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Unity News

**From the Editor:**

Christmas and New Year are often the worst times for compulsive gamblers and their families. How many of us had to face the fact that money we so diligently saved had been gambled away and that there would be no family feast and no presents for anyone.

It is so sad when new members appear feeling absolutely devastated by what the gambler has done. Hopefully though they will learn to smile again, once they realise that

- they are no longer alone with their problems
- they are not the only ones who have been through it
- a better life can be attained through using the rooms and the Gam-Anon programme

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**NB:** Please send all contributions either by e-mail to [unity@gamanon.org.uk](mailto:unity@gamanon.org.uk) or by post to Our Unity, 18 School Lane, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 6NL.

Next deadline for submissions: **31st October 2020**

If any of your members are partially sighted, a large print copy can be sent by email. Apply to [unity@gamanon.org.uk](mailto:unity@gamanon.org.uk)

## **7 Years On**

My world was turned upside down January 2012, it had often been rocked every time there was a knock on the door from bailiffs, or letters demanding payment in the run up to the "Big Confession".

To give a bit of history - J was a self-employed upholsterer. At the time we met there was plenty of work (although changeable) and before the gambling took hold the bills could be paid.

For a couple of years in the early days I worked with J really keen to learn upholstery. It also meant I got a better idea of how changeable it was, so because it was never certain I decided to get a part time job to make sure there was some regular money coming in.

When I first met J he liked a bet, mostly on the horses and playing the fruit machines, which when I think about it got more and more serious as time went by. I was often bailing him out with my own money and paying bills etc, never realising the damage this addiction was doing. His moods were getting more and more intense and arguments were more frequent. He also had longer periods out of the house and would instigate rows so he had an excuse to stay out. Sometimes he would come home pleased with himself, then other times he would be very quiet and preoccupied.

The day that the s\*\*t hit the fan I had taken the afternoon off and was going to apply for a promotion and needed to sort out my application.... while I was doing this I noticed a pile of papers which I had not seen before and took a look to find there were bills and uncashed cheques for the council tax and mortgage etc, which left me with plenty of questions. J was going to do a quote for some work and despite my intention of holding back until this was done, I could not hold my tongue. Needless to say, this ended badly. He went out to do the quote and I was left seething. He did not come home when I expected him early evening, then it was getting later and later - still no sign of him and he was not answering his phone!!!! I had no idea where he was.....

Next morning I woke up to find he had not been home all night ?

I was angry and worried at the same time. I tried to phone - no answer. I was getting angrier and more upset as I thought he was just ignoring me... Finally I tried one more time.... He answered Phew! He said I think we need to talk ... at last !

We met a couple of hours later. He was strange but said that his gambling had got completely out of control. He was really sorry and would understand if I didn't want him around anymore. So we talked and talked and cried and talked all weekend and it was only when I picked up his bag that I saw lots of empty packets of tablets and empty bottles of whisky that he then told me that he had tried to take his own life for fear of facing up to the truth. He felt absolutely worthless, was racked with guilt and deeply depressed. I was in a mess!! How were we going to sort this out? Were we going to lose the house? Were we going to split up Help!!!

We went to the doctor and ended up at the hospital to get him checked over and fortunately no damage was done physically anyway.

Then started the road to our recovery. We went to Citizens Advice who really helped to get our finances in order. They also advised us to get in touch with all the people and companies we owed money to and arrange payment. The adviser also told us about GA.

Our first meeting was not easy... that was just getting there...we did not know Reading and J's phone was playing up so finally we got to the meeting hall to find it all in darkness! OMG what next? We thought we had the wrong day or time or place. Then thank goodness S came along, tapped on the window and asked if we needed Gamblers Anonymous. Oh yes, we certainly did!

It has been a very long journey and hard work in the past 7 years. I am still married to my Gambler and we have a better relationship now with the newly re-enforced foundations. J is gambling free and says the thought that gambling had almost cost him his life keeps him off...I hope that fear stays with him always.

We have gained such a lot and are constantly working on the honesty, truth and very importantly Trust. Still TRUST has been the thing that has needed the most attention.

I have learnt a great deal about myself and grown in confidence with the help of my group and the Steps meetings.

I don't think I will live long enough to pay back the help and kindness I was given and still get from my fantastic group. I have got myself involved in my local

group and nationally, attend conventions with great enthusiasm, would tell all that it is worth going to at least once.

Although I would have preferred not to have gone through this nightmare to get here, in an odd way it has been a blessing in disguise.

Thank you with all my heart to Gam-Anon and to Gamblers Anonymous.

L – A proud member of the Reading Group

### **The first time....**

We all will be able to recall the first time we entered a Gam-Anon room: it's is worth recalling no matter how miserable the memory is. Why? Because often we are in the position of welcoming some new person into their first meeting. Some thoughts, key points if you like, that I always bear in mind when welcoming the newcomer.....

