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THE TWELVE STEP

WORKBOOK

OF

GAM-ANON®

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Gam-Anon® International Service Office, Inc.
PO Box 307
Massapequa Park, NY 11762
718-352-1671
gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org
www.gam-anon.org

Our Twelve Step Workbook was created to assist us in “working” Gam-Anon’s Twelve Steps of Recovery and Twelve Steps of Unity. As we read the in-depth Introduction for each section along with each step that follows, we will understand, with deepened clarity, just what is meant when guided to “work the Steps.”

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THE TWELVE STEPS OF RECOVERY

1. We admitted we were powerless over the gambling problem and 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 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 others.

Introduction to the Twelve Steps of Recovery Workbook

In *The Gam-Anon Way of Life*, it says: "When we first come to a Gam-Anon meeting, we hear of the Twelve Steps. We wonder how these Steps can help us. It is difficult for us to realize our need for them. Soon, however, we come to understand ***the Twelve Steps are the Gam-Anon Program***. As we work the Steps, we learn how to deal with our problems on a day-to-day basis. We develop the serenity and peace of mind we seek."

As far back as we can remember, since the beginning of Gam-Anon in 1958, the Twelve Steps have been sacred in our Program. Early on, they appeared in a small red book ... later on in the *Way of Life* book ... again in *Living with The Compulsive Gambler* ... again in *The Twelve Steps*, which morphed into the *Twelve Steps and Companion Questions*.

We have short synopses of the Steps and longer expositions on the Steps. The Literature Committee has revisited the writing, commentary, and interpretation many times throughout our nearly 60-year history.

We are pleased to present the Twelve Step Workbook that has brought into one volume a comprehensive commentary on the Steps, reflections from our members on the Steps, and a meaningful section for each step entitled "Working the Step."

We often hear a member advised to "work the Steps" but for some the work is unclear. How does one work a Step? What does that mean?

It is sincerely hoped that this volume - deep with meaning and reflection - will provide our members with a resource rich in content for a fuller experience with the Twelve Steps.

While the workbook is valuable for an individual member to work the Steps, it can also be a resource for meeting topics, reflections, commentary, and questions to focus on at meetings.

Special thanks go to Upstate NY Area 5, which initiated this project, members of the Literature Committee, and the members who provided their reflections, for making this volume possible.

*Defily delving into other people's problems,
I lived, distracted from my own.
Smoothing the surface of life with the veneer of perfection,
the gaping, glaring gaps were never shown.
I hid me from my buried burden
in an intellectual haze,
designing hundreds of diversions
to completely crowd my days
so there was no time left to examine my direction,
no silence,
no solitude,
no moments open to possible reflection.
I paid lip service to a hunger for change,
but my actions declared my desire to settle back into
familiarity,
to be comfortable with my old role,
even though it's a feeble shell of what I could be.
I dodged the truth in less demanding backward paths,
without the energy of spirit to plod toward something better.
Until reality rushed in to tell me what I really knew,
my life would never change until I thought I was worth the effort.*

*I'm searching for a better way,
a slice of hope,
a change, long overdue.
I'm reaching out my hand.
You're reaching too.*

*Tentatively talking.
Taking
just a step or two.
Fearful of the change,
I long to turn away
but I reach out to you.*

*Gently leading,
always waiting,
you are there to see me through.
Guiding me
from one Step to another.
Prodding me
with love.
Challenging
to find a way more true.*

*Strewn with obstacles
and full of pain
my way begins to fade from view.
But you are there to
clarify my vision.
Following your light,
I feel my faith renew.*

*Hand in hand in Program.
Working at those Steps
so tried and true.
I emerge
transformed.
A stronger me
because I walked the walk.*

STEP ONE

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

The principle of Step One is *acceptance*. It is the recognition of the reality of our situation. There are two parts to this Step. One is the admission of powerlessness over the compulsive gambling, and the second is the admission of the unmanageability of our own lives. Let us explore both.

First, we need to understand compulsive gambling as an illness. It isn't anybody's fault. It is progressive in nature. The gambling may be arrested but not cured. The gamblers themselves are powerless over their illness (as it states in Gambler's Anonymous Step One). Therefore, how could *we* have ever had control over it? None of us could stop the compulsive gambler despite our efforts. However, many of us blamed ourselves; we blamed them; we blamed their family of origin; we blamed God; we blamed society and the world in general.

Many of us learned the hard way that we could not stop the gambler from gambling. As the ones affected by the compulsive gambler's actions, we saw their inability to manage their lives, and so we attempted to do so for them. We used many methods to try to control them. We begged and pleaded, trying to appeal to their good nature. We loved them, believing that our kindnesses might get them to stop, and then we hated them when that didn't work. We threatened them, and we tried to reason with them. We repeatedly paid their debts and believed their promises to never gamble again. And then they did it again, and then we did it again.

We attempted to take on the responsibility for another person that was not ours to take. We tried to force issues and impose our will on another's life, never doubting that we were correct in taking such actions. We thought that we needed to be strong because we were the family mainstay, but being depended upon proved to be a sign of weakness, not of strength. We were full of good intentions, constantly so involved in the gambler's problems that we lost ourselves.

We became bitter and frustrated. We were filled with anxiety and fear, worrying about the future, about debts, about what would happen to us. We experienced anger and resentment as we became the victims of the gambler's actions. Self-pity and envy were common among those who believed they were short-changed in life.

Some of us became silent sneaks or all-knowing martyrs, looking for signs of their gambling or policing the gambler's every activity. Others were vindictive and vengeful, wanting to get even for the harm done to us. Some of us hid from the world, ashamed of our lives. Many of us became hopeless and despairing, believing that things could never get better. Some had overwhelming emotional problems. At times, we lived in our own fantasy world just to get through the day.

Most of us had lost respect not only for the gambler, but more importantly, for ourselves. Nothing worked, and many of the things we did seemed to make matters worse. Our lives had become unmanageable. Unmanageable because of gambling? That was only incidental! The gambler merely provided the background against which our own negative qualities could be brought out in all their undesirability. We did not reach the point of admitting that our lives had become unmanageable until we had hit our own personal bottom. Only then were we able to say in all honesty, "I give up."

Giving up! What does this admission of defeat do to help us? What else can we do? What is left? Step One reminds us that we can do nothing. We can do nothing to keep the compulsive gambler from gambling. We are faced with something that is beyond our control. What we once thought of as defeat we came to recognize as powerlessness.

Our goal in Program is to recover from the ill effects that gambling has had on our lives. When we recognize that we do not have power over the gambler, we become free to focus on ourselves. We no longer have the heavy burden on our shoulders of "fixing" another person. We are relieved. We are not responsible for the gambler's problem. It becomes evident to us that as we were never able to stop them from gambling, neither are we responsible if they should gamble. It is no longer necessary for us to live in fear that any wrong move on our part will send them back to gambling. We release the compulsive gambler, recognize our own need for recovery, and become ready to put our own spiritual and emotional house in order. We begin to work on healing, forgiving, and changing ourselves for the better. We are now free to look for new ways to cope and deal with our problems and challenges. We take responsibility for our own lives.

Reflections

I thought that if I were mean to my husband, then he would stop gambling. When that didn't work, I tried being nice to him. That didn't work either.

I believed that if I were a "good wife," he would stop gambling.

I tried to explain to my son that he was ruining his life, but he didn't listen to me.

I paid off my gambler's debt amid promises that "this would be the last time." Months later he was back for more.

I knew I did not cause my husband to gamble, but I could not understand why I was unable to make him stop. I wondered what was lacking in me that I could not make him see the light. I was ashamed and I felt like a failure.

My life was unmanageable, but my main concern was controlling my husband and ignoring my own issues.

When I entered Gam-Anon for the first time and was told that compulsive gambling is an illness, I was able to relate to this immediately. I spent a lot of time during my marriage thinking that no sane person would gamble the way my husband did. I learned I was right. I understood that compulsive gambling is an illness.

Freedom to be who I am is one of the gifts I got from Step One.

Learning that I was powerless over another's addiction did not mean that I was powerless as a human being. Quite the contrary, I was now free to focus my efforts on being strong for me and developing a relationship with the outside world from which I had felt isolated.

The most powerless time of my life was actually those years living with an active compulsive gambler and thinking I should be able to control his addiction. Step One helped me gain true personal power by letting go of this irrational thinking.

Accepting powerlessness over the gambler means admitting the truth about my situation.

Step One teaches me about developing personal boundaries and letting go of the victim mentality.

When I stop trying to control the gambler, I will have space in my head for my own thoughts and feelings that I denied.

Working Step One

What does it mean to work Step One? We work Step One when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the first stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step One is about

Acceptance

1. Admission of powerlessness over the gambling problem
2. Recognition of the unmanageability of our lives

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step One and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Admission of powerlessness over the gambling problem:

1. What had you done to try to stop the gambler from gambling? What was the result of this effort? What do you understand from this result?
2. What is the difference between defeat and powerlessness? How have you experienced feelings of defeat and powerlessness as you coped with the gambling? How did Gam-Anon aid in your admission of powerlessness over the gambler? In what ways has the concept of powerlessness changed your life?
3. What is the difference between “giving up” and “letting go”? How have you experienced “giving up” and “letting go” as you coped with the gambling?

Recognition of the unmanageability of our lives:

1. At what point did you recognize that your life was unmanageable? How did that make you feel?
2. Did you keep the fact that your life was out of control a secret by acting as if everything was all right? Why?

3. What did you do in the name of love or “peace at any price” that proved useless? How important was it to keep the gambler happy? Did you believe this would improve your situation? Did it?

4. Did you try to avoid conflict or making waves? If so, what effect did this have on you? Do you continue to avoid conflict or making waves?

5. Did you interrogate the gambler? If so, what effect did this have on you? On the gambler? Do you continue to interrogate the gambler? How does this work for you?

6. What did you take responsibility for that was not yours to take? How did you feel while making yourself responsible for everything? In what ways did you attempt to manipulate others in the hope of changing your situation? Did you discount your own needs and feelings? How did your unhealthy focus on the needs and feelings of others create this situation?

7. Did you see yourself as the family mainstay? Did you pay a price for this belief? In what ways did this help/hurt others?

8. Have you denied other people the chance to learn from their mistakes by eliminating the consequences, softening the blow, or fixing their problems? What was the result when you attempted to be “the power” to everyone for everything?

9. How do you describe the emotions you felt while your life was out of control? Were you envious, despairing, resentful, or heartbroken? Did you feel betrayed, guilty, depressed, frustrated, or frantic? Did you live in fear or worry? Were you vengeful, wanting others to pay for what had been done to you? Were you bitter, hopeless, or overwhelmed? Were you in denial of your situation?

10. How have you paid a price for these negative emotions? Did you stuff them down? What was your emotional bottom?

11. Did you create a fantasy world; minimizing the truth and therefore allowing yourself to be convinced that something was healthy or sane when your intellect told you something was terribly wrong?

12. What did you tell yourself to soothe your fears and frustration?

13. How did the gambling in your home affect your actions and thoughts outside the home? In what ways have career, education, and outside relationships suffered?

14. Did financial problems take center stage, leading to the belief that if there were more financial resources, life would be better? What was your relationship with money like? Did you handle finances in an honest manner?

15. Have frustration and anger due to the gambling problem led to inappropriate choices with alcohol, drugs, spending, or food?

Acceptance:

1. What freedom comes from accepting that you are neither the cause nor the cure of the gambling problem? Have you been able to accept compulsive gambling as an illness? How has this acceptance made a difference in your life? Can you envision your life without the negative reactions of blame, anger, self-pity, worry, fear, bitterness, despair, envy, and revenge?

2. What were your expectations of your first Gam-Anon meeting? Were they met? Did you recognize the need to become honest with yourself? Did you believe in the promise of a new way of life? Did you recognize that your recovery is a journey and that Gam-Anon is the path to recovery? Was there anything that you found disturbing about Program in those early days? How did you deal with that? Do you feel you have the right to be happy? Did your painful memories of helplessness in the face of the gambling illness make the acceptance of powerlessness over the gambling a sensible choice?

3. Accepting the concept of powerlessness offers many positive changes in our life. Have your beliefs about personal responsibility changed? How does this affect your daily life? Has your *To Do List* changed since working Step One? Is accepting powerlessness over the gambler intellectually easy but emotionally difficult? In what ways has acceptance opened the door to serenity? Has your self-image improved? Have you established healthy boundaries? Describe how you did this. How do you envision yourself as part of your family, your community, and Gam-Anon? What opportunities do you see possible for your future?

4. Has working Step One and accepting your powerlessness affected other people in your life? Besides yourself, who else has benefited from your attendance in Gam-Anon? Explain the positive result for those involved.

5. Accepting your own powerlessness requires time and effort. Describe what steps you have taken to let go of these issues:

Trying to control your family and friends and fixing their problems.

The future.

Your own anger, regrets, guilt, and mistakes.

The need for perfection.

Your need for instant fixes.

Worrying about what other people think of you.

Your fear of confrontation.

Your fear of change.

STEP TWO

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

The principle of Step Two is *hope*. Having accepted that we are powerless over the gambling problem might have led us to think that our situation was hopeless. To the contrary, Step Two tells us that there *is* hope for us. We may not be able to control the gambler, but we can restore our own lives to normalcy. There is help and hope for us in Gam-Anon.

The assistance we are searching for can be found at our Gam-Anon meetings. During our very first weeks in Gam-Anon, we discover that we are not alone. We find that we are with people who understand. We know that we are among people with whom we can identify and share. We see that others are learning to cope with the gambling problem and, therefore, we can, too. Others have improved the quality of their lives through the Program. We come to believe that this is also possible for us. Members share with us their experience, their strength, their hope, and their progress. We are given suggestions for dealing with the financial and emotional strains that are generated by compulsive gambling. More productive ways of communicating with our gambler and others are shared with us. We are urged to protect our assets, our children, our sanity, and our hearts. We are encouraged to heal and grow.

We begin to become open to the idea that the Gam-Anon way of life can guide us to a normal way of thinking and living. When we look at the effects of the Gam-Anon Program on those who work the Steps, we see growth and find understanding. At each Gam-Anon meeting members acknowledge that something has changed in their lives for the better. They attribute this change to a power greater than themselves. We observe growth, acceptance, serenity, strength, love, and positive attitudes. If we keep our minds open, we become aware of a power that clearly is capable of bringing about significant changes in our lives.

Perhaps, at first, we are unwilling or unable to give this phenomenon a name. Some like to call it "mystical" and feel it is a kind of magic. Others cannot put a name to it at all. We in Gam-Anon refer to it as a Higher Power or the God of our own understanding.

In Gam-Anon we are not concerned with any religious concept of a Higher Power. Gam-Anon is concerned only with spiritual growth, which is the foundation of our Program. Most of us confuse the word *spiritual* with *religious* or *religion*. Spirituality is simply peace of mind and a sense of well-being. This spiritual serenity begins with the acceptance of a Higher Power and its role in our lives.

