing problems with gambling. Think about the risk and protective factors seen in the book, and compare these to someone you have met in your life.

### EXAMPLE:

Elena getting angry at her friends and having a short temper reminds me of the time that my friend was struggling with some family problems. She didn't talk about the issue, but our friend group could tell she was upset about something because that was not like her. We just tried to be understanding, and one day she just blurted it all out. She said it made her feel better that we had been there for her, even when she wasn't able to talk about the problem, and she said she was sorry she had been kind of rude through it all.



### GAMBLING FALLACIES

What gambling related thinking fallacies do you see demonstrated in the first chapter at the fair? Devine regularly tells Luke that his ways of thinking about gambling aren't true. How do you think that impacts Luke's thinking?

Is there another way Devine could approach Luke about how he thinks about gambling?

What is problematic about how Luke spends money on slot games in their video game?

How many fallacies can you spot in the story?

Sometimes when people develop problems with gambling, the way they think about gambling can be skewed. We see that a lot with Luke in this story, and Devine often tries to get him to think differently. Think about the story, and the conversations you have had around it. Has there ever been a time where you or someone you know was using flawed thinking about something they were struggling with? If that type of thinking changed, how so?

### EXAMPLE:

The risk factor about having adults in your life who gamble was the one that I really thought most about. I have an uncle who always buys scratch tickets everytime he goes to the store, even when he is broke. He gets them for us for every holiday and birthday, too. Sometimes it's fun, and sometimes I feel kind of bad for him.



### WARNING SIGNS

What do the characters, specifically Luke and Elena, DO that could be considered warning signs? What do the characters SAY that could be considered warning signs?

What are some differences between how we see Luke's relationship to gambling and how we see Elena's relationship to gambling?

What do you think will be the most challenging part of recovery for Luke and Elena, and how could they get support/help?

There are some warning signs that you or someone you know might be struggling with gambling. In the story, Luke has many visible warning signs, and Elena has some that are more subtle until the end. Think about the story and about the conversations you had. Have you ever seen warning signs that someone you knew was going through something challenging? What did that look like, and how did you respond or react?

### EXAMPLE:

The way Elena thinks gambling might help her with her anxiety in a way makes sense to me. I have felt anxious before and I did things that at the time felt like they would make me feel better, but they ended up making me feel worse. I went through that same thing, so now it's easy for me to see it as a warning sign.

# Fidelity

## How to use this tool as a complete program

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

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## FIDELITY

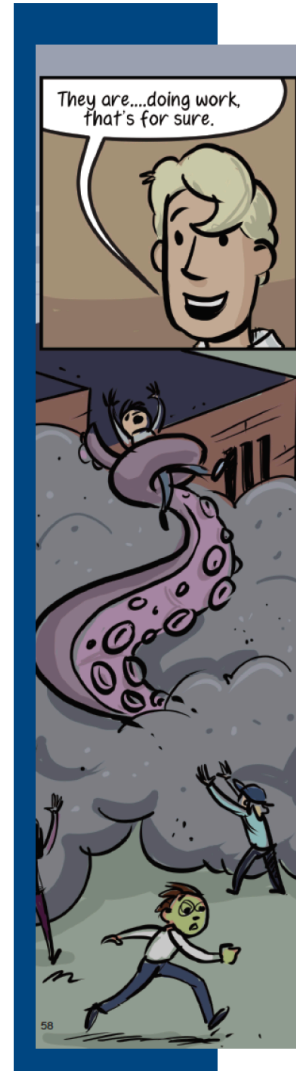
There are two ways which a facilitator could use *Against the Odds* as a conversational tool.

### First, as a partner in the evidence-based process.

This method will assist to further the prevention science framework which the tool is built around. This method includes:

- Taking/Viewing the **Facilitator Training**
- **Discuss the fallacies, warning signs, and risk and protective factors with the students**
- Using the accompanying **worksheets (optional)**
- Engaging in **conversation** with young people in grades 6 through 12
- Administering a **pre and post survey** to measure outcomes
- Following one of two program **timelines** as outlined in this facilitator's guide.

