GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

COMBO BOOK

GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN, AND THE WISDOME TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

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I sought my soul,
But could not see,
I sought my God,
but He eluded me,
I sought my brothers and sisters,
and found all three.

HISTORY

The fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous is the outgrowth of a chance meeting between two men during the month of January in 1957. These men had a truly baffling history of trouble and misery due to an obsession to gamble. They began to meet regularly and as the months passed neither had returned to gambling.

They concluded from their discussions that in order to prevent a relapse it was necessary to bring about certain character changes within themselves. In order to accomplish this, they used for a guide certain spiritual principles which had been utilized by thousands of people who were recovering from other compulsive addictions. The word spiritual can be said to describe those characteristics of the human mind that represent the highest and finest qualities such as kindness, generosity, honesty and humility. Also, in order to maintain their own abstinence they felt that it was vitally important that they carry the message of hope to other compulsive gamblers.

As a result of favorable publicity by a prominent newspaper columnist and TV commentator, the first group meeting of Gamblers Anonymous was held on Friday, September 13, 1957, in Los Angeles, California. Since that time, the fellowship has grown steadily and groups are flourishing throughout the world.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS is a 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 to recover from a gambling problem.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop gambling. There are no dues or fees for Gamblers Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Gamblers Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to stop gambling and to help other compulsive gamblers do the same.

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real problem gamblers. No one likes to think they are different from their fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our gambling careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could gamble like other people. The idea that somehow, someday, we will control our gambling is the great obsession of every compulsive gambler. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of prison, insanity or death.

We learned we had to concede fully to our innermost selves that we are compulsive gamblers. This is the first step in our recovery. With reference to gambling, the delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

We have lost the ability to control our gambling. We know that no real compulsive gambler ever regains control. All of us felt at times we were regaining control, but such intervals – usually brief – were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced that gamblers of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period of time we get worse, never better.

Therefore, in order to lead normal happy lives, we try to practice to the best of our ability, certain principles in our daily affairs.

THE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Here are the steps which are a program of recovery.

1 **We admitted we were powerless over gambling – that our lives had become unmanageable.**

2 **Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.**

3 **Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this power of our own understanding.**

4 **Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.**

5 **Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

6 **Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.**

7 Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.

8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

12 Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

THE UNITY PROGRAM

In order to maintain unity our experience has shown that:

1. **our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon group unity.**

2. **our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.**

3. **the only requirement for Gamblers anonymous membership is a desire to stop gambling.**

4. **each group should be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or Gamblers anonymous as a whole.**

5. **Gamblers anonymous has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers.**

6. **Gamblers anonymous ought never endorse, finance or lend the Gamblers anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**

7 every Gamblers anonymous Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8 Gamblers anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9 Gamblers anonymous, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10 Gamblers anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Gamblers anonymous name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11 our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and internet.

12 anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the Gamblers anonymous program, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

COMPULSIVE GAMBLING AND GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

What is compulsive gambling?

Compulsive gambling is an illness, progressive in its nature, which can never be cured, but can be arrested.

Before coming to Gamblers Anonymous many compulsive gamblers thought of themselves as morally weak, or at times just plain “no good”. The Gamblers Anonymous concept is that compulsive gamblers are really very sick people who can recover if they will follow to the best of their ability a simple program that has proved successful for thousands of other men and women with a gambling or compulsive gambling problem.

What is the first thing a compulsive gambler ought to do in order to stop gambling?

The compulsive gambler needs to be willing to accept the fact that he or she is in the grip of a progressive illness and has a desire to get well. Our experience has shown that the Gamblers Anonymous program will always work for any person who has a desire to stop gambling. However, it will never work for the person who will not face squarely the facts about this illness.

How can you tell whether you are a compulsive gambler?

Only you can make that decision. Most people turn to Gamblers Anonymous when they become

willing to admit that gambling has defeated them. Also in Gamblers Anonymous, a compulsive gambler is described as a person whose gambling has caused growing and continuing problems in any department of his or her life.

Many Gamblers Anonymous members went through terrifying experiences before they were ready to accept help. Others were faced with a slow, subtle deterioration which finally brought them to the point of admitting defeat.