For those of us who always believed in a power greater than ourselves, Step Two may simply be an acknowledgement, renewed awareness, or reaffirmation of that power, and our willingness to be restored to a normal way of thinking and living.

There are others for whom this Step presents a dilemma. They may express belief in a Higher Power but cannot accept that our Higher Power can, does, or will intervene in our lives. They believe this power exists to order planets and galaxies, to create mountains and rivers, but certainly not to be concerned with our individual day-to-day lives. The non-religious among us may have no Higher Power-concept at all, so this whole idea may be baffling or threatening. How can one receive help from a power they do not believe exists?

Perhaps, most difficult of all is the situation of those of us who once had faith in God but somewhere, somehow, lost it. We spent countless hours crying out to God for assistance. We thought that if there is a God, how could these things happen to us? Were we being punished? We had prayed and believed but to no avail. Were we not trying to manipulate God? We cannot expect to feel our faith return in an instant, nor can we will it to return. For some the most acceptable interpretation of this Step is that Gam-Anon is the Higher Power that will lead us to a normal life.

What we can do is stop struggling and recognize that the life we were living was neither normal nor healthy. Despair due to the gambling left us empty and hopeless. If we willingly and honestly open ourselves to the possibility of letting this Higher Power enter our lives, it will be the beginning of awareness of inner peace. It can lead to the release of negative feeling, anxieties, and worry. We will find that there is no limit to what we can do as we move toward a normal way of thinking and living. Having let a Higher Power into our lives, the gradual process of change begins. Other may see these changes in us before we become aware of them ourselves. Our negative attitudes begin to give way to positive attitudes and

we start to become hopeful that we can experience serenity in our lives. By allowing spirituality to infiltrate our lives, we find the energy to tap our hidden potential. Our goal is a normal way of thinking and living and becoming well-adjusted to the outside world without undue mental tension. Our newfound spirituality diminishes our anxiety, allowing us to adjust to reality more effectively.

Once we have accepted a belief in a Higher Power, it is not difficult to believe that this power can and will restore us to a normal way of thinking and living. We accepted we were powerless; we accepted a power greater than ourselves. Now we can accept that this power can and will restore us. What a wonderful feeling! We are not alone in our struggle anymore. We now have an ally to whom we can turn.

Finding the Higher Power of our understanding does not mean that life will be trouble-free or easy. What it does mean is that we have found a new way to experience challenges.

It has been said that Gam-Anon does not open the gates of heaven to let us in; rather, it opens the gates of hell to let us out. If that is true, Steps One puts the key in the lock and Step Two turns it. Both Steps give hope to a previously hopeless situation, and both, together, prepare us for Step Three, the decision that actually opens the gate and allows us to walk through.

Reflections

When I first came to Gam-Anon, I was told there were hundreds of years of experience in that room. What I had done in the past got me to my present state, so what did I have to lose by learning through their experience.

I couldn't understand how my life had turned out this way. What had I done that had been so bad that justified my being punished?

I look to my Higher Power to help me do what I cannot do for myself.

I don't know who the Higher Power is, but I have come to understand that it is not ME!

I turned to my meeting for everything. I would call my sponsor with every concern or question. The Program was truly my Higher Power.

I have never been a spiritual person, but "the room" became my Higher Power. Attending meetings and listening to others started me on the path to inner peace. My dysfunctional marriage to a compulsive gambler left me with no idea what a normal way of thinking and living was. I needed the help of my Gam-Anon brothers and sisters to define that for myself.

I stopped viewing life through the haze of compulsive gambling; through my Higher Power, I began replacing despair with hope.

I don't have to completely understand the concept of Higher Power to know that my Program is divinely inspired.

Step Two helped me to find my normal; I don't feel crazy anymore.

As I opened my mind and heart to a power greater than myself, I began to feel hopeful that my life could improve.

Some people say, "Coincidence is God's way of acting anonymously." I am grateful for having heard these words.

I have heard others say, "Insanity is doing the same things over and over, expecting different results." So I turn to Gam-Anon as a power to show me how to live differently so that I may get different results.

Some have interpreted Step Two as: "Came" – "Came to" – "Came to believe." I guess belief is a process. The process of believing in a Higher Power was not something I expected to consider in Gam-Anon, but over time, it has evolved.

Despair caused me to hit bottom; my Higher Power showed me how to climb out of my despair.

Working Step Two

What does it mean to work Step Two? We work Step Two when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the second stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Two is about

Hope

1. Developing a belief in a power greater than ourselves
2. Potential for restoration to a normal way of thinking and living

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Two and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Developing a belief in a power greater than ourselves:

1. Looking openly and honestly at the effects of the Gam-Anon Program on those who work the Steps may be difficult at first. It is easier to believe “my situation is different.” Did you identify with the Gam-Anon members at your earliest meetings?
2. One of the slogans is “Let Go and Let God.” Are you willing to trust enough to put your life into the hands of a Higher Power?
3. How would you describe your own spirituality? How would you describe your belief in a Higher Power?
4. The phrase “came to believe” gives us the latitude to grow into our spirituality at our own pace. Is your concept of your Higher Power still evolving?
5. Are you aware of “coincidences” in your life that upon reflection may be your Higher Power’s way of acting anonymously? How does this awareness affect your belief in a power greater than yourself?

Potential for restoration to a normal way of thinking and living:

1. Do you resist the messages of those who are in the Program, or are you open to a new way of thinking and living?

2. Are you coming to believe that your inner peace does not rest on what your gambler does, but rather in the letting go of your gambler? Do you remind yourself of this concept when you become stressed over gambling issues?

3. What was not “normal” about the way you lived your life before Gam-Anon? Describe what a normal or healthy way of thinking and living means to you. Do you see this as a possibility for yourself?

4. What interactions did you accept in your life with the compulsive gambler as “normal” but you now recognize as unhealthy or insane?

5. In what ways have you retreated from a normal way of thinking and living?

Hope:

1. Can you open your mind to the possibility that your HOPE for a better life will come not from your own power but from a Power outside your own?
2. Step Two speaks to a restoration of a normal way of thinking and living. Does this give you hope?
3. View the landscape of your life as it appears now that you can include hope. How does it differ from prior to working Step Two? Do you see possibilities for yourself that you may never have imagined? What are they?

STEP THREE

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

The principle of Step Three is *faith*. Step Three is where the Gam-Anon program really starts to work, or, more accurately, where we really start to work the Program. We have already accepted in Step One that we are powerless over another person's compulsive gambling and that our own lives have become unmanageable. We have come to have hope and to believe that a power greater than ourselves might help us to live normally again. For some of us, this power is the Program. For others, the power is that of the God of our understanding. For still others, the power is both. For many of us, as we remain in Program, our belief in a Higher Power evolves and grows. Whatever we may conceive this power to be, Step Three asks us to make a decision to entrust ourselves to the care of this power.

Having decided to seek help, attending meetings is the first step. Many of us use the strength and love that we feel in the Gam-Anon room as the Higher Power. When we use the telephone, texting, and e-mail to maintain a connection with other members and also refer to our literature between meetings, we carry this strength with us on a daily basis. When we work with a sponsor and seek suggestions from others in the Program for new ways of coping with the gambling problem, we are demonstrating our decision to trust the Program. Working with a sponsor helps us to understand the Program and its importance in our lives.

We have many tools of the Program at our disposal. Utilizing them is part of the *work* that is necessary to achieve recovery. Among these tools is the Pressure Relief Group Meeting. Adhering to our Pressure Relief Group budget is most helpful in relieving financial stress and restoring a normal way of thinking and living. Taking to heart the suggestions in our handbook exemplifies our decision to have faith in the Program and to allow it to work for us. We exhibit our willingness to work the Program when we share honestly at meetings about the burdens we carry, when we "listen and learn," when we begin to take responsibility for ourselves and not take on the responsibilities of the gambler, and when we ask for and accept the wisdom offered by the Program. As we come to understand the Twelve Steps of Recovery and use them, we learn how to transform our lives and move forward on our personal road to recovery. Ultimately, we share what we have learned and help others.

The key to Step Three is willingness, and the way to start is to "try it." The smallest step will build an ever-increasing ability. The first time we do anything is the hardest. Our aim is to give up trying to control our situation and allow for the help that our Higher Power offers. Consider the power of electricity which flows continuously through our walls. We all know it is there and expect that it will work. But we cannot actually use this electricity unless we plug into it. Similarly, we must plug into our Higher Power to reap its benefits. If it is so easy to flip a switch which floods our home with light, why then is it so difficult to flip the switch onto a belief in a Higher Power that could light up our lives? When we find ourselves in an unfamiliar area, it is a common practice to stop and ask directions. If we can put our faith in an unknown human being, surely we can develop a faith like this in the Higher Power of our understanding. This faith can make us independent.

In fact, the more we come to depend on our Higher Power, the more independent we become. We are all dependent on outside sources in our daily lives. It can be as simple as using a stool to allow us to reach high places, calling a plumber when the drain is clogged, or going to a physician when we are sick. We cannot do everything by ourselves and we rely on all sorts of assistance. This assistance gives us the ability to get the job done and get on with our lives. Gam-Anon offers us assistance with navigating the gambling problem.

How do we allow a Higher Power to care for us? What do we do to make that decision to surrender? Perhaps we are desperate enough to be willing to try, even if we are not convinced of its effectiveness. Perhaps we see the beneficial effect of this decision on others and are, therefore, willing to try it ourselves. Perhaps we simply accept the word of the group that it works. Even if, at first, we don't believe it, we "act as if." Prior to this, when we talked to God, we begged, we bargained, and we even questioned His wisdom. In turning our will and our lives over to our Higher Power, we use such phrases as "Thy will, not mine, be done," "I am desperate; please show me your way and help me to accept it," "I'm turning myself over to you today," and "Whatever happens will be okay because I know you are on my side." Quit fighting and take that Higher Power as a partner.

Surrender of our will does not come all at once but is a continuing process. We may start in one area of our life, feel its positive effect, and then extend that willingness to surrender to other areas. Ultimately, it will become a way of life, so that each morning we renew the decision.

We need to remember that we are not turning over any specific problems. What we are turning over to our Higher Power is our willfulness in our attempts to rectify our problems by our own omnipotence. Making the decision called for in Step Three is only part of the action. We must also be open to accepting the will of our Higher Power. The Serenity Prayer teaches us to accept the things we cannot change and to change the things we can. Surrendering to our Higher Power's will and accepting the results does not make us spectators in our own lives. We must actively work to know our Higher Power's will for us. This process starts here and continues in Step Eleven.

Doing it our way got us to this unhappy place to begin with. What do we have to lose? We can always go back to our old ways again. What do we have to gain? We will gain a new way to cope with life. We will gain serenity. We will come to feel joy again. Deciding to try a new way of living demonstrates our willingness to allow our Higher Power to work in our lives.

Reflections

I have found that I can be willing to do something I don't want to do. I did not want to attend meetings at first, but I went every week. I stopped playing a not-for-money game of canasta with my husband and parents because I was warned that for his recovery he shouldn't even hold the cards. I was willing to go on a vacation that was not a cruise, thereby keeping away from the temptation of the casino on board. I was willing to live by the Pressure Relief Group budget, although it was somewhat restrictive at first. I exercise every day even though I hate it, because I know it is good for me. In these ways, I turn myself over to my Higher Power.

I must ask myself this question: what do I have faith in?

If I wait until I feel ready to do something, I will probably never do it. It is in the act of doing that I gain the confidence that I am capable of completing the task. In this way, I make a decision to act for the betterment of my life and build my strength from having the courage to take scary steps.

I used to worry about everything. I was so anxious. As I have gained faith in my Higher Power, I have begun to take care of myself and to stop trying to manipulate my gambler in an effort to control what happens. I have let go of outcomes that I have no control over.

The part of this Step that speaks to me is "made a decision" which was so hard for me before Program. Every decision was astronomical. The outcomes of my decisions, no matter how simple, were seen back then as having to be perfect "for all of my life ..." Back then, I never understood the concept of one day at a time.

In reference to the first three Steps, I have heard the phrase, "I can't. My Higher Power can. I think I'll let Him."

I hear others say "Act as if." In doing so, I act in the way I would want my better self to act and await the day when those same actions are my "go to" actions.

I love the phrase "made a decision." It keeps it so simple: just make the decision to come to Gam-Anon and be open to the Program. Stop the torment: should I, shouldn't I, over and over. Just make the decision and be done with it!

I needed to "get off the fence." Part of me wanted what the Program had to offer and part of me just wanted to put my head back in the sand and make believe none of this was really happening to me. I came to meetings when it was convenient. I did not call anyone, even when my heart was breaking. I suffered on my own. When I had finally reached my own bottom, I began to make attendance at meetings a priority in my life. I became involved with other members. I became committed to the Program and my life began to get better.

Working Step Three

What does it mean to work Step Three? We work Step Three when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the third stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Three is about

Faith

1. Willingness to be open to a new way of thinking and living
2. Making a decision to allow the Higher Power (of our own understanding) to work in our lives

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Three and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Willingness to be open to a new way of thinking and living:

1. When were you really ready to allow this Program to work for you? Why do you think it happened *then*? How did you demonstrate this readiness?
2. What burdens are currently on your shoulders? Is there comfort in knowing that facing these burdens is no longer necessary to do alone? Describe your feelings in having a Higher Power help you with these burdens.
3. What are the other resources that you rely upon in life? How do they serve as a "higher power" for you? Do you still want to do everything "your way" or are you open to other ways of solving issues? Are you defiant, stubborn, wary, doubtful, cynical, teachable, or enthusiastic about changing the way you look at the world? Explain.
4. In what ways were you willing to adopt a completely new attitude about living with the gambling problem?
5. Can you give up writing the script of your life (and everyone else's)?
6. Do you feel that your Higher Power should endorse the plans and solutions that you have envisioned? Do you "bargain" with your Higher Power?

Making a decision to allow the Higher Power (of our own understanding) to work in our lives:

1. Step Three speaks to making the decision to surrender your will and your life to your Higher Power. What does this mean to you? How does this surrender of your will make you feel? What can you do today that demonstrates surrendering your will?
2. The essence of Step Three is the making of a decision to have faith in a Higher Power outside of you. Why is the act of making a decision so important? Can you relate to the concept that reliance on a Higher Power might help you experience some sense of freedom and some independence?

3. Think back. In what ways did you evolve from *making a decision* to embrace Gam-Anon to *making a decision* to really commit to the Program? And what does a real commitment mean to you? Does a real commitment make the journey to serenity easier?

Faith:

1. Some people view faith as the opposite of fear. Fear often keeps us from taking action. Courage is doing something despite the fear. How does this apply to you? What holds you back?
2. A powerful way to grow in your faith is to simply "act as if" you already have faith. "Act as if" you routinely turn your will and life over to your Higher Power. There are many theories as to why this approach works, but the bottom line is this: when we "act as if" something is true in our lives over a period of time, it will most often become a reality for us. An easier way to say this is, "Fake it until you make it." Explore the areas in your life where this approach of "Act as if" has the most significance. How do you feel after you "Act as if?" In what areas has the "Act as if" way of living led to a desired new reality?
3. Sometimes we "Let go and Let God" but our situation is still not to our liking. How can you accept your reality when it is not what you wanted it to be? Are you willing to have faith that you are exactly where you need to be right now?
4. As you increase your faith, in what ways do you feel more serene?