**Second, as an engaged member of the community** who wishes to use the graphic medicine simply as a tool to foster conversation. This method will assist in having convenient and accessible community conversations. This method will not be included in the evidence base through evaluation.



# Surveys

## Pre and post for students

## One facilitator survey

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

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## PRE AND POST SURVEYS

To assist in evaluating *Against the Odds*, please use the pre and post-surveys at the links below. Administer the pre survey to students before they begin reading *Against the Odds*. Administer the post-survey once the students have read the book and you have had conversations around each chapter. Your facilitator code for the student pre and post survey and the facilitator survey is your state abbreviation, first two letters of your/the facilitator's last name, last two numbers in your zip code, so as an example mind would be MEHA30 for Maine, Harlow, 04330. The facilitator should take the facilitator survey when they finish with a group. This helps us understand unique groups, and provides the facilitator opportunities to give feedback, comments and recommendations:

### Student Pre-Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/dwhTJJ37Ji>

### Student Post-Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/FMFCHyKFPPr>

### Facilitator Survey

<https://forms.office.com/r/XsHmmWQFU1>



# Conversation Topics

- Discussion Points
- Conversation starting questions

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

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## DISCUSSION POINTS

### Blurred line of Gaming and Gambling

Social casino games include online games that mirror real-life casino games such as poker, slots, roulette or jackpots but don't offer any financial winnings. They can be referred to as "free" mium games that allow players to access some of the game's content without paying but do require money to gain extra features or competitive advantages. Due to the lack of age restrictions, these types of games can be an introduction to gambling. Many video games replicate real-life gambling behaviors that can normalize gambling for youth. Games offering opportunities for login rewards with instant upgrades can encourage players to play every day, can build competition among players online, and allow players to earn virtual money or other prizes.

### Skins

A skin is a digital item that changes the appearance of a character or weapon without affecting gameplay. Skins can change the look of a character's outfit or give them a specific look. Players can earn skins by completing achievements or buying them from a store within the game often through loot boxes. Some skins are rarer than others, and rarer skins are more valuable. The popularity of skins in gaming led to the development of skins gambling, where players use skins as currency to wager on games of chance.

### Loot Boxes

Loot boxes are virtual items in video games that can be purchased or earned in a game and contain random virtual items. Loot boxes can be chests, crates, or card packs. They can have a variety of items, such as new characters, weapons, armor, power-ups, or customization options. Players can buy loot boxes with real money, in-game virtual currencies, or earn them through gameplay.

Loot boxes show similarities to gambling due to working on the same mechanics as a slot machine. They do not require any skill, have randomly determined outcomes, and use visuals and sounds associated with winning. Therefore, loot boxes have the potential to encourage youth to gamble.



WORKSHEETS

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## CONVERSATIONS

After the students have read the chapters, use the following questions to facilitate a conversation.

You may also let the students lead the conversation.

### Protective/ Promotive/ Risk:

What risk Factors does Luke experience in his life? What Risk Factors does Elena Experience? Do you see risk factors for the other characters that don't struggle with gambling? What protective factors are present for the students? Connection to others can be a risk factor or a protective factor; What do you think about the character's deciding to have a connections group to deal with some of their struggles? What supports did the students have in their lives? What types of family structures are represented? What about the environment of the school, or sports, were protective factors for the characters? What role does community organizing and self advocacy play in the lives of the characters? How does the circumstances in the town (the loss of a major employer, environmental degradation, the affects of the chemicals on the people and animals) become a risk factor?

### Fallacies:

What gambling related thinking fallacies do you see demonstrated in the first chapter at the fair? Devine regularly tells Luke that his ways of thinking about gambling aren't true; How do you think that impacts Luke's thinking? Is there another way Devine could approach Luke about how he thinks about gambling? What is problematic about how Luke spends money on loot boxes in their video game? How many fallacies can you spot in the story?