How does someone stop gambling through the Gamblers anonymous program?

One does this through bringing about a progressive character change within oneself. This can be accomplished by having faith in – and following – the basic concepts of the Gamblers Anonymous Recovery and Unity Programs.

There are no short cuts in gaining this faith and understanding. To recover from one of the most baffling, insidious, compulsive addictions will require diligent effort. **HONESTY, OPENMINDEDNESS, AND WILLINGNESS** are the key words in our recovery.

Is knowing why we gambled important?

Perhaps, however insofar as stopping gambling, many Gamblers Anonymous members have abstained from gambling without the benefit of the knowledge of why they gambled.

What are some characteristics of a person who is a compulsive gambler?

1. **INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT REALITY.** Hence the escape into the dream world of gambling.

2. **EMOTIONAL INSECURITY.** A compulsive gambler finds he or she is emotionally comfortable only when "in action". It is not uncommon to hear a Gamblers Anonymous member say: "The only time I felt like I belonged was when I was gambling. Then I felt secure and comfortable. No great demands were made upon me. I knew I was destroying myself, yet at the same time, I had a certain sense of security".

3. **IMMATURITY.** A desire to have all the good things in life without any great effort on their part seems the common character pattern of compulsive gamblers. Many Gamblers Anonymous members accept the fact that they were unwilling to grow up. Subconsciously they felt they could avoid mature responsibility by wagering on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card, and so the struggle to escape responsibility finally became a subconscious obsession.

Also, a compulsive gambler seems to have a strong inner urge to be a "big shot" and needs to have a feeling of being all powerful. The compulsive gambler is willing to do anything (often of an anti-social nature) to maintain the image he or she wants others to see.

Then too, there is a theory that compulsive

gamblers subconsciously want to lose to punish themselves. There is much evidence to support this theory.

What is the dream world of a compulsive gambler?

This is another common characteristic of compulsive gamblers. A lot of time is spent dreaming of the great and wonderful things they are going to do as soon as they make the big win. They often see themselves as quite philanthropic and charming people who will provide family and friends with expensive cars, and other luxuries. Compulsive gamblers picture themselves leading extravagant lifestyles made possible by the huge sums of money they will accrue from their gambling. Large homes, designer clothes, and expensive vacations are a few of the wonderful things that are just around the corner after a big win is finally made.

Pathetically, however, there never seems to be a big enough winning to make even the smallest dream come true. When compulsive gamblers succeed, they gamble to dream still greater dreams. When failing, they gamble in reckless desperation and the depths of their misery are fathomless as their dream world comes crashing down. Sadly, they will struggle back, dream more dreams and of course suffer more misery. No one can convince them that their great schemes will not someday come true. They believe they will, for without this dream world, life for them would not be tolerable.

Isn't compulsive gambling basically a financial problem?

No, compulsive gambling is an emotional problem. A person in the grip of this illness creates mountains of apparently insolvable problems. Of course, financial problems are created, but they also find themselves facing marital, employment, or legal problems. Compulsive gamblers find friends have been lost, and relatives have rejected them. Of the many serious difficulties created, the financial problems seem the easiest to solve. When a compulsive gambler enters Gamblers Anonymous and quits gambling, there is no longer the financial drain that was caused by gambling, and very shortly, the financial pressures begin to be relieved. Gamblers Anonymous members have found that the best road to financial recovery is through hard work and repayment of our debts. Bankruptcy, borrowing and/or lending of money (bailouts) in Gamblers Anonymous is detrimental to our recovery and should not take place.

The most difficult and time consuming problem with which they will be faced is that of bringing about a character change within themselves. Most Gamblers Anonymous members look upon this as their greatest challenge which should be worked on immediately and continued throughout their lives.

Why can't a compulsive gambler simply use willpower to stop gambling?