STEP FOUR

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The principle of Step Four is *honesty*. It calls for us to fearlessly search our own character and behavior. Many of us dedicated an excessive amount of time taking the inventory of others, particularly our gamblers. We have found fault with our gamblers; we have blamed and criticized. *They* were the guilty ones, and we believed we were merely victims of their actions. But what was our part in the gambling picture? What role did we play in bringing our lives to this unhappy place? Now it is time to look at ourselves.

Some of us have an aversion to taking an inventory of ourselves. We may convince ourselves there is no need. We clutch at excuses. Many of us believe that if they, the gamblers, had treated us better, we would not have gone astray in our thinking. We may feel our thinking and actions are justified.

For many of us this Step presents a daunting endeavor. What will we discover if we inventory ourselves? Our own self-pride might get in the way of a sincere desire to see our faults. It will be difficult to tear down the facades we spent so much time creating, hiding from our families, the world, and ourselves. Will the effort be worth the pain and discomfort? And what will we discover?

Let us remember that we are not looking to merely find fault with ourselves. We are looking to better understand our behaviors in light of our circumstances. We need to see our strengths as well as our weaknesses. We need to see our capabilities as well as the errors we have made. Recognizing our good qualities with humility allows us to experience satisfaction in what is good, loving, and generous in us. We are not helped by justifying our shortcomings, nor are we helped by resenting them or being depressed by them. Being honest with ourselves will not only help us in identifying the negatives but will allow recognition of the positives.

Our inventory is simply how we get to know ourselves better. "Why do we behave as we do?" "How do we think?" "What are our values, our priorities, our fears and hopes?" "Who are we?" "Have we changed over time?" "Are we ashamed of whom we have become?" "Do we fall short of being who we wish to be?" Or ... "Are we satisfied with how we live our lives?" "What are our good qualities?" "What do we like about ourselves?"

We may not even know where or how to begin to take an inventory. It is often suggested that our inventory be written. When we write our thoughts down on a piece of paper, the words and meaning become real to us. The spoken word can be changed or modified by the way it is said; the written word stands. The physical act of writing is the outward manifestation of our inner commitment.

Some may choose to create a life history, writing the story of one's life as it is remembered, starting with the first recollection to the present time, including all the feelings experienced that we can recall. Others might choose to break their lives into time divisions or life stages.

Still others prefer to examine a checklist of characteristics, behaviors, or feelings such as resentment, arrogance, pride, love, patience, forgiveness, envy, etc., and determine how these relate to the important people, places, and things in our lives. For example, "How do I deal with anger?" "What brings me joy?" The *Gam-Anon 4th Step Inventory* book clearly relates to our Gam-Anon experience and is a source of structured inventory questions, identifying meaningful characteristics and feelings, allowing us to elaborate on those that are important to us.

Step Four does not require us to make changes. It prepares us for the Steps that follow in which we determine what changes we may wish to make. Here in Step Four we need only have the courage to examine honestly, who we are.

We, in Gam-Anon, concur with Socrates' statement: "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Reflections

When I came into the Program, I loved having Step Four. I so wanted to know what was wrong with me that a nice girl like me ended up in such despair. What was wrong with me that I allowed myself to sink to such depths?

Why had I surrendered my values to keep this relationship?

My recovery began when the fear of losing me became greater than the fear of losing him.

I needed to know why I acted as I did in spite of knowing better.

Step Four was a window into myself. I needed to recognize my assets and defects so that I could move forward with my life, changing the ways in which I harmed myself.

I would have liked to believe that my gambler was the cause of all my regrets, but clearly, I had free choice when I didn't act in my own best interest.

I love the Gam-Anon 4th Step book - its sections and questions afford me real avenues to direct my soul searching.

I avoided a written Fourth Step - not really wanting to write the story of my life, but the Gam-Anon 4th Step book approach is the framework I needed to get going.

In spite of my assets, which I greatly value, I am often diminished and greatly saddened by my defects. I need to accept I am not perfect. Defects are part of my humanity.

For me, the Fourth Step was the beginning of learning about myself. Before that, I had no language for the things that I was feeling. I just stuffed it all down. Now I can name what is going on inside of me. I love the clarity.

There was a time in my life when I could not even look into the mirror. All I felt was shame about who I had become. Approaching the inventory was very scary for me. But doing it marked the beginning of my healing.

I needed to understand why, even as my gambler deceived me, I was all too willing to put my head in the sand; even though my gambler lied, I chose to believe the lies. How could I possibly have bought into the dreams and schemes presented to me?

I wanted to explore what it was about me that had me covering my gambler's debts and lying for my gambler.

I had to get honest with myself. Did I object to the gambling or only to the losses from the gambling?

I began doing Step Four searching for my negative qualities, the things that kept me stuck in a bad place. I was surprised and grateful to also recognize that I had good qualities. This recognition gave me a much-needed boost to my confidence.

Doing my Fourth Step helped me to hold myself responsible for the part I played in my own life. I was no longer able to blame the gambler for all that went wrong. My own actions and choices were keeping me tied to my gambler's illness.

The path to my recovery became more defined after doing the Fourth Step. I realized somewhere that I lost the person I thought I was and wanted to be. I was counting on Step Four to reintroduce her to me.

Step Four taught me I needed to take care of all of me. Just dressing up the outside was not enough. I needed to repair myself from the inside out.

Step Four helped me realize that not dealing honestly with my fear and anger caused me to say and do things for which I am not especially proud.

This inventory stuff is PAINFUL! And I have to tell you I DON'T LIKE IT! Going back through my life, sorting out all of the garbage, processing it, and figuring out my part in all of it is next to impossible to do on my own. But I am not on my own. I have my sponsor to talk to and to push me when I start to slack off.

Working Step Four

What does it mean to work Step Four? We work Step Four when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the fourth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Four is about

Honesty

1. Making a searching and fearless moral inventory
2. Process to take the inventory

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Four and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Making a searching and fearless moral inventory

1. Now that you are free to focus on yourself, are you fearful of doing so? Is it painful to acknowledge the part you played in the gambling problem? How have you hidden from yourself? Your family? The world? Would you rather continue to blame others for your situation? Has (false) pride kept you from looking honestly at yourself? Are you afraid of what you will find?

2. What are your values? Have you behaved in ways that are consistent with your values?

3. As you examine your life, in what ways do you recognize that you are neither all good nor all bad? Is it painful to acknowledge the part you perhaps played in the gambling problem?

4. Reflect on the cathartic effect of the inventory ... the humbling effect ... the freeing effect.

Process to take the inventory

1. A balanced approach keeps the inventory honest and humbling yet positive and useful. Which of the following issues might be stumbling blocks for you in attempting to have a balanced inventory?

- a) Trying to go too fast too soon.
- b) Glossing over faults to avoid the pain.
- c) Concentrating on faults while having difficulty seeing positive traits.
- d) Making the commitment to find time to complete the inventory.
- e) Fear of dredging up the painful past.
- f) Getting stuck in memories of painful experiences.
- g) Getting bogged down by feelings of guilt.
- h) Focusing on self-recriminations (e.g., I should've done that. Why didn't I do that sooner? If only I wouldn't have done that, etc.)
- i) Blaming.
- j) Justifying actions or rationalizing choices.

2. Many people resist the notion of actually writing their inventory. They may be content to discuss parts of their inventory but shy away from putting it down on paper. What method of doing an inventory is most appealing to you? Would you

prefer to write in a journal or on a computer? Perhaps you would consider a letter to your Higher Power. Would you like to do it alone or with others? Throughout the Step Four inventory process, will you look to your sponsor for support, motivation, or discussion on any questions you may have about the process?

3. When you write your 4th Step Inventory, which would you prefer:

- a) Narrative - Write the story of your life in chronological order, paying special attention to your feelings and actions.
- b) Life Stages/Time Divisions - Write your life, choices, and personality as you moved through childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, and adulthood. Make comparisons of your choices and feelings about each stage - especially with the time periods when you were most involved with the gambler.
- c) Characteristics - Write about the various characteristics of your personality and life in different time periods, being careful to spend just as much time on positives as on negatives. For example: **Anger** - How have I dealt with anger in various episodes of my life? What about now? **Joy** - What has brought me the most joy in my life? What about now? Is my joy based only on the circumstances around me, or have there been times of inner joy? The *Gam-Anon 4th Step* inventory book published by the Gam-Anon International Service Office offers this approach.

4. Looking ahead to Step Five, how do you feel about sharing your inventory with another person? Sharing your inventory as you go along has the added benefit of working Step Four and Step Five simultaneously.

Honesty

1. Reflect on the concept of honesty as it relates to the inventory. How can you be searching and fearless in your inventory?

2. We may hide behind a mask before others, but we can never really hide from ourselves. In what ways have you tried to deceive yourself?

STEP FIVE

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

The principle of Step Five is *courage*. It takes courage to admit to ourselves that we have character flaws and perhaps it is even more fear-provoking to admit them to another person. We may be ashamed of our past and embarrassed about how we handled our lives and the things we have done. We have had our defenses up for so long that we hesitate to take off the masks we present to the world. We may wonder what will happen if someone else sees the "real" me. Will this person not like me or reject me?

As we worked Step Four, we became aware of problem areas in our lives. Awareness alone, however, will not result in the resolution of these problems. Some positive action is necessary.

We have relied on our Higher Power to help us work the Program thus far. We may feel, therefore, that just sharing these self-discoveries with our Higher Power would be sufficient. But it isn't. Since we suffer from human frailties, the sharing with another human being will help with our continued search for personal honesty and humility.

Why must this action be to admit our wrongs – our defects – to another human being? Why isn't just writing them down enough? Because there is more work to be done with our inventory! We have learned that simply doing an inventory and then not continuing with the following Steps could lead us back to the self-deception which we have used all too often in the past. Willingness to admit to another who we are, despite our fear of exposure, will strengthen our sense of honesty and humility. Remember that as human beings we all have faults; therefore, we are not unique. This truth may help diminish our fears as we work this Step.

What we discover when we do Step Five is that we are just members of the human race with human weaknesses and failings. Each of us is no better and no worse than the others. We find that we are not alone. The burden of having to be perfect becomes lighter. We gain a clarity and perspective that was previously hidden from us. We can forgive ourselves for our failings. We understand that we were just

doing the best we could at that time. We can peel away our masks as we confidently begin the process of making better choices in the future.

It is important to remember that our Fourth Step is not just about our defects. It also reflects our assets and our values. When we entrust our Fourth Step inventory to another human being, we continue the process of becoming honest, open, and committed to self-improvement. We leave shame and isolation in the past. We are willing to share the fullness of who we are.

When we are ready to share our personal inventory, we seek to find someone whom we can trust and in whom we can confide. We want someone who will honor our anonymity. We wish to speak with someone who can be objective, a person who will not be affected by our revelations. We seek a person who will not criticize and not judge. We want someone who will be a passive listener and will not offer advice or solutions. We are not looking for sympathy; we are looking for someone who can empathize with us, a person who understands our situation. Often this person will be our sponsor or another Gam-Anon member; however, we may choose to speak to a member of the clergy or a therapist. This is an individual decision. Mostly, when we speak, we want to be listened to and heard. And we want to feel *safe* with our revelations. We find that "talking it out" is cathartic. Unspoken thoughts become a burden; these burdens become more daunting with time. When we have someone we can talk to, we can see our problems in a new light. A new clarity presents itself.

Sometimes we do not even recognize our own feelings or character flaws. We have been in turmoil for so long that we become immune to the signals. For example, we might be acting out anger toward our compulsive gambler and not even know that we are stuck in such resentment. However, when we talk to another person, he/she might have the language to clarify our own words so that we may view them with more insight. When we say things aloud, we can actually hear what we are saying! That in itself can motivate us to take action. We don't want to go back on our word. A silent promise made to ourselves to bring about change is not nearly as powerful as a commitment to another person.

We are assured that our situation is not insurmountable when we speak to others who have experienced similar situations. When we work Step Five, we are stepping courageously into the beginning of our change.

Reflections

Doing a Fifth Step requires a great deal of trust on the part of the person doing the Step work because it takes a great deal of courage to bare one's soul.

My sponsor is totally unbiased, loving, and affirming. She helps me forgive my failures and see my good qualities.

It was such a relief to get all that stuff out. It was the first time I ever said what was really going on inside of me, and nobody tried to fix me or tell me what I "should" do. They just listened.

I had such pain, and it festered inside of me. Nobody could understand. Everyone jumped in with opinions and solutions. So I stopped telling people and kept it all in. When I did Step Five, I finally felt that I was being heard.

My mom used to say as she put on her make-up in the morning that she was "putting on her face." I put on my face for the outside world. In the Gam-Anon room, I can take off my face and be real.

When I speak aloud about what I need to do to change my behavior, I am more committed to making the required change.

I am grateful to my sponsor for allowing me to unburden myself in ways that were so private.

Sometimes my mere unexpected utterance as I speak at a meeting is just what I need in order to hear my inner self.

I became an expert at keeping things hidden for years. I could not bring myself to reveal to the world what kind of life I was living. What would everyone think of me? I wanted everyone to view me as a person who had it all together. The thought of doing Step Five made me very anxious. I gradually got over this feeling the more I told the truth about my life in my Gam-Anon room. This helped me take the Fifth Step.

As we spoke about Step Five in our Gam-Anon meetings, I realized that this Step was more about finding peace than seeking and receiving absolution for the wrongs I did.

After doing Step Five before a member of the clergy, I realized I not only felt unburdened, but also that I had just done the right thing and I was on the path to righting a wrong.

I was raised believing never to "air my dirty laundry in public." It was understood when I was growing up that there should not be any talk outside about family matters. Therefore, speaking of my situation at a Gam-Anon meeting, and then even more deeply when doing Step Five, was really difficult for me at first. However, the more I shared, the better I felt, and now it just comes automatically for me to share what is going on in my life.

Having come this far, I don't want to disappoint my sponsor or myself. There is always the deadline of the phone call I have to make. I've got one tomorrow morning, and I still have work to do. I've said I will make that call, and I will. I am already seeing the benefits of some of the work. Sponsorship, for me, is the only possible way for me to complete this journey. Do I think it's possible to do it on my own? For some people, maybe—for me, no way!

I experienced anxiety and some feelings of "run for the hills" when my sponsor suggested that we meet and share some writings from my Fourth Step. I was very scared to reveal any of the screw-ups from my past! But I did believe that the Twelve Steps would help me - and to keep trying even if I'm scared. My sponsor told me some of the things she had written when she did her own Fourth Step, so it wasn't so difficult for me to share what I'd written about myself. Her insight into my Fourth Step writing was probably the greatest gift of that day!