### Warning signs:

What do the characters, specifically Luke and Elena, DO that could be considered warning signs? What do the characters SAY that could be considered warning signs? What are some differences between how we see Luke's relationship to gambling and how we see Elena's relationship to gambling? How do Luke's dad and Elena's step dad influence Luke and Elena? What do you think will be the most challenging part of recovery for Luke and Elena, and how could they get support/help? If you were in Huck, Devine, and Bishop's shoes, how could you support your friends?



# Timelines

## Full Length Abbreviated Length

TIMELINE

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### FULL-LENGTH

Week 1

- Administer the Student Pre-Survey
- Discuss Fallacies with the students
- Have students read the first two chapters.
- Give the students an opportunity to discuss their first impressions
- Choose conversation questions from the worksheet section to discuss
- Assign Chapter 1 and 2 worksheets for completion prior to the next session

Week 2


- Give students an opportunity to reflect back on Chapter 1 & 2 assignments
- Reminder of what the fallacies are and give an opportunity for questions
- Have students read chapters 3 & 4
- Give the students an opportunity to discuss their first impressions
- Choose conversation questions from the worksheet section to discuss
- Assign Chapter 3 & 4 worksheets for completion prior to the next session

Week 3

- Give students an opportunity to reflect back on Chapter 3 & 4 assignments
- Have students read the remaining chapters
- Give the students an opportunity to discuss their first impressions
- Choose conversation questions from Page 124 and 125 to discuss
- Assign Chapter 5 & 6 worksheets for completion prior to the next session

Follow Up

- Give students an opportunity to reflect back on Chapter 5 & 6 assignments
- Give the students an opportunity to discuss their overall impressions
- Administer the student Post-Survey
- Facilitators should take the Facilitator Survey



1 hour per session

TIMELINE

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### ABBREVIATED LENGTH

Week 1

- Administer the Student Pre-Survey
- Discuss Fallacies with the students
- Have students read the first three chapters.
- Give the students an opportunity to discuss their first impressions
- Choose conversation questions from the worksheet section to discuss
- Assign Chapter 1-3 worksheets for completion prior to the next session

Follow Up

- Give students an opportunity to reflect back on Chapter 1-3 assignments
- Have students read the remaining chapters
- Choose conversation questions from worksheet section to discuss
- Give students an opportunity to quietly work on the 3-6 Worksheets
- Give the students an opportunity to discuss what their overall impressions
- Administer the student Post-Survey
- Facilitators should take the Facilitator Survey



1.5 hours per session

# Worksheets

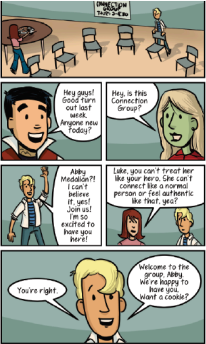
## Worksheets Examples

\*Consider letting the students chose whether or not to share their worksheets.

NAME:

//

DATE:



### RISK AND PROTECTIVE

What risk Factors does Luke experience in his life?

Connection to others can be a risk factor or a protective factor; What do you think about the character's deciding to have a connections group to deal with some of their struggles?

What supports did the students have in their lives?

What role does community organizing and self advocacy play in the lives of the characters?

There are factors in our lives that may put us at greater risk for developing a problem with gambling, and there are things that may protect us from developing problems with gambling. Think about the risk and protective factors seen in the book, and compare those to someone you have met in your life.

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## WORKSHEET EXAMPLES



**RISK AND PROTECTIVE**

What risk Factors does Luke experience in his life?

Connection to others can be a risk factor or a protective factor; What do you think about the character's deciding to have a connections group to deal with some of their struggles?

What supports did the students have in their lives?

What role does community organizing and self advocacy play in the lives of the characters?

There are factors in our lives that may put us at greater risk for developing a problem with gambling, and there are things that may protect us from developing problems with gambling. Think about the risk and protective factors seen in the book, and compare those to someone you have met in your life.