We believe that most people, if they are honest,

will recognize their lack of power to solve certain problems. When it comes to gambling, we have known many compulsive gamblers who could abstain for long stretches, but caught off guard and under the right set of circumstances, they started gambling without thought of the consequences. The defenses they relied upon, through will power alone, gave way before some trivial reason for placing a bet. We have found that will power and self-knowledge will not help in those mental blank spots, but adherence to spiritual principles seems to solve our problems. Most of us feel that a belief in a Power greater than ourselves is necessary in order for us to sustain a desire to refrain from gambling.

Can a compulsive gambler ever gamble normally again?

No. The first bet to a compulsive gambler is like the first drink to an alcoholic. Sooner or later he or she falls back into the same old destructive pattern. Once a person has crossed the invisible line into irresponsible uncontrolled gambling, he or she never seems to regain control. After abstaining a few months some of our members have tried some small bet experimentation, always with disastrous results. The old obsession inevitably returned.

Our Gamblers Anonymous experience seems to point to these alternatives: To gamble, risking progressive deterioration or not to gamble, and develop a better way of life.

Does this mean I can't even participate in a little penny ante game or a world series pool?

It means exactly that. A stand has to be made somewhere and Gamblers Anonymous members have found the first bet is the one to avoid, even though it may be as little as matching for a cup of coffee. This includes Internet gambling, bingo, the stock market, commodities, options, buying or playing lottery tickets, raffle tickets, flipping a coin, fantasy sports or entering the office sport pool.

I only go on gambling binges periodically. Do I need Gamblers Anonymous?

Yes. Compulsive gamblers who have joined Gamblers Anonymous tell us that, though their gambling binges were periodic, the intervals between were not periods of constructive thinking. Symptomatic of these periods were nervousness, irritability, frustration, indecision and a continued breakdown in personal relationships. These same people have often found the Gamblers Anonymous program the answer to the elimination of character defects and a guide to moral progress in their lives.

GAMBLING, for the compulsive gambler is defined as follows: Any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or "skill" constitutes gambling.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

1. **Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?**
2. **Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?**
3. **Did gambling affect your reputation?**
4. **Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?**
5. **Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties?**
6. **Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?**
7. **After losing did you feel you must return as soon as possible and win back your losses?**
8. **After a win did you have a strong urge to return and win more?**
9. **Did you often gamble until all your money was gone?**
10. **Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?**

11 **Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?**

12 **Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?**

13 **Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?**

14 **Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned?**

15 **Have you ever gambled to escape worry, trouble, boredom, loneliness, grief or loss?**

16 **Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?**

17 **Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?**

18 **Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?**

19 **Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling?**

20 **Have you ever considered self-destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling?**

Most compulsive gamblers will answer yes to at least seven of these questions.

TO ALL GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY THE NEW GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS:

1. Attend as many meetings as possible per week. **MEETINGS MAKE IT**.
2. Telephone other members as often as possible between meetings. **USE THE TELEPHONE LIST!**
3. Don't test or tempt yourself. Don't associate with acquaintances who gamble. Don't go in or near gambling establishments. **DON'T GAMBLE FOR ANYTHING.**
4. Live the Gamblers Anonymous Program **ONE DAY AT A TIME.** Don't try to solve all your problems at once.
5. Read the **RECOVERY** and **UNITY** steps often and continuously review the Twenty Questions. Follow the steps in your daily affairs. These steps are the basis for the entire Gamblers Anonymous Program and practicing them is the key to your growth. **GET INVOLVED AND BE OF SERVICE.** If you have any questions, ask them of your Trusted Servants and Sponsors.
6. **GET A SPONSOR, IT IS DIFFICULT TO RECOVER ON YOUR OWN!** Sponsorship gives an opportunity for members to work on a one-on-one basis to achieve recovery by sharing, practicing, and working the 12 steps of recovery.
7. We encourage every Gamblers Anonymous member to have a **PRESSURE RELIEF GROUP MEETING** as it offers guidance toward a normal way of thinking and living. The **PRESSURE RELIEF GROUP MEETING** may help alleviate financial, employment and personal pressures. Adherence to it may aid in your recovery.
8. **BE PATIENT!** The days and weeks will pass soon enough, and as you regularly attend meetings, abstain from gambling and follow the guidelines on this page, you will experience continued recovery.

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REVISED 11/22
PRINTED 11/22