Working Step Five

What does it mean to work Step Five? We work Step Five when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the fifth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Five is about

Courage:

1. Sharing our inventory with another person
2. Clarifying the exact nature of our wrongs
3. Lifting the burden of our past

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Five and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Sharing our inventory with another person

1. Do you think sharing the exact nature of your wrongs will bring accountability? Why? Do you believe sharing the exact nature of your wrongs will prevent backsliding? Why? Do you have a desire to explain or justify how the wrongs came about? If so, why?
2. Reflect upon why writing down your faults is not enough. What is so important about admitting them to another human being?
3. When you admit your faults and talk about feelings and behaviors with another, do you find clarity? Do you get a different perspective about yourself? Do you feel that you gain acceptance?
4. Can you be completely honest with yourself and others about your mistakes and character flaws? What did these shortcomings cost you? How did any self-destructive behavior affect you and those around you? Were you aware that your behavior was destructive while being caught up in it? In what ways did you justify this behavior?
5. What are the qualities you look for in the person with whom you wish to share your Fifth Step? When receiving someone else's Fifth Step, are you a good listener? Can you share without giving advice? How, if at all, might your relationship with the listener change after you deliver your Fifth Step? Do you see the possibility to build on your relationship? How?
6. With whom will you share your Fifth step? Reflect on how you trust that person and the process.
7. How do you see working Step Five as serving you to make changes in your life? How are you better off from having worked Step Five?

Clarifying the exact nature of our wrongs

1. Reflect on the phrase "the exact nature of our wrongs." The word "wrongs" as used in this Step refers back to the defects and character flaws we confronted in Step Four. What are your thoughts and feelings when you define the exact nature of your wrongs? Reflect on how it feels to give voice to these wrongs to yourself and another human being.
2. Do you believe your faults are worse than those of other people? Why? Or do you believe your faults are not as bad as those of other people? Why? Does it matter to you how you compare with others? If so, why?
3. When you look in the mirror, what do you see? In Gam-Anon, we hold up the mirrors to each other and ourselves. We see who we are and who we want to become. What are the "masks" that you wear and how do they serve you?

Lifting the burden of our past

1. It is often said that we are "as sick as our secrets." Do you feel that you are carrying a lighter burden now that you have shared it with another? How did doing your Fifth Step lessen the feeling of isolation?
2. How has admitting your character flaws and failures been freeing? Has this admission decreased their power over you? Has unburdening yourself brought you peace of mind? How has life changed now that you have this peace of mind? Are you less or more likely to return to "old ways" of dealing with life?
3. How does working Step Five bring you closer to moving away from your past and making changes in your life?

Courage

1. Did you need courage to admit your wrongs to yourself and to your Higher Power? Can you summon up this same kind of courage as you share them with another human being?
2. How has the courage to admit your faults to another human being helped you to grow emotionally and spiritually?

3. How can having the courage to admit your human frailties bring you into closer relationships with others? With your Higher Power? With yourself?

4. Can you identify the manner in which self-deception played a part in your life in the past? Do you now have the courage it takes to admit this?

5. How has doing Step Five given you the courage to remove the masks you wore? Do you present yourself to those in your life in a new and more confident way?

STEP SIX

Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.

The principle of Step Six is *willingness*. This Step is about becoming willing to let go of our character defects no matter how familiar and comfortable they may have become. It is here that we set the stage for the changes we are about to make. It is in Step Six that we become *willing* to have these defects of character removed. We can now prepare ourselves to allow them to be removed and to make room for positive changes.

Our Fourth Step has guided us in identifying our defects of character. Step Five points out the importance of admitting these defects to our Higher Power and to a trusted human being of our choice. We see ourselves clearly, perhaps for the first time in our lives. We have identified our assets, and we have come to know many of our character defects, recognizing the harmful and detrimental effects they have had on our lives. We have discovered that we are not all we would like to be. Now is the time to become entirely ready and *willing* to have these defects of character removed. This is the process by which we become fully prepared to live without the defects that have stood in the way of our being our best selves.

Some of us may resist becoming willing for such changes to occur. Perhaps we are afraid to change. We might even take pride in or cling to a defect. For example, if we are often “stubborn,” we may believe that our stubbornness is our way of getting what we want. It works for us. But is it hurting us, too? Are we stubborn to the point of being obstinate or when we would benefit from being more reasonable? If we are often “angry,” we may feel justified in our anger. But how does our anger hurt us? Are we walking around with a snarl on our face and a knot in our neck? When we realize our anger is hurting no one but ourselves it is then time to turn that page and become willing to be rid of it. We become ready to question, “Is this who I really want to be?”

We may believe that in some way, our defects define us. Perhaps we are a “negative thinker” or a “worrier.” We wonder, “Who would I be if I didn’t worry? It is who I am.” We might believe that we need to worry: if we “worry” enough, our worrying will magically result in a desired outcome. We may say, “What would be left of me without worry?” Perhaps what would be left is a person who is serene and peaceful!

Some defects we recognize simply do not work for us anymore. For instance, if we are a "controller," we might now say, "Has my desire to control resulted in actually controlling anyone?" Or "Has this defect damaged my self-image?" If we tend to be critical and judgmental of others, we might now recognize that our criticism often alienates those whom we judge, rarely making us feel good.

Some defects may simply be familiar and comfortable. We may feel *this is just the way I am. I can't change.* We certainly can't change if we don't see the value in change or if we don't want to change. We may feel, *why bother. I'm doing fine as I am.* But are we really?

We may think we are powerless over our defects of character. To a degree, this is true. Many of us who are not often conscious of our behavior simply "run on automatic." But those of us who have done our inventories have become aware of our defects and can develop the ability to choose how we act in the future. Looking ahead to Step Seven, we are reminded that we will need a power greater than ourselves to help remove them. At this stage of recovery, however, we are able to understand our defects of character and their negative effects on our lives. We are now willing and, in fact, looking forward to replacing them with positive changes.

The key words in this Step are "entirely ready." "Entirely ready" means being fully prepared. Keeping this definition in mind, we now approach Step Six, which calls for us to be entirely ready to have these defects removed. We find that our defects bring us more pain than pleasure. We sincerely wish to be rid of them. We feel that "enough is enough." We are sick and tired of being "sick and tired." Actually, as we become more willing to be rid of our defects, the opportunity to face them seems to present itself more often. Perhaps this is because we are now living "mindfully." We become earnest in our desire to grow and live more fully and to be the best we can be. We become *willing* to be rid of the difficulties and troublesome ways of the past. To continue without such change would stand in the way of our progress toward recovery.

Since this is a program of spiritual growth, we approach Step Six in our own unique way. We know that we must work this Step at our own individual pace. We can look to the Program for guidelines.

We need to remember that even though we may feel we are entirely ready to have our defects removed, we may continue to act as always, stuck in our behaviors. It is here that we are humbled and come to understand our need to continue on with Step Seven. Before Gam-Anon we tried to solve our problems through our own efforts, intellect, and will, and we usually faced frustration and helplessness. Strengthened by our increasing sense of willingness, we become entirely ready to be rid of our defects of character and look forward to taking the action stated in Step Seven.

Reflections

Once I took the blindfold off and stopped being stubborn about my defects, I understood why I had to become willing to "let go of them." My defects no longer served me. In fact, I was being harmed by them. I had a need to move on.

After doing Step Five, I recognized that I was harming myself with the continuing anger I felt toward my compulsive gambler. Step Six prepared me to rid myself of it for good.

As I began noticing my defects of character, I started asking myself, "Can I live my life better without this unhealthy action or feeling?" And ... "Am I ready and willing to let go of it?" Just because I was willing did not mean that was the end of it. But each time it reappeared, I reflected on my willingness to be rid of it. I knew eventually as I moved on to Step Seven I would see the demise of it.

I couldn't stand looking into the mirror and seeing who I had become. I hated my life and myself.

I am drowning. ... I have to change - enough is enough.

I felt that my gambler should change, must change, now ... but I only have to "try" to change.

I was always so willing to do anything possible to change my gambler. I was never successful. Am I willing to do anything to change me? Yes, and I believe I will be successful.

It seemed that once I was really willing to be rid of my defects, I became more conscious of them as they appeared. My defects became impossible to ignore. Specifically, when I decided that I no longer wanted to be an angry person, I began to see how really angry I was all the time. And this made me even more “ready” to be rid of it.

My school motto was “Let each become all he is capable of being.” It has been a long time since I attended that school, but I am finally ready to accept that challenge.

I felt as if I had crossed the “point of no return.” Now that I see myself so clearly, how can I possibly continue to behave this way? I have a deep desire to do things differently.

I have come to recognize my usual role in escalating family dramas. I am so tired of it. Step Six reminds me that I am ready to face my role in the dramas and am ready to behave differently.

I could barely look at myself in the mirror, anymore. When the pain of looking at the person I became was worse than my fear of changing, I became ready and willing to have my defects of character removed.

Working Step Six

What does it mean to work Step Six? We work Step Six when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the sixth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Six is about

Willingness

1. Being entirely ready to have our defects of character removed
2. Become open and ready to change

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Six and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Being entirely ready to have our defects of character removed

1. Reflect on your defects of character that have had a big impact on your relationship with others. How would your life be different if you let go of these defects? Considering the impact these changes would have on your family – your

spouse, children, parents, other relatives, significant others, friends, and work relationships – will making changes be worth it? In what ways? Does this encourage you to become willing? Has becoming aware of your defects made you ready for their removal?

2. We often expect our gamblers to change, to change quickly, and to rid themselves of their defects of character. We may be unwilling to excuse them when they do not change in *our* timetable. But what excuses do you use to continue on indefinitely with your defects? How do you justify this seeming unfairness?

3. “Self-justification” of our shortcomings is an easy trap to fall into. It means we are excusing away defects in our character as “normal” or “okay” even though they are not. How does self-justification keep you from being ready and willing to make needed changes? How does self-justification counter your sense of humility? How do you feel about yourself if you opt to justify shortcomings?

4. Reflect upon this thought: “*When is enough, enough?*” When do we become “sick and tired” of being “sick and tired” with respect to our defects – those aspects of ourselves that interfere with becoming all we would want to be? Are you ready to become your best self? Are you ready to eliminate defects that are hurtful to yourself or others?

5. In what way are your “defects” actually “coping mechanisms” that may have outlived their usefulness in your life?

6. Do you have some particular defect you would rather keep? How does it serve you? Do you take pride in it? In what ways does the defect make you feel good, powerful, in control, or strong? How does it hurt you? Does the defect “define” you, comfort you, help, or hurt your self-esteem?

Become open and ready to change

1. Reflect upon these thoughts: If your defects are removed, what will be left of you? Will you be better for their removal? How does that make you feel?

3. How does staying consciously aware of your defects help with your readiness to change? How does talking with another Gam-Anon member or speaking at a meeting help with your readiness to change? What role does Step Five play in your willingness to do Step Six?

4. Do you tell yourself, "I am *trying to change or trying to ...?*" Is it enough to "try"? Step Six does not say we are *trying* to be ready. How have the words "try" or "trying" allowed you to hide from making the commitment to change? Think of the many times you have said, "I'll try." What was the result?

5. In conjunction with letting go of your defects of character, can you describe in what ways you think your life might change? For example, how would your life be different if you weren't angry all the time?

6. Can you put your trust in the process and cease struggling? Can you accept and not be discouraged when you find yourself not ready to change? Is it more difficult to live with a certain defect as you are becoming ready to make change? Do you have patience with the process?

7. As we continue on the journey of self-exploration, we come to recognize many feelings that we previously ignored or stuffed down. Some of these negative feelings manifest themselves as our defects or character flaws, particularly when they overwhelm us or overtake our lives. Are you ready and willing to be rid of such negative feelings as pessimism, distrust, fear, anxiety, insecurity, etc.?

Willingness

1. Since you have been in Program, in what ways have you seen an increase in peace, comfort, humility, and spirituality in your life or in other members' lives? How does this inspire your willingness to have your defects removed?

2. As we continue in our journey, we come to understand that dealing with our defects is not an all or nothing consideration. We may be willing to have some defects removed, but not necessarily all defects. We come to understand that our willingness to address other defects may come in time. What defects are you willing to have removed? What brought you to this point of readiness? What defects are you not willing to have removed at this time? Why?

3. What is the difference between wanting to do something and being willing to do it? Could you ever see yourself saying, "I don't necessarily *want* to give up this particular character defect, but I am *willing* to give it up for the sake of becoming better?"

STEP SEVEN

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

We have become entirely ready to have our shortcomings removed in Step Six, but this may not be as easy to do as we think. Even though we have found within ourselves a true desire to be rid of our defects of character, we discover we cannot simply change ourselves *by ourselves*. Surely if we could have, we would have by now. Even though we feel we are entirely ready to have our defects removed, we may continue as in the past. If we are to relinquish our shortcomings or, indeed, change those undesirable things that have become an integral part of us, we will need help. Help from whom? Help from our Higher Power!

Before the Program, we tried to solve our problems through our own efforts, intellect, and will, and we often faced frustration. How many times did we say to ourselves, "Next time I am going to do this differently" or "Tomorrow I will stop my procrastinating" or "I know better!" or "I resolve to ..." or "I promise myself that from now on I will ...". And how many times did tomorrow come and go and we still thought or behaved in the same old way? So many of our good intentions to change came and went, and we were still burdened with the same old negative thoughts or acting in the same old debilitating and unproductive ways. We have come to understand that in order for us to change we need help. Again, as in Step One, we recognize the limits of our power, this time in removing our shortcomings and, again, we turn to our Higher Power for assistance and help. And so, with humility and without reservations, we ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings.

Does our Higher Power work alone to remove our shortcomings? Do we simply ask, and it is done? Probably not! By the time we reach Step Seven, we have a great desire to change. We are mindful of our shortcomings – those shortcomings that concern our thinking process, and other shortcomings that concern our behavior and our actions. We are now aware when we do not behave as we would really desire to behave. With this increased awareness about who we are and what we want to change about ourselves, we begin to assess alternate ways to act rather than just to continue in our old automatic way. We may ask our Higher Power for help, but we also need to do the footwork.

Humility is the principle or essence of this Step. But what does humility mean? Humility has been defined as the absence of false pride. It is infused with sincerity, integrity, and a yearning to improve ourselves, not to be better than others, but to be our own best selves. Some of us believe humility is a desire to seek and do God's will. Humility is the key to opening the door to recovery through this Step.

Humility does not imply groveling or servility. It is seeing ourselves in proper perspective in relation to the universe. It is seeing how much we have changed and realizing how much more we need to change. It is seeing our strengths without becoming arrogant and conceited and seeing our weaknesses without depression and self-pity.

When we strongly desire to change and humbly ask our Higher Power for help, we become able to take small steps toward changing. As we look back over time, we see that these small changes add up. We are indeed becoming the people we aspired to be. With the help of our Higher Power, our shortcomings are being removed.

Even with the help of our Higher Power, it will take time for our character defects to disappear. Remember, we each proceed at our own pace. Perfection is a long way off, but improvement can occur from day to day. We are reminded to go easy on ourselves and take one day at a time.