AMPLE:

na getting angry at her friends and having a short temper reminds me of the time that my friend was struggling with some family problems e didn't talk about the issue, but our friend's up could tell she was upset about something cause that was not like her. We just tried to be understanding, and one day she just blurted it out. She said it made her feel better that we I been there for her, even when she wasn't e to talk about the problem, and she said she's sorry she had been kind of rude through it



**GAMBLING FALLACIES**

What gambling related thinking factors do you see demonstrated in the first chapter of the book? (Choose at least 3). Luke: Tell me about it. Making about gambling wasn't too. How do you think the response Luke thinking?

Is there another way Devine could approach Luke about not thinking about gambling?

What is problematic about how Luke spends money on lost loans in their video game?

How many fallacies can you spot in the story?

Recognize when people develop problems with gambling, the way they do, about gambling can be shared. We see this a lot with Luke in this story, and Devine often tries to get him to think differently. Think about angry, and how conversations you have had around it. How often have you a time where you or someone you knew was using flawed thinking and gambling they were struggling with? If that type of thinking occurred, how easy?

EXAMPLE:

The risk factor about having adults in your life who gamble was the one that I really thought most about. I have an uncle who always buys scratch tickets everytime he goes to the store, even when he is broke. He gets them for us for every holiday and birthday, too. Sometimes it's fun, and sometimes I feel kind of bad for him.



**WARNING SIGNS**

What do the characters, specifically Luke and Elena, DO that could be considered warning signs? What do the characters SAY that could be considered warning signs?

What are some differences between how we see Luke's relationship to gambling and how we see Elena's relationship to gambling?

What do you think will be the most challenging part of recovery for Luke and Elena, and how could they get support/help?

There are some warning signs that you or someone you know might be struggling with gambling. In the story, Luke has many visible warning signs, and Elena has some that are more subtle until the end. Think about the story and about the conversations you had. Have you ever seen warning signs that someone you knew was going through something challenging? What did they look like, and how did you respond or react.

EXAMPLE:

The way Elena thinks gambling might help her with her anxiety in a way makes sense to me. I have felt anxious before and I did things that at the time felt like they would make me feel better, but they ended up making me feel worse. I went through that same thing, so now it's easy for me to see it as a warning sign.



# Facilitator's Training

A facilitator's training is available live via Zoom or recorded. This training reviews all supporting documents, surveys, and practice facilitation skills. This training is required viewing to hold the program to fidelity, but not required for facilitators who wish to use the graphic medicine informally for conversations.



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HOW TO IMPLEMENT

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## FACILITATOR TRAINING

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[How ACES impact gambling problems](#)

[How gambling and substance use can be related](#)

[Trends](#)

[Protective/Risk, Signs & Symptoms, and convergence of gaming and gambling](#)

[General youth-related gambling information for students, parents, educators, professionals](#)

[Substance Misuse Prevention science](#)

# Resources

- Resources available throughout the guide, and additional resources.
- Some resources are also included in the graphic medicine itself.

OTHER RESOURCES //

## New England Resources



[Vermont](#) [Maine](#) [New Hampshire](#) [Massachusetts](#) [Rhode Island](#)

[National Council on Problem Gambling](#)

View the New England gambling councils, or find your state affiliation on the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) website. See also the 1800Gambler support lines.

HELP FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING

CALL 1-800-GAMBLER  
TEXT 800-GAM  
CHAT 1800GAMBLERchat.org

1-800-GAMBLER

PROBLEM GAMBLING HELP

OTHER RESOURCES //

## SCREENER TOOL

The problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI): you can choose to ask these questions out loud to the students who could privately record their answers. If students have a score of 3-7 or 8 or more (moderate to severe), follow up with students to be sure they have support, resources, and next steps.