1. They are in the middle of a massive personal trauma: they need help, reassurance and some hope.
2. They need to know that for their own well-being they need to slow down, realise that this is a huge issue and that it's not a short term solution, so reinforce over and over again the refrains of 'day at a time', 'baby steps' and 'if you don't take care of yourself you are not able to care for others'.
3. They need to know that in the room there will be a whole range of different stories and experiences, that theirs is unique but will have a lot of common connections with others there - that everyone understands their pain and their trauma - and that at last 'they are not alone'
4. They don't have a choice about changing, they are already having their life change around them and they will be a different person because of what is happening. The best 'survivors' of this trauma are the ones who embrace the need to change and grow.

R, Newcastle

These days we are all inundated with abbreviations we don't understand. Fortunately, we don't have many of them in Gam-Anon, but here are some that may be mystifying:

1) **CG** Compulsive gambler

2) **ISO** = International Service Office

Based in New York, this office ensures that Gam-Anon world-wide speaks with the same voice regardless of where the group is and that we all pass on the same message – “You are not alone...we have been there...we know what you are going through...and we will share how we solved similar problems”

3) **NSO** = National Service Office

This is made up of a Secretary and Treasurer and their backups - time given by a few volunteers to ensure that Gam-Anon UK groups keep contact with each other; that funds received are banked; that literature stocks are maintained; that all groups are sent literature; that any groups that are unable to pay their rent are subsidised

4) **AUM** = Annual Unity Meeting

This is a meeting held once a year for all groups in the country to get together and share their experiences and, if necessary, to vote on a point raised that could affect all UK groups (eg: paying or not paying for literature). We discuss issues affecting groups and growth of Gam-Anon nationally. An additional meeting called ‘Get Together’ is held 6 months after each AUM – again for sharing our stories, bringing up suggestions to take forward to the AUM and to have discussions on a certain subject which is usually chosen either by the NSO Secretary or someone on the day. It is totally informal and is intended to get to know each other better. Expenses to attend are paid by NSO, for up to two members from each group for both these meetings

5) **BOD** = Board of Directors

This is the Gam-Anon world-wide Board that ensures that Gam- Anon continues to give support to family and friends of Compulsive Gamblers. It meets once a year somewhere in the USA with a representative (usually the Group Secretary) from any group that wishes to attend. Gam-Anon UK has a seat on the Board (we are Area 19)

After many years in the position Regina K, Executive Secretary of the ISO, finally found a successor. Our thanks should go to Regina for her hard work over the years and to wish her every happiness in her retirement.

Our new Secretary is Judy A and this is what she wrote:

On my first day as executive secretary I want to say hello and tell you how excited I am to take on this position. It is my personal goal to work to live up to the high standard of service and commitment Regina K always showed as she served us all so well as the voice of Gam-Anon. I am extremely grateful you have allowed her to stay on as a mentor!

I look forward to meeting you in person at the spring BOD.

Judy A.

Executive Secretary  
Gam-Anon International Service Office, Inc.

## **THE INTENTION OF GAM-ANON**

Gam-Anon is dedicated to the creation and preservation of serenity in our lives.

What this means to you is that the Gam-Anon room is designed to be a safe place to bring your current situation. You can put it on the table, look at it, cry about it, be angry at it, or whatever you want to do about it.

Hopefully, by the end of the evening you will have been able to unburden yourself for a short while and be able to go home and face your situation with a new perspective.

None of our members are here to give you specific advice which you should take as gospel. And we cannot dilute our principles to a point where we perform as marriage counsellors, psychologists, members of the clergy, vocational guidance specialists or as representative of the legal profession. We are here as we have a common denominator in our lives. We are in relationship with a compulsive gambler.

Because of this common denominator, we are readily able to understand your problems better than your family, friends, counsellor or advisor. We can listen to your problems with an empathetic, not a sympathetic or critical, ear. You can rest assured that no one in our room will tell you what you are doing is bad. We will only offer our experience in similar matters, giving you a new approach to consider in your situation.

Our goal in the Gam-Anon room is to provide new insight into what can be a devastating problem in many people's lives. With the guidance of the Gam-Anon

programme we can provide a wealth of information about practical safeguards you can choose to take when first coming into the programme.

Above all, remember that all people change. The problems that you are facing today will be different tomorrow, next month, next year. Try to put matters into perspective for Today. Don't feel compelled to make decisions that are forever, rather make choices for today. Choices are always open for review and change.

In all things, remember that Gam-Anon is your support system. No-one can make it work for you but you. We can only be there to support you when you reach out for us.

with the Fellowship a few weeks you will be welcomed with open arms. It is a marvellous opportunity to meet friends from all over the country that you didn't know you had and to share views and ideas on how Gam-Anon can improve and grow.

## **THE GAM-ANON 12 STEP PROGRAMME**

### **1. ACCEPTANCE**

We admitted we were powerless over the gambling problem and that our lives had become unmanageable

### **2. HOPE**

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

### **3. FAITH**

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

### **4. HONESTY**

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

## **5. COURAGE**

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

## **6. WILLINGNESS**

Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed

## **7. HUMILITY**

Humbly ask God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings

## **8. SINCERITY**

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

## **9. ACTION**

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

## **10. VIGILANCE**

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

## **11. SPIRITUALITY**

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. SHARING**

Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to others