Reflections

Step Seven always eluded me despite my many years in Gam-Anon. But the day came – that most unexpected day – when I wept, humbled, and uttered aloud (referring to an obsessive debilitating thought) to the universe, "Please take this from me. I can't do this anymore." And miraculously, it was lifted! It is not important how this happened but only that it did happen. Today Step Seven is an integral part of my spiritual life.

When I invoke my Higher Power, I humbly acknowledge that I am just human and have limited capabilities. Step Seven reminds me that I am not expected to work alone in my efforts to change.

Were I only so powerful – imagine how I would change the world, much less myself.

If only I could will myself to lose all my defects....

I had a desire – to become "generous" with money (as my husband was), but I was thrifty to a fault. I asked my Higher Power to grant me the ability to be more generous. Then I proceeded to "act as if" I was generous each time I was presented with the opportunity to consciously choose generosity over thriftiness. My new generous attitude about money is now my natural way. I have actually changed! Not alone, but with the help of my Higher Power.

I was very skeptical about Step Seven. Then one day, when I was really tempted to do something that was not in my own best interest, I figured I would try doing what Step Seven tells me to do. I looked upward and actually dared my Higher Power to help me. Amazingly, the temptation immediately disappeared. I often wonder if my Higher Power really intervened or if it was because I willingly asked for help. I have decided that it doesn't matter. The fact is that it works!

I usually don't want to be rid of a defect, or want to make a change, unless my present behavior has become really troublesome for me. I seem to have to reach a kind of a "bottom." Likewise, I have to reach a "bottom" in trying to banish my defects by myself, before I remember to ask for help from my Higher Power.

My compulsive gambler, my husband, intimidated me. I was often afraid to present him with important issues. With the help of Step Seven, asking my Higher Power for the courage I lacked, I started to become more confident, less timid, and more assertive. I have discovered that sometimes when we change, other people don't quite like it. But I needed to do it for me and for my own sense of worth.

Prior to a job interview, I was anxious to the point of feeling as if I were walking into a room full of lions. I asked my Higher Power for help with my anxiety because I certainly was having no success on my own. My body relaxed as comforting thoughts like, "What's the worst that can happen?" were allowed to enter my head. I ask for help often, and it is always there for the asking.

In the very same day I asked my Higher Power for help to be quiet and not offer my (unwanted) opinion to my adult child, I also asked for help to speak up and find my voice when talking to my boss.

Sometimes it's like "déjà vu"... very few of my defects seem to go away permanently. I have to ask for help over and over with each new situation. I am hopeful that as I keep doing things in my new way, it will become my natural way and I will really have changed.

Working Steps Four, Five, and Six was challenging, and at times I found my commitment tested. Step Seven was the gift at the end of meeting the challenge of those Steps. I was thankful to learn that I was not expected to do this on my own. My Higher Power was my spiritual partner, and I was encouraged to diligently work this Step.

I was frustrated with my unsuccessful attempts to be rid of the defect of my need to control the gambler. I believed in Step One, that I was powerless over the gambling, but I still struggled. Step Seven is very clear about the need for humility in the process of letting go of our defects. I now see what I can do on my own and what I need help in accomplishing. I ask my Higher Power as many times as necessary to lift this defect and relieve me of my need to control not only the gambler but also others who touch my life.

I believe in nature as a force. It has taught me abundant lessons about humility and has assisted me in finding my spiritual self. That spiritual self is what I use when I practice Step Seven.

Wittingly or unwittingly, I have allowed defects of character to decimate my life. But I know these defects do not define who I am; they are not a part of my being. That is why I ask my Higher Power to help do what it takes to rid myself of them and let the real me surface.

For too long I realized that change was needed in the manner in which I made my way through life. Before Step Seven, my solution was putting my belief in magical thinking. I was counting on a miracle. The miracle in my life truly happened when I came to Gam-Anon.

I had the most difficulty with Step Seven. This Step entailed soul-searching and honesty. My false pride kept me blaming all my problems on the compulsive gambler. With humility and the help of my Higher Power, I was ready to recognize and let go of my own shortcomings in relation to our problems.

Working Step 7

What does it mean to work Step Seven? We work Step Seven when we come to understand the significance of this Step as the seventh stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Seven is about

Humility

1. Asking our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings as we acknowledge we cannot do it alone
2. Doing the footwork for changing

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Seven and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Asking our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings as we acknowledge we cannot do it alone

1. The journey through Steps Four, Five, and Six, and now Seven is an in-depth journey into facing your assets and defects. Having identified your defects, having shared this inventory, having become entirely ready to rid yourself of your defects, you may now recognize you are unable to do this alone. How do you value this long and insightful journey? Why do you now believe you are unable to remove your shortcomings alone? Do you contemplate being able to continue this process through life's journey, perhaps in the face of new challenges?

2. One way of working this Step is by beginning the day with the Serenity Prayer and the acknowledgment of your yearning to have a specific defect removed, one that needs your attention. Can you begin each day inviting your Higher Power to help you in your sincere desire to be rid of your character defects? Are you open to the idea that you cannot remove all your shortcomings yourself? How does this make you feel?

3. The defect we find ourselves working on may not be the one we would have chosen but may be the one needing priority attention. Through life's twists and turns we are sometimes forced to face defects that we would have preferred to avoid. What life events forced you to face your defects? How does that make you feel? Are you thankful in the long run for being forced to face your defects? Do you see a good outcome as a result?

Doing the footwork for changing

1. In what ways, if any, are you able to remove your shortcomings by yourself? In what ways, do you recognize that in spite of “doing the footwork” you still need the help of your Higher Power? Write about the “footwork” you have done in relation to your specific defects. Why wasn’t it enough? How do you “invite” your Higher Power to help you? Do you have confidence that with your Higher Power’s help and your footwork your defects will be removed? If not, why? What can you do to gain this confidence?

2. Can you “think” yourself into changing for the better? How can you “act” your way to changing for the better? How does “act as if” work for you?

3. An important part of Step Seven is allowing your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings. At first, this may sound like you need only “sit back and do nothing.” However, there is action to be taken, just not the same kind of action you may have previously considered. Some might say, “Let go and Let God.” Sometimes we just have to get out of our own way. Reflect on the following footwork you take when you allow your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings:

trust ... risk ... ask ... cooperate ... believe ... reach out ... open yourself ... meditate ... pray ... be flexible ... accept ... be disciplined ... be humble. ... What else?

4. Removal of our shortcomings implies change. Change demands self-discipline. How has self-discipline been a factor in the changes you have undergone? If you have tried to change and failed, how can you use what you have learned in this process for the next time?

Humility

1. What does humble mean to you? How do you interpret humility as it appears in Step Seven?

2. Humility suggests that you are not the one and only person who can solve every problem. In the past have you acted as if you were the only one who could solve your problems? Can you open yourself and humble yourself, to accept the idea that other people and your Higher Power can provide solutions to your problems? Perhaps you can utilize some of these strategies to help:

meditation and prayer ... waiting and listening ... taking time to look at the situation to be sure it is yours to address ... asking for help ... speaking with your sponsor ... asking for suggestions in your Gam-Anon meeting. ... What else?

3. By uttering the Serenity Prayer, we acknowledge our humility. How does this apply to you?

How does each specific element of the prayer work for you?

4. Humility is the key to Step Seven. How balanced is the perspective you have of yourself?

STEP EIGHT

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

The principle of Step Eight is *sincerity*. If we are sincere in our desire to rebuild our lives, we will value the importance of making amends to those we have harmed. Perhaps we wonder why we in Gam-Anon even have such a Step. Why will we be making amends? We didn't gamble compulsively. Perhaps it would be helpful to define what constitutes harm to another in this context. Harm can be defined as injuring, damaging, or hurting an individual physically, emotionally, spiritually, morally, or financially. So, whom did we harm? If we have diligently completed a Fourth Step, we will know the answer.

We harmed others inadvertently by our behavior when we were angry, envious, depressed, or feeling sorry for ourselves. We harmed others by casting blame on them for our misery and by retaliating in unkind and disrespectful ways. When we were unable to cope, we took our frustrations out on others including our children, in-laws, parents, friends, co-workers, or just about anyone with whom we came in contact.

How many lies did we tell to our family and friends to cover for the gambler, borrow money, or hide our own shame? Rather than lying, we could have been honest. Who might have been hurt from our lies? Many of us got lost in the gambling problem instead of the care of our loved ones. How often did we disappoint our children because we didn't parent responsibly when our gambler acted irresponsibly? We were often unable to fully engage in life as it was going on around us. How many times were we unable to be present in moments that were important to family and friends? Whom have we neglected because of our acts of omission?

Many of us were miserable and took our misery out on others. It is painful to note that as we make our list, the people we harmed the most were often those we loved the most, namely, our children and family. Were we responsible for setting a bad example for those who looked up to us? Perhaps our actions or disinterest caused worry to those who love us. However, there may be others. Did we alienate friends by avoiding them due to shame about our situation? Did we stay away because we

couldn't "keep up"? Perhaps there were times that our employers did not get a full day's work from us, or perhaps we stole or borrowed money to sustain ourselves, our family, or the gambler. Perhaps we never before considered that by being consumed with the problem of compulsive gambling we could become hurtful to so many.

A very important realization is that we have harmed ourselves. Perhaps we have harmed ourselves the most, and we belong at the top of the list. Think about it! We deprived ourselves emotionally and spiritually through our anger, our inability to cope, and our despair. We harmed ourselves by spending our precious time, sometimes years, in misery neglecting our creativity, our careers, and the pursuit of self-fulfillment. We denied reality and disregarded our own feelings. We retreated from friends and family and became socially isolated. We harmed ourselves physically... ignoring our health, indulging in poor eating habits, losing sleep, pacing, worrying, and wasting our energy. We harmed ourselves financially with our distorted views about money, giving money inappropriately to the gambler, acting irresponsibly, some of us overspending, others living impoverished.

Perhaps the last person we might consider putting on this list is the gambler. How many times before we came to Gam-Anon did we blame the gambler for the unhappy situation in which we lived? We wanted our gamblers to change even when they indicated they would not – could not stop gambling. In the meantime, we remained status quo, not exerting any effort on our part to seek help. And yet we continued to criticize and berate them. Did we behave in ways that enabled them? Did we harm our gamblers by not allowing them to be responsible for their own actions? Did we harm them with our resentment or our anger or ill-suited decisions to get even? Did we engage in physical or verbal abuse or the withholding of love, affection, or emotional support?

How do we become willing to put someone on this list when the person we harmed may have harmed us too? Even if we believe they were as hurtful as or more hurtful than we were, we need to remember that we are still responsible for our actions. We are working our Program, doing our Eighth Step, to find recovery and to heal our spiritual selves. We wish to let go of the pain from memories in our past. If we have lived with shame, guilt, or remorse, we seek to move beyond these debilitating feelings.

A very important aspect of becoming willing to make amends is finding the willingness to forgive those who have hurt us. After all, how can we have a clear and healthy relationship with those whom we resent? We are encouraged to find the pathways to forgiveness, to overcome our resentments, thereby opening our hearts to others. We begin to forgive when we can shift our focus and energy from the pain that another person has caused us to the desire to let go of that pain. Ultimately, we are doing this for our own sake, not for the other person. When we can forgive others for the hurt they inflicted upon us and can drop a grudge or resentment that we have been holding onto, we give ourselves the gift of freedom from their wrongdoings. We are not excusing their behavior nor are we inviting them to hurt us again. What we are doing is acknowledging the hurts and letting them go in order to heal. Looking beyond resentments we have accumulated because someone has hurt us allows us to see that others share some of the same human frailties that we have. We recognize that they were only doing the best they could at the time.

Isn't it ironic that when we become open to forgiveness and compassion toward others, we are the ones who benefit from the softening of our own hearts! When we can drop the word "blame" from our vocabulary and become accepting and forgiving of others' shortcomings, we can also become kinder and gentler to ourselves. Self-forgiveness is also an integral part of Step Eight as we continue to rebuild our relationship with ourselves as well as with others.

Now that we have made our list, it is time to become willing to make amends. Remember, this Step asks only for willingness. To be willing to make amends takes courage and honesty. It asks that we drop our defenses and justifications. Facing the fact that we are responsible for harming others can be unsettling. At this point we need to rely on our Higher Power for the courage and honesty we need in order to bring to the surface painful experiences and embarrassing memories. We have kept many of these buried inside ourselves because of the burdensome feelings of guilt and shame that they have stirred within us. We become willing to cast off our excuses rather than seeking refuge in them. We become willing to accept full responsibility for our actions rather than pointing a finger at others.

Step Eight is not meant to be a guilt trip. We no longer need to see ourselves as either victim or victimizer. Doing Step Eight shows a sincere attempt to right our wrongs, recognize old patterns, and develop peaceful and rewarding relationships going forward.

Reflections

Resentment poisoned every aspect of my life. I was miserable and I was going to make my gambler miserable. Oh, how superior I was! I also took out my frustration on my kids. I was not the mother I wanted to be.

I shifted my attention away from the pain that my mother inflicted on me and focused on the desire to forgive and heal. I had given her a lot of power in my life. In forgiving, I took back my power.

Sometimes I believe I am angry at someone else, but I discover that I am really angry at myself ... or my reactions, for my sensitivity, my weakness ... my lack of "self."

My gambler gambled, and I covered her bad debts. I covered up for her behavior. I did not allow her to face the consequences of her actions. I wonder if she would have hit bottom sooner if I had acted differently.

I harmed myself by making choices that countered my values and beliefs. Forgiving myself for my bad choices was the hardest work I ever did. No one put a gun to my head to force my choices. I was solely responsible for the choices that wrecked my life.

I was afraid that if I showed my gambler any kindness such as forgiveness, she would take advantage of me and hurt me again.

I don't ever want to live with regrets, especially for my actions or behaviors that hurt people. Step Eight has taught me that it is time to become willing to put my past behind me and start working toward healthy relationships. Time is a gift; it doesn't last forever. I don't want to live with "I should have ..." I need to give myself the gift of serenity.

I heard it said that resentments cause spiritual heart attacks. Step Eight handed me the prescription for the cure for that heart attack. All I had to do was become willing to fill that prescription and move on to Step Nine.

By his own admission, my husband is a compulsive gambler. My father was an alcoholic, and my mother was a life-long victim. Where did that leave me? It left

me angry, reactive, and hurtful. At times I felt entitled to lash out and then soon after I would have feelings of self-hatred and regret. Gam-Anon has taught me I don't have to become a statistic. If I become willing, I can forgive: forgive those who hurt and disappointed me and forgive myself for striking back. I can break the cycle.

How willing am I to risk opening up to another human being, someone whom I have harmed and this same someone who has also harmed me? I came to the conclusion this is about my serenity and my peace of mind. The only risk I take is not doing it.

Working Step Eight

What does it mean to work Step Eight? We work Step Eight when we come to understand the significance of Step Eight as the eighth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Eight is about

Sincerity

1. Making a list of all persons we had harmed
2. Becoming willing to make amends to them all
3. Understanding forgiveness as a part of the process of making amends

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Eight and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Making a list of all persons we had harmed

1. Who are you including on your Step Eight list? What are your criteria for determining if you have caused harm to another?
2. In what ways may you have you harmed your children? Parents? Friends? Colleagues? Others? Do you feel guilty about the harm done? Are you embarrassed or ashamed of your past? Are you overwhelmed with regret? Do you detect alienation in any of your relationships?
3. Do you believe that *you* belong on your list? What are some of the ways you deprived yourself financially? Socially? Emotionally? Spiritually? In what other ways did you do harm to yourself?

4. In what ways have you hurt your gambler? Did you take on responsibilities that were not yours to assume? Did you "fix things" or prevent in any way the gambler from facing the consequences of the gambling? Did you withhold affection or love from the gambler? Did you lie, manipulate, cover-up for your gambler? Did you shame or berate the gambler? In what ways did you harm your gambler's dignity?

5. In light of the fact that compulsive gambling is an illness, an addiction, how do you process putting blame on the gambler? What part did you play in any dysfunction? Would you rather keep blaming others, or are you willing to take relevant responsibility for harm done? Have you seen yourself as a victim? Did you ever use the "victim" role to gain sympathy or help from others or to manipulate others?

Becoming willing to make amends to them all

1. Do you hesitate to do this Step because of denial, self-pity, regret, guilt, or condemnation?
2. Is there some amend that you are eager to make but simply don't know how you might approach this person with your amend?
3. Can you be willing to make certain "living amends" by changing your attitude, actions, or behavior rather than through words of apology? What might these amends look like?
4. What would be the motivation which would encourage you or increase your willingness to make an amend that you don't really want to make?
5. Having felt like a victim for so long, do you find it difficult to put the "shoe on the other foot" and recognize that you have hurt others, too?
6. Do you think it is still important to make an amend even if there is no desire to maintain the relationship?
7. Do you feel you can add to this list as time goes on, or do you feel you must complete the list all at once? Are there some people you don't want to consider at this time? Who are they and why?

Understanding forgiveness as a part of the process of making amends

1. Why do you need to forgive yourself? What choices did you make for which you must forgive yourself? How did you participate in the dysfunction of your life? Your home? Your family? Can you be gentle on yourself, understanding that you were just doing the best you could at the time?
2. Is there anyone on your list who you believe harmed you? Are you angry with that individual? Can you let go of that anger in order to forgive, or do you prefer to hold onto your resentments?
3. How do you forgive others for the harm they did to you? Do you believe that forgiving is simply "smoothing things over?" Do you forgive by ignoring the harm done? Do you think forgiveness is excusing or condoning bad behavior? Are you afraid that if you forgive someone, you give him or her license to repeat his or her bad behavior? Can you view forgiveness of others as a gift to yourself?
4. Can you recognize that if you forgive, you give yourself freedom from the pain of the anger and resentment you were carrying? Reflect about how this experience has manifested itself in your life.

Sincerity

1. Reflect on sincerity, as defined as "proceeding from genuine feelings." How sincere are you in your desire to right the wrongs of the past?
2. Are there some people on your list for whom it is more difficult to *sincerely* want to right the wrong? Why? How might you engage your Higher Power to help with this added hindrance?

STEP NINE

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

The principle of Step Nine is *action*. Step Nine calls for us to take the amends we have defined on our Eighth Step list from theory into *action*. Together Steps Eight and Nine aim to bring healing to ourselves and to our relationships with others. To amend is to change for the better, improve, to mend or repair, and to become better in conduct. At first, making amends might be uncomfortable, but a sincere attempt, using your Higher Power as a partner, will make it less daunting.

There are a number of ways to make amends. Direct amends are preferred when possible, such as a face-to-face apology, paying back a debt, or replacing lies with truth. Good judgment is needed to make an appropriate apology. Is this the proper moment for an apology in order to right a wrong, or could it open up an old wound? As we ask for guidance from our Higher Power, we can also seek the help of our sponsor or other experienced Gam-Anon members. We might need to plan the words to best use; we might find the manner in which we speak to be important – paying attention to tact, humor (if appropriate), sincerity, and the part we played in the incident. We need to be careful not to hurt someone again because we have a need to clear our conscience.

When making an amend, we must carefully speak only of what we did wrong. Even if the other person hurt us too, that is not the issue at hand. We should consider only our actions when making the amend. We are taking responsibility for the part we played. Consequently, self-justification or being accusatory will affect the sincerity of our amend.

It is not always possible to make direct amends. Sometimes persons we have harmed have passed away. The alternative here can become one of loving remembrance. We might wish to visit their gravesite and speak our amend. We might write a letter of amend to them. Perhaps performing an act of kindness in their name could be considered an amend. Through prayer, we can share our sincere desire to make this amend with our Higher Power.

Indirect amends can take many forms. Changes in our attitude and behavior, increased gentleness, tolerance, and acceptance, will be in direct contrast to the hurts we inflicted through anger, resentment, and fear. Sometimes the way we hurt another was not in what we did to them but in what we did not do. How many times were we so self-absorbed in our troubles that we were unable or unwilling to give others the attention or care that they needed from us? Now would be the perfect time to make amends by showing interest in another's well-being, activities, and achievements. We can do other kindnesses so that we are making what is sometimes referred to as "living amends," striving for patience, prudence, common sense, and courage.

We need also consider those amends that are challenging to make – how do we make amends to those who are unreachable, geographically afar, or have changed names? How do we make amends to the markets and shops from which we stole food, clothing, or holiday gifts for our children? These amends challenge us as we seek peace. Perhaps a charitable donation or performance of a good deed toward someone in need could help fulfill our yearning to make this amend.

Even though we are willing to reach out to others, with all the sincerity, honesty, and true humility we can muster, our amends may not always be accepted. Some people may not be ready to forgive us for the harm we did. We might be unearthing bad memories for them, and they may need more time to come to terms with our amends. Although we ideally would like for others to forgive us, as we are learning to find forgiveness for others, this is not the objective of our making amends. Even if we acknowledge the risk in making some amends, we make them anyway, unless we clearly understand that to do so would cause further injury. Guidance from our Higher Power and sensitivity are important considerations. If we procrastinate, it will tend to hinder our further growth. We need to remember that we are taking these actions to clear up the weight of our own guilt and remorse for our wrongdoings.

On the other end of the spectrum, the recipient of our amends may not even remember the event that has weighed so heavily in our minds. And there are others who may be truly pleased that we "owned up" to what we had done. This might result in a renewed relationship that has been waning over time. The people who love and care about us tend to forgive things we did to hurt them.

Of great importance is the need to make amends to ourselves if we are to continue to grow and change. We have explored in Step Eight the ways we have harmed ourselves in the past and how we need to forgive ourselves. Self-forgiveness is but one way of making amends to ourselves. Other ways we make amends to ourselves include caring for our body, mind, and spirit; pursuing the education or career we might have neglected or sacrificed; finding our voice; rebuilding relationships; finding joy each day by doing the things that make us happy to be alive; finding fulfillment; becoming the people we want to be.

Making amends to others gives us the gift of freedom from our unhappy past. Making amends to ourselves brings us into a future of hope and well-being. It is after taking the action called for in Step Nine that we truly become free from the regrets and remorse of our unhappy past. We "clean the slate" and begin to live our lives with a newfound freedom and happiness. We rebuild our relationships and continue on our journey to peace and serenity.

Reflections

Once I received a letter of apology from an old friend about an incident that had happened in our teen years. I had all but forgotten what occurred, but I was heartened to discover that she recognized how she had hurt me at the time. Several years later, I summoned the courage to write a similar letter of amends to someone I felt I had hurt. "Pass it on!"

I yearned for many years to make amends to my children for the way, in my frustration at the gambler, I took it all out on them. I waited for the right moment. Amidst tears and hugs, when it was finally appropriate, I admitted my failures to them. What a cleansing experience that was!

One amend I made to myself occurred when I told my image in the mirror that I would commit to my recovery,... that I would focus on my own journey to restoring my life, my values, my ethics. I would stay on higher ground.

One amend I made to my gambler, my husband, was to invite him to join me on the path of recovery, but to also tell him that I would no longer journey down the path to destruction if that was where he was heading.

I made an important amend to my gambler, my family, and myself when my Pressure Relief Budget reflected the "line items" I strongly believed in even if others did not. I always prided myself in what I valued – the arts, nature, service to my community. I was no longer going to prioritize paying off debt above a life of value. Thank you to the Pressure Relief for making this amend easy for me.

Committing to coming to Gam-Anon meetings and really paying attention to the Twelve Steps was needed if I ever were to change for the better. I could not have a "do-over," go back in time and re-live my life differently. I had to face my reality, make my life matter, and become healthy as the wife of a compulsive gambler who would always be the father of our children.

Supporting my gambler's involvement in GA is the best amend I could make to her. After all, if I love her, wouldn't I want her recovery for the sake of her ability to live healthy in this life?

I made my first amend to myself when I declared that I would never, never let myself down again. If there was one person I wanted to be always able to depend on, that was me.

After my very first Gam-Anon meeting I told my daughter that I would never again repay one of her gambling debts. I didn't realize it at the time but that was my first amend to the compulsive gambler. Today she is grateful.

I always loved my family but took them for granted during the gambling years of my marriage. Suddenly I understood the ways I neglected to be a caring participant in their lives. I never verbalized it to them but I did vow and keep that vow to be there for them during the good and the bad. If I tried, I could not name all the good things I have gotten in return just for being there. This was an amend to them and to myself.

I had no idea how to make a particular amend. The thought of it was unsettling: What would I say? How would the other person react? I thought, the only thing I can do is approach that amend with absolute sincerity. The rest would take care of itself. It was easier than I imagined, and very rewarding.

Many years in Program have allowed me to contemplate Step Nine numerous times. I thought I had made all my amends. Then one day I started thinking back, way back, and there was something that I did a long time ago that I am not particularly proud of. But surely I was so much younger then and that was before Program, before I knew better, and this person no longer is in my life. Right? Not so right. I believe that I am still responsible for that part of my life. Admitting my errors and making amends is important for me. I need to stay honest and not make excuses for my bad behavior regardless of when or to whom it happened. As it is impossible to locate that person, I decided to make a donation to a charity that I thought would be meaningful to this individual. I am grateful to a Program that shows me how to make peace even with something I did so long ago.

During the gambling years, and even after the gambling had stopped, I found myself "taking" small items from the supermarket. How humiliated I felt when confronted by the security guard. I was, of course, required to pay for my misdeeds of that day. And as a further amend later on, I sent an anonymous money order to the supermarket for my previous thefts. But this was also an amend to myself for the degradation and humiliation I caused myself in that very low time of my life. Since then, reminded of my dishonesty, I have never so much as kept the wrong change if anyone in any establishment makes an error in my favor.

During the gambling years I avoided being with people. I felt like I could not be truthful about my situation, and I was envious of my friends and it was easier to stay away. Once I started working the Program and my life improved, I realized how much I missed having this one particular friend in my life. I felt like I owed her an explanation for my absence. What a joy when I picked up the phone and heard her voice!

Working Step Nine

What does it mean to work Step Nine? We work Step Nine when we come to understand the significance of Step Nine as the ninth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Nine is about

Action

1. Making amends and righting our wrongs
2. Making amends to our gamblers and ourselves
3. Freeing ourselves from the guilt of our past

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Nine and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Making amends and righting our wrongs

1. Have you written a letter of apology? Have you apologized face to face? Have you made contact with a person you had avoided in the past, re-igniting a friendship? How did it make you feel?

2. When making an apology, do you plan exactly what to say? Is being clear and concise as possible part of the plan, leaving no room for ambiguity?

3. Have you used any of these methods to make “living” amends: Changing your attitude toward someone? Striving for patience with someone? Increasing your tolerance of someone’s shortcomings? Showing interest in another’s well-being? How else can you make it up to those you care about for the hurts inflicted?

4. Have you done an anonymous good deed in order to right a wrong? Have you changed your behavior in order to right a wrong? What are some actions of kindness you might perform to make amends to those you cannot approach directly?

5. Have you opened an old wound by attempting an amend? Have you ever been rejected after making an amend? Were you able to accept the rejection, satisfied that you did your part?

6. Have you had the need to make an indirect amend? Reflect on the circumstances and the amend you made.... How did you feel after doing so? Do you feel you have fulfilled your obligation to yourself? To the other person? If not, what else remains for you to do?

Making amends to ourselves and our gamblers

1. Why is it critically important that you don’t forget about yourself as you make amends? What are your thoughts on: If you can’t forgive yourself, you can’t forgive others? How does forgiving yourself affect your perspective on forgiving others?

2. How do you make amends to yourself? How does living more honestly and openly become an amend to yourself and others? Consistent with the Gam-Anon slogan “One day at a time,” what do you do differently *today* in thought, behavior, activity, etc., that reflects your commitment to make amends to yourself?

3. How do you make amends to your gambler? How do changes in your behavior, such as no longer “enabling” the gambling, serve as amends to the gambler? After coming to Gam-Anon, do you view the gambler differently? Will your changed perspective improve both your lives? How?

4. Can you see yourself saying to the gambler, “We have had difficult times, and traveled different roads, but I want to take responsibility for my part in what occurred.” “Putting my head in the sand when you compulsively gambled helped neither one of us.” What message of amend to your gambler are you comfortable making?

5. Specifically, in terms of your financial well-being, and in keeping with the GA’s and Gam-Anon’s philosophy of restitution and responsibility, what are the amends to yourself and your gambler? Have you had the Pressure Relief Meeting or the Gam-Anon Budget Meeting to sort out responsible approaches to making you financially whole? Why is this amend so important?

Freeing ourselves from the guilt of our past

1. How has making an amend freed you from some guilty wrongdoing?

2. How has making an amend made you feel cleansed, free, lighter?

3. Have you replaced lies with truth?

Action

1. Is there an amend you have decided to put off to a future date? Why? Are you committed to following up? How do you plan to hold yourself responsible?

2. Upon reflection – how have the amends you have made served your recovery?

3. Reflect upon the gratitude you experienced after making your amends.

STEP TEN

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

The principle of Step Ten is *vigilance*. Step Ten is the first of the three Steps known as the maintenance Steps. Step Ten becomes meaningful only after we have been diligent in working Steps One through Nine. With the completion of *all* the previous steps, we have addressed our unhappy past. We know how much we have gained, how much our lives have improved, and how we have positively affected the lives of others. We cannot rest on our laurels. Not only must we work at keeping what we have gained, but we also must persevere with making progress. Specifically, in Step Ten, we strive to further improve our lives and ourselves.

We are all familiar with backsliding into old habits, attitudes, and patterns of behavior as we periodically take two steps forward and one step back. Such lapses hurt us as well as others, but our Program tells us not to be disheartened or impatient with ourselves. Rather, we develop the ability to practice vigilance. What does this mean to us? Step Ten cautions us to be aware of our character defects and address them daily. This Step also directs us to remain alert to those returning behaviors that interfere with our growth and serenity and to be willing to take prompt corrective action. We are encouraged to stay alert to the equally damaging state of complacency. This level of awareness comes from introspection, which ideally becomes a routine part of our daily lives.

Think back! In the past, most of us let our pain and frustration grow and fester. We came to this Program desperate and shattered, many of us full of anger and resentment. Acknowledging our need to change, we had to face ourselves realistically with our unique in-depth inventories. Step Ten reminds us that it is important to keep our inventory current. It tells us to remain vigilant to our specific defects lest they surface and become damaging again.

Sometimes personal awareness comes instantaneously when our physical and/or emotional reactions tell us that we are in trouble. At other times, we work at being in tune with ourselves when we make a conscious effort to do a daily inventory. There are several methods we may employ to carry out a personal inventory.

One way to accomplish this is by becoming more consciously aware by “checking in with” ourselves. When we realize we are feeling uncomfortable, it is at this very moment we should pause and reflect. *Why* is *this* specific situation making us uncomfortable? *How* are we experiencing this discomfort? Are we anxious? Tense? Fearful? Guilty? *Where* are we feeling this discomfort? Are we experiencing a physical reaction such as a knot in the stomach, a flutter in the chest, a lump in the throat, clammy hands, or headaches? *When* are we experiencing these reactions? Is it at a certain time of the day? (Are we always irritable in the morning?) Or is it at times when we feel worthless, depressed, or vulnerable? *What* are the circumstances that made us uncomfortable? What incident precipitated these feelings?

Another method of doing a daily inventory is by taking the time to reflect upon our day. This daily review examines our behavior throughout the day, what we did, why we did it, and how our actions affected us or others. Are there undesirable patterns forming in our lives? This review of our daily actions gives us an opportunity to identify problem areas. Just as important, we have the opportunity to reinforce and appreciate our positive behavior. It is suggested that this review be done at the end of the day when we can take some quiet time for ourselves. Let the day pass before our mind’s eye. Recognize the different feelings we experience during the day, especially the negative ones that interfere with our growth. This is the time to sort through our behavior and reactions. Were they helpful or harmful to others or us? Did they indicate a need for improvement or change? Were there positive things we felt good about? Were there things that we felt showed growth?

To do our daily inventory, some of us choose to keep a journal in which we write about our day-to-day thoughts, actions, and feelings. Others speak to a sponsor or another Gam-Anon member about our difficulties and successes as they arise. As we remain in the Program, we become more adept with these daily check-ups and check-ins. We become proficient in recognizing quickly when our thinking or actions are askew. We wish to feel “centered” again.

Issues with behavior and attitude may surface. If we wish to become the people we aspire to be, we need to continue to work on ourselves. Reminiscent of Step Five, when we are uncertain and need additional clarity, it helps to avail ourselves of assistance through a “one - to - one” with another Gam-Anon member or a

conversation with our sponsor. We can refer back to Step Six to ensure our willingness, and Step Seven to enlist the help of our Higher Power to pursue our all-important work of becoming the best we can be. And, when necessary, we keep current with our need to forgive and make amends. To maintain our recovery and to understand ourselves further, we continue to use the tools of reading our literature and writing out our thoughts and feelings.

It seems that no matter how long we are in the Program, and no matter how much we have grown and changed, we can still expect some of our character flaws to reappear as we face new situations. After all, we are only human! Whenever we face a character defect or acknowledge we are acting wrongfully, we need to promptly admit it and seek to correct it. We found many ways to help ourselves, but the overall goal is to develop a willingness to admit to ourselves who we are, how we are responsible for our own behavior, and the consequences of our behavior. We are looking for progress, not perfection, as we continue to work on ourselves and improve our lives.

Reflections

I believe that who I was (with my defects) when I came to Program is buried deep inside me. Under the right circumstances, "she" will emerge again and cause me the same heartache. I am aware of what I must do to keep "her" buried.

Writing helps me get to what is really going on with me. I would sit at the typewriter or computer and just write one sentence. That sentence would lead to the next and then the next and so on – after about three pages it was all there – what clarity I gained. Some of my writings were developed into meaningful letters I would share when appropriate; others were written, understood, and then trashed.

I have learned that when I am uncomfortable with myself, I feel my unease in my body. I waste no time in calling my sponsor, my confidant, to air my discomfort. This conversation will invariably end with my acceptance of my human imperfect self, and then I can move on more serenely than before the call.

Every time there was a change in lifestyle or finances or when we transitioned into new stages of our lives – moving, work changes, retirement, we always relied on a Pressure Relief Re-evaluation or a sit-down to air our questions or concerns. I am grateful I never became complacent; I learned to trust the Program and its tools.

I purchased one of those diary journals and made my New Year's resolution to start on January 1st, writing every day. Well, by January 15th, I was writing every other day, and by March, I was writing once a week. November and December remained completely blank. So much for my discipline! I used that same journal for five years, writing only when I was upset or in pain about something. How interesting it was that as I re-read my entries over those years, the same issues appeared and re-appeared.

My way of doing Step Ten is to call my sponsor every morning. We speak of the day's upcoming challenges or of yesterday's successes or difficulties. After all these years, I don't know who is sponsoring whom. We serve as loving witnesses to each other's life.

Each evening before I go to sleep, I take a few minutes to write my inventory of the day. I start with my gratitude list.

There are certain techniques I have found that help me simplify my life. The three A's – Awareness, Assessment, and Action – are a recipe that allow me to feel comfortable while working on a personal problem whether it is an interpersonal conflict, a health problem, or one of life's unexpected challenges.

I remind myself of the importance of doing Step Ten in the same way I remind myself to protect and safeguard any prized material possession, only more so. My continued well-being and serenity are at stake. I cannot afford to lose them.

The old adage "a stitch in time" takes on a new meaning for me as I work Step Ten daily. The changes I made in my life after coming into Gam-Anon were not particularly easy. I don't want the good things I have gained to slip away because of complacency.

There are times I find it easier to start things than to continue with them. I think about the many projects I have started and lost interest in completing. I need to remind myself that I am my most important project and cannot afford to become complacent with my daily inventory. My accomplishments help me rekindle the fire.

One of my more stubborn defects of character is my need to control. There is no lack of opportunity each day for me to try to "help" those whose inventory I so

readily want to take. So it is in becoming consciously aware and taking a spot inventory that I catch myself from going down that harmful road.

After I ended my relationship with my gambler, I thought my need for Gam-Anon also ended. Amazingly, I still was who I was, and brought my same defects into my other relationships! With Program, I was able to recognize my continuing need to work on myself.

Getting in touch with my inner self and inner "voices" is a new concept for me and requires using a set of tools I am not accustomed to using. But, I am trying it. Writing things down and journaling is one of those tools.

Working Step Ten

What does it mean to work Step Ten? We work Step Ten when we come to understand the significance of Step Ten as the tenth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Ten is about

Vigilance

1. Continuing to take personal inventory (maintenance of Step Four)
2. Prompt admission of wrongs and defects

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Ten and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Continuing to take personal inventory (maintenance of Step Four)

1. When you have an uncomfortable feeling, do you "stuff" the feeling or examine it? Does your emotional discomfort manifest itself physically? If so, how? How can you use the many tools of our Program to overcome your tendency to "stuff" your feelings? Explain how ignoring "stuffed feelings" is detrimental to your serenity?
2. Are you aware of how you behave or are you mostly "running on automatic?" How does performing a daily inventory guard against "running on automatic?"
3. Do you take a personal inventory on a daily basis? When would be the best time of day for you to do a daily inventory? Would taking inventory both in the morning and at night seem beneficial?

4. How can working with your sponsor be beneficial? How can you be proactive in this phase of your recovery? Have you discussed with your sponsor the best method for you to employ in doing your daily Tenth Step? Have you considered using more than one method? What method(s) have you decided to use?

5. Considering where you are in your recovery, do you see the need to continue to improve or change your behavior? How will you accomplish this? How does "one day at a time" assist you with taking Step Ten?

6. Are there changes you recently discovered while doing Step Ten about which you feel good?

7. Do you find that you backslide into old habits, attitudes, and patterns of behavior? How does this make you feel? What do you perceive as the triggers for this backsliding? How do you plan to address these triggers?

8. Which character defects resurface periodically? How willing are you to revisit Steps Five through Seven in addressing these defects? Are they more easily recognizable now?

9. Do you feel discouraged when you backslide? How might your Higher Power help you accept your humanness?

10. Does your inventory reveal that you have grown spiritually? If so, in what ways?

11. The attached Step Ten Inventory, part of our Gam-Anon literature, has been widely referenced as a helpful guideline for working this Step. In what ways do you find the specifics of this inventory helpful to your Step Ten? Reflect on your progress with specific points.

Prompt admission of wrongs and defects

1. Is it still hard for you to admit to yourself or to others when you are wrong?
2. Is it still hard to make amends when you harm others?
3. How do you feel when you recognize an "old" defect has resurfaced and still needs attention?

Vigilance

1. Step Ten asks you to remain vigilant – vigilant to backsliding to old habits, vigilant to not becoming complacent about your recovery, vigilant to taking inventory of inappropriate behavior, vigilant to the resurfacing of defects, vigilant to ignoring the tools of your Program. What can you do to remain vigilant so that your recovery is maintained? Would setting aside a specific time of the day help in maintaining vigilance? What else can you do that will inspire you to making Step Ten an integral part of each day?

2. Have you become complacent in your recovery? Are you complacent with respect to attending program or utilizing the Twelve Steps of Recovery as a vehicle to maintain your recovery? Do you find it tedious or discouraging to reflect back? How will you work to change this? Did you think after doing Steps Four through Nine you accomplished all that was necessary? How can you address your complacency? Do you see a relationship between complacency and backsliding? How can you do better?

3. Do you work with a sponsor? Have you allowed yourself to find someone special with whom you share your inventory? Do you use the phone or email to communicate with members of your program to explore your uncomfortable feelings and to get new perspectives and feedback? Sometimes there is a member from another meeting or from a conference or workshop whose recovery specifically “speaks” to you – to whom you can relate. Do you allow yourself the gift of making contact with that member? How can you use the telephone or email to communicate? Do you feel comfortable reaching out again to the person with whom you did your Fifth Step?

4. Many have shared that free-flowing writing unleashes deep thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. It is suggested that you start writing or keyboarding and let the writing flow – sentence after sentence – with no regard for spelling, punctuation, grammar, anything. Just let the words come out. After a few sentences, your writing will take on a life of its own, and your thoughts and feelings will be revealed. You will probably understand more about yourself if you just let it happen. If this is new to you, are you willing to try it?

5. Do you have experience with journaling? Can you consider using a daily journal to help maintain your recovery? Do you recognize how using a daily journal and being able to look back on your growth will enhance your recovery?

6. How does “awareness, assessment, and action” play a role in your inventory?

7. Gam-Anon literature offers so many insights and reflections on the journeys of others. By reading the many books, you allow others to share their experience, strength, and hope. You can find avenues for improvement via the readings. Which readings should you bookmark as “go-to” when you need to refresh your commitment to your journey of recovery?

8. Finances have proven to be repeatedly challenging for many of us. When doing your Tenth Step do you reflect on your financial recovery? Are there old attitudes toward money that still need work? How do you use the tool of Pressure Relief (Budget Relief) to reevaluate your circumstance as finances change? Do you continue to use these tools when there are changes due to age, job, retirement, stages of dependents, etc.? Do you use the tool of sit-downs to confront your unease with situations that affect recovery?

My Daily Tenth Step Inventory

In reviewing our behavior each day, we note our character strengths and weaknesses and become aware of what we need to watch for, work toward, and strive for. Every day of the week, place a mark where you are on the scale for each character trait.

SHORTCOMINGS

WORKING TOWARD

ASSETS

I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----10		
Coarse.....	Polite.....	Refined
Complacent.....	Motivated.....	Accepting
Critical.....	Detached.....	Encouraging
Discourteous.....	Considerate.....	Kind
Dishonest.....	Conscientious.....	Honest
Despairing.....	Collected.....	Hopeful
Egotistical.....	Self-Knowing.....	Humble
Envious.....	Indifferent.....	Content
Exaggerating.....	Evaluating.....	Clear Perspective
Fearful.....	Calm.....	Faithful
Flailing.....	Focused.....	Committed
Gloomy.....	Happy.....	Joyful
Impatient.....	Tolerant.....	Patient
In Denial.....	Surrendering.....	Reality Based
Indiscreet.....	Selective.....	Discreet
Irritable.....	Dignified.....	Tranquil
Judgmental.....	Understanding.....	Compassionate
Lazy.....	Interacting.....	Accomplishing
Materialistic.....	Comfortable.....	Spiritual
Negative.....	Neutral.....	Positive
Overreacting.....	Thinking Clearly.....	Rational
Overwrought.....	Managing.....	Balanced
Pessimistic.....	Realistic.....	Optimistic
Phony.....	Self-Realizing.....	Authentic
Preoccupied.....	Concerned.....	Serene
Procrastinating.....	Prioritizing.....	Prompt
Reluctant.....	Cautious.....	Willing
Resentful.....	Releasing.....	Forgiving
Selfish.....	Thoughtful.....	Selfless
Self-Righteous.....	Taking Responsibility.....	Admitting Mistakes
Stubborn.....	Open-Minded.....	Able to Compromise
Submissive.....	Self-Confident.....	Assertive
Uncaring.....	Interested.....	Caring
Volatile.....	Self-Controlled.....	Stable
Withdrawn.....	Friendly.....	Outgoing

And in all things was I LOVING?

At the end of the week evaluate your tendencies in each characteristic. Notice your assets, set a goal in the areas needed in the upcoming week, and watch your growth.

Step 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.

The principle of Step Eleven is *spirituality*. It is the second of the maintenance Steps, which means that it helps us maintain our recovery. We who are sustained by this Twelve Step Program believe there is a power working in our lives. Some of us choose to call this power God, or Power of our own understanding, or Higher Power. Before Gam-Anon, many of us believed in God, but our conscious contact had been selective. We decided the time, the place, and the need. Many of us kept this spiritual or religious part of our lives locked away in a separate chamber of our minds, only to be brought out in emergencies, like a spare tire. In Step Three we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to this Power of our own understanding, thereby establishing a meaningful relationship. In Step Eleven we seek to improve this relationship through our conscious contact with this Power of our own understanding. Having diligently worked all the previous ten Steps, we are now ready to make a commitment to have consistent contact with our Higher Power. Our aim is to develop ways of tapping into this Power on a daily basis.

Step Eleven suggests we communicate with our Higher Power through *prayer* and *meditation*. For some, discipline will be required in order to make conscious contact at a specific time of the day. Others may feel more comfortable finding time in a more flexible manner. The important point is that spiritual reflection be done consistently. We can develop our personal plan by first finding a quiet time and place to be alone. With a little preparation, we can eliminate distractions and interruptions to insure privacy. We can each think of this period of prayer and meditation as a valuable "time for me."

Some of us are more familiar with the concept of prayer, having grown up believing that prayer activates our contact with God. In prayer we experience a spiritual turning toward our Higher Power, transmitting feelings, thoughts, desires, fears, and concerns. Heartfelt, it is both simple and direct. It doesn't have to be formal or structured. It is not asking for anything more than guidance. And as this is so, we will never be disappointed.

Praying only for the knowledge of God's will for us requires the total release of "my will" to "Thy will." It is surrendering ourselves into the care of a Higher Power and allowing this power to work in our lives. This means letting go of those things that are beyond our control – letting go of our desire to control the people, places, and things around us, always remembering that our primary purpose is to let go of our self-will. To do this, old habits, attitudes, and patterns of behavior may have to be changed.

Each morning, a suitable prayer might be to ask that we be shown guidance throughout the day and that we be given the strength to solve our problems. With this strength we will be better able to cope with daily challenges. Throughout our day we may be indecisive when confronted with alternatives. This is the time we may ask God (of our understanding) to provide us with inspiration, intuition, or other help with our decision. We let God take over. We relax, take it easy, and cease to struggle. We may be surprised how the right answers will come.

And let us not forget about our Serenity Prayer, in which we ask our Higher Power to help us accept the things we cannot change, change those things we can, and develop the wisdom to know the difference. The Serenity Prayer is fundamental to our Program in that it reminds us that we cannot change what has already happened, and while we are not omnipotent, we do have the ability to bring changes into our lives. However, any prayer that we feel comfortable with is the right prayer for us.

Meditation is the quiet and sustained concentration of the mind at a spiritual level. It is a reflective time of listening, learning, and awareness. It is a time when we clear our heads and focus on a higher plane. Some people have found it helpful to start their meditation with a spiritual reading from our literature. It is suggested that we direct our concentration toward one specific thought or idea. It is not unusual to drift off with intruding thoughts. We need simply bring ourselves back to the original contemplation. Although requiring some discipline at first, with practice, spiritual meditation may become second nature.

Our faith and belief in our Higher Power comes from within, from a deeper place than we can see visibly. Our trust in our Higher Power will permit us to accept that our needs are being met in a way that is best for us. We are reassured that we will be okay.

Some speak of experiencing a "spiritual awakening," but for most of us the change is gradual. Over time, we become increasingly aware of changes occurring in our lives and our hearts and begin to recognize signs that let us know our spirituality is growing. How do we assess our growing spirituality? Perhaps we find ourselves seeking our Higher Power's help in managing our lives. Perhaps we are experiencing some measure of peace and serenity on a sustained basis. With these changes we acknowledge a growing gratitude to our Higher Power for the blessings that come to us each day, and we express our gratitude in our daily prayer.

Gibran, in *The Prophet*, wrote, "You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy."

Reflections

For me, meditation is about accessing a deeper and more powerful part of myself.

I never grew up with prayer. The only prayer I feel comfortable with is the Serenity Prayer. So that is my prayer.

Each morning I start my day with a "gratitude" list. I feel like this is a way to connect with my Higher Power. How can I be grumpy if I am grateful?

I am not sure what my belief in a Higher Power is. But this I know when I pray for strength and serenity, I am blessed with strength and serenity.

Each morning I awake early – maybe an hour earlier than needed – open my Bible and read. This is how I start each day – and this is how I make my conscious contact.

I have tried to meditate along with a group and find myself peeking to see if everyone else has their eyes closed. I have tried it alone, in the bathtub, in the living room; that did not work for me. At the end of a yoga class, I nearly fell asleep during the meditation. All I know is that when I walk my dog in the early morning, I feel a sense of peace come over me as I breathe the fresh air and experience the stillness of the day. And when I am engrossed in some art project, I feel like I am taken to a higher place. So maybe that's meditation!

Since coming into Gam-Anon, I have returned to my church – going each Sunday to the service. I am grateful for having found again this precious resource.

I take myself to my special place – the edge of the body of water – listen to the quiet laps of water – and in my aloneness feel the presence of my Higher Power.

Getting in touch with my inner self and inner “voices” is a new concept for me and requires using a set of tools I am not accustomed to using. Writing things down and journaling is one of those tools. I am trying it. Another is meditation. However, until now, I must confess, I have just ignored that suggestion. This morning, I resolved to try it. I just let my mind go wherever it wished. Amazingly enough, I came to a couple of insights which I have shared with my sponsor. I intend to act upon those insights. The point is that I might never have achieved these insights if I had not “done the work.” This spirituality “thing” is really hard work for me, and one of the tools in attaining a form of spirituality is connecting with my inner self.

I did not pay attention to the spiritual parts of this program for many years – I only wanted to know how to cope with my issues and my gambler. I did not realize how these pragmatic needs of mine would be better served if I could absorb the spiritual urgings of the Steps. In time, Steps Two, Three, Seven, and Eleven became the heart for everything else. When I now struggle, I seek the help and guidance of my Higher Power ... with gratitude.

If I ever gave the impression that this meditation “thing” or this getting-in-touch “thing” is easy, I am sorry! It just does not happen every time you sit down to meditate. However, it does happen often enough; and I am told that just as with other skills, practice makes you better.

A horrific tragedy occurred in my life – and I did not know what to pray for – quickly I began reciting, repeatedly, the Serenity Prayer – and then I knew – I recited the Serenity Prayer over and over and prayed not for an outcome but for my ability to cope with whatever happened.

One of my defects of character is impatience. I had to be patient with myself while practicing Step Eleven. I wanted to “get it” right away. Things don’t happen spontaneously for me. I need to keep at it. This is what I do. I keep at it to constantly improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power.

I had to find the right form of meditation for me. I ruled out certain forms of meditation I read about and that was worrisome; they just didn’t seem right for me. But then I found that by reading Gam-Anon meditations especially at the start of each day, I would be headed in the right direction. There is so much wisdom in my Gam-Anon literature and I refer to my favorite pieces often for spiritual inspiration.

When I was first introduced to Step Eleven I thought, this should not be a difficult Step for me. I have years of religious training behind me. After twelve years of parochial schooling and a belief in God, I have this. Wrong! What I didn’t have was a sense of spirituality. I was missing the one-on-one relationship with my personal Higher Power. Step Eleven opened the door that allowed me to reach into a deep part of myself that I really didn’t know existed. I am very grateful today for discovering my true spiritual self.

I have learned that putting pressure on myself does not work well when I am trying to tap into my spiritual self. I use a simple first thought every morning to start me off. I simply ask my Higher Power to be with me in all I do, help me with the day’s challenges, and guide me to make good choices. And then I express my gratitude, for I have received many gifts.

Working Step Eleven

What does it mean to work Step Eleven? We work Step Eleven when we come to understand the significance of Step Eleven as the eleventh stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Eleven is about

Spirituality

1. Prayer and Meditation
2. Improving our conscious contact with God (of our understanding)
3. Praying for knowledge of God’s will for us, and the power to carry that out

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Eleven and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Prayer and Meditation

1. It has been said that prayer is talking to your Higher Power and Meditation is listening to your Higher Power. How do you use each, prayer and meditation? Can you name the benefits of both prayer and meditation in your life? Do you use one more than the other?

2. What does it mean to you to pray for “Thy will” instead of “my will”? How does this distinction affect your spirituality?

3. How do you feel when you pray? How does daily prayer affect your thoughts, feelings, or actions? Do you pray for “things” or make requests of your Higher Power when you pray? Do you pray for guidance?

4. Has the manner in which you pray evolved since working Step Eleven? How? Is your daily prayer an expression of gratitude and joy as well as need?

5. Is the Serenity Prayer a part of your daily prayer? How does reciting the Serenity Prayer make you feel? When is the Serenity Prayer useful to you as a “go-to” prayer? Reflect on why this is so.

6. How do you feel when you meditate? How does daily meditation affect your thoughts, feelings, or actions? Does the Serenity Prayer play a part in your daily meditation?

Improving our conscious contact with God (of our understanding)

1. What might your day be like if you started each day turning your first waking thought toward your Higher Power? Can you imagine that a feeling of well-being might occur if you were to ask your Higher Power to direct your thinking? Are you willing to act on this? How do you imagine you would feel if indeed your day started this way?

2. How has your Higher Power become an integral part of your life? Are you consistent about making contact with your Higher Power?

3. To increase spirituality, we strive for consistency. How consistent is your commitment of time for reflection, prayer, and meditation? Do you have an established routine or pattern for prayer and reflection? If so, how can you best eliminate distractions and procrastination that might detract from this commitment? Do you think of your prayer and meditation time as a special time just for you?

Praying for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out

1. What do you have to “let go” of in order to pray only for God’s will in your life?

Some things that come to mind are

- Your gambler
- Other family members
- An old familiar habit
- An illness
- A situation in your family beyond your control
- A situation at work beyond your control
- A pattern of behavior
- Your own self-will
- Other people’s opinions of you
- Your poor opinion of yourself
- Preconceived beliefs of what life should be like
- Worry about the future
- Obsessive thinking

2. Do you have trust that your Higher Power is meeting your needs in the best possible way? Can you accept that you may not get all you ask for? Do you strive to see the bigger picture?

Spirituality

1. How do you address your feelings, thoughts, desires, struggles, fears, intellect, reasoning, logic, and will power with your sense of spirituality? Is it more natural for you to be more analytical than spiritual when addressing your concerns? What anxieties about the future have been diminished since letting spirituality into your life?

2. Are you aware of a heightened feeling of spirituality since being in the program? Has your spiritual growth nurtured heightened intuition, calmness, or confidence in facing your life’s situations? Have you achieved a measure of peace and serenity? Have you become aware of changes in your attitude and the way you deal with life? Explain.

3. Have you been able to make peace with your unhappy past because of your spiritual growth?

4. What readings or literature are useful to improve your spirituality during times of reflection? How can intellect, reason, logic, and will power during prayer and meditation block out your Higher Power's will? How can you set these things aside?

5. About what do you feel gratitude? Do you feel that your life is in order? Do you feel at one with the world? Does acknowledging gratitude enhance your spirituality? Are you encouraged to share your feelings of gratitude and spirituality to people in your life?

Step Twelve

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

The principle of Step Twelve is *sharing*. When we reach Step Twelve, we must pause to reflect on the changes that have taken place in our lives as a result of attending meetings and diligently working the Gam-Anon Twelve Steps of Recovery. We cannot be less than awed at how we have changed. A new calm has settled over us, and we experience a feeling of inner peace we did not have before. We find ourselves approaching all areas of our lives in a new way. Growth has come from a willingness to be totally honest with ourselves on the journey we have taken. We have examined our relationships with the people in our lives, to the world we live in, and to our Higher Power. The Twelve Steps of Recovery that we follow are a pattern for living, and we have learned that we can apply its principles in our lives on a daily basis.

We are now ready to carry our message of recovery as we welcome, give assistance, and comfort to others affected by the gambling problem. Step Twelve says that having made an effort to practice the principles of the program in all our affairs we now carry this message to others. Let us review the principles of our Twelve Steps.

The principle of Step One is *acceptance*. Many of us came to our first Gam-Anon meeting in great emotional pain. The gambling problem had caused a financial crisis for many of us, and many lived with unexplained absences and suspicious circumstances. Trust was gone and we tried unsuccessfully to cope with a problem we did not understand. Our peace of mind was destroyed and the feeling of helplessness was overwhelming. We came to Gam-Anon hoping to learn how to stop the gambler from gambling. We have learned to accept our powerlessness over the gambling problem. We came to recognize that our own lives had become unmanageable.

In Step Two, we find *hope*. In the Gam-Anon fellowship, we share our experiences and strength, give voice to our fears, and focus on the suggestions our program offers. We have come to believe in a power greater than ourselves through which we can be restored to a normal way of thinking and living. We have experienced a newfound sense of hope.

The principle of Step Three is *faith*, which we exhibit as we allow the Program to work in our lives. We have become willing to open the door to our Higher Power, to the God of our understanding. We have learned to let go of the things we cannot change and turn them over to the care of our Higher Power.

Often, the new Gam-Anon member will blame every disappointment in life on the gambler. Step Four calls for *honesty* as we take our own inventory and face our own character flaws.

What role did we play in the real life drama that brought us to this crossroad in our lives? Ultimately, each of us must take responsibility for his or her own life and happiness. It is in the search for understanding that new insight comes to us. We listen to others at our Gam-Anon meetings and we see ourselves in the other members. We learn to look within ourselves for answers and become aware of our own strengths and weaknesses. It is within the written inventory that our eyes begin to open, and we come to a new understanding and acceptance of ourselves.

We have the *courage* of Step Five to take off our masks and be real. We communicate and express our feelings; we share our inventory, gaining clarity, making the burden lighter. In Step Six, we show *willingness* and readiness to have our defects removed. We know that there is a better way to live and we want that better way. In Step Seven, we practice *humility* as we recognize that we need the help of our Higher Power to make these changes. At times we seem to take two steps forward and one step back, but even as we find ourselves repeating old patterns of behavior, changes do begin to take place.

In Step Eight, we show our *sincerity* to truly acknowledge how we may have hurt others. With the help of our Higher Power, we found ourselves willing to forgive those who had harmed us and learned to forgive ourselves for our mistakes. When we let go of old resentments, we found that we were the ones released. We make amends to the people we may have hurt when we were so caught up in the gambling problem and could think of nothing else, as we take the *action* called for in Step Nine.

Step Ten teaches us *vigilance*. Our work is not done. We continue to take personal inventory, admit our mistakes, and make changes in our lives. Indeed, Step Ten is the continuation of working on all the Steps that precede it.

In Step Eleven, we set aside time for prayer and meditation. We enhance our *spirituality* as we seek to improve our relationship with our Higher Power. We remember to be grateful for each day and the blessings in our lives. We had searched for a Higher Power, only to find that it had always been available to us just for the asking. We learned to ask our Higher Power for guidance on a daily basis, and it became a natural part of our lives. Answers were given to us in unexpected ways. It no longer seemed important to know how or why it worked.

In our Twelve Step work we have examined our values, beliefs, and our relationship with our Higher Power. Many of us have experienced what is referred to as a spiritual awakening. This has a different meaning for each of us just as we each have a Higher Power of our own understanding. For many of us it is nothing short of a miracle to have received the gift of recovery. The change in our attitudes, the ability to cope with life as it happens, the renewal of faith in a Higher Power, the God of our understanding, the awareness of serenity is the spiritual wholeness we were promised.

We work Step Twelve when we share the Gam-Anon Program of Recovery with those affected by someone else's gambling. We are here for the new members as someone was here for us. To the newcomer we offer an understanding heart, friendship, and most important, we offer hope. We have heard their stories and have lived their pain. We know the feelings of hopelessness because we have walked the path before them. Help is within reach. They need not be alone.

In our Gam-Anon meetings we have learned to deal with our pain, our despair, and hopelessness and replace them with self-respect and renewed dignity. We are ready to offer help and share our new way of life. The Steps of Recovery form a pathway that leads from emotional pain to self-discovery and a better understanding of who we are and where we would like to be. Even as we accept our powerlessness over the gambler, we come