### Problem Gambling Severity Index

This self-assessment is based on the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. If you wish to seek other forms of support or information, please contact your local health services or a professional.

months, have you bet more than you could afford to lose?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

months, have you needed to gamble with at the same feeling of excitement?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

to back another day to try to win back the money you lost?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

have a problem with gambling?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

health problems, including stress or anxiety?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

stopping or told you that you had a gambling problem or not you thought it was true?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

financial problems for you or your household?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?

es 2 Most of the time 3 Almost always

your score, the greater the risk that your gambling is a problem.

ing, problems with few or no identified negative consequences, 8 of problems leading to some negative consequences, gambling with negative consequences and a possible loss of

in problem gambling index: Final report. Submitted for the Canadian Centre on

website

## VAPING RESOURCES

Vapes and e-cigarettes often include nicotine, THC, and other substances that can be addictive or make stopping use difficult. If you use vaping or e-cigarette products and you're thinking about quitting, there are resources that can help you take the next step.

### Quit Resources:

- This Is Quitting (Truth Initiative)
  - The first-of-its-kind program to help young people quit vaping. This is Quitting has helped more than 250,000 youth and adults on their journey to quit vaping. Learn more about the works and the additional resources available for parents, teens who vape and for adults who want to quit.
  - Teens and young adults can join for free by texting **DI** to **88709**
  - [TheTruth.com](https://www.thetruth.com)

### Lung helpline and Tobacco Quitline:

- Talk to experts at the American Lung Association Lung and Tobacco QuitLine. The service is free and they are here to help you. You can connect by calling 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-4872 and press 2), submitting a question or live chat, or available.
- <https://www.lung.org/help-support/lung-helpline-and-tobacco-quitline>

### Education:

- American Lung Association:
  - [What Teens Need to Know](https://www.lung.org/what-teens-need-to-know) (www.lung.org)
  - [Alternative to Suspension Program](https://www.lung.org/alternative-to-suspension-program) (www.lung.org)
  - [talkaboutvaping.org](https://talkaboutvaping.org) Get Your Head out of the Clouds
- Truth Initiative / truth Campaign
  - [The Truth about Vaping](https://www.thetruth.com) (www.thetruth.com)

### CDC:

- [Electronic Cigarettes](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/electronic-cigarettes) (www.cdc.gov/tobacco)



# How to Request a Copy

- **Copies are free**
- **In New England, you can request a PDF, a paperback copy, or both**
- **Preventionists outside New England can request a PDF copy**
- **Complete a brief request form and you will automatically receive the link to download a PDF copy.**

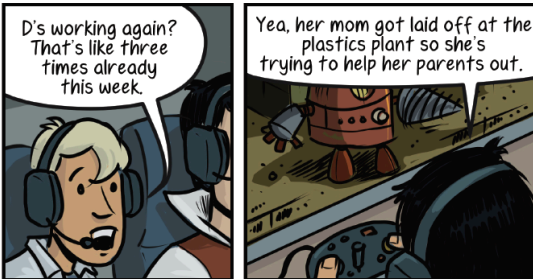


Against the Odds Request Form



In the Air Request Form

### CHAPTER 3: IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL



# Activity

- Spend 5 minutes reading *Against the Odds* Chapter 3: It's all fun and games until... (page page 21-27)
- Next, practice asking one of the facilitation questions with someone sitting near you. (Questions on Page 28 of the facilitator's guide. It's ok to come up with your own questions, too. )

Activity Time: 10 minutes

# Return from activity



- How did it go?
- How can you improve the process when working with students?



# Activity

- Spend 5 minutes reading Chapter 1.
  - Then, choose one of the three worksheets for Chapter 3. Spend five minutes independently answering the question by writing your answer on paper.
  - Worksheets for this chapter can be found on page 15, 16, and 17 of the implementation guide.
  - Spend a few moments sharing your worksheet experience with someone near you.
- 
- Activity Time: 10 minutes



# Return from activity

- How did it go?
- How can you improve the process when working with students?

# Questions?

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New England (HHS Region 1)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network  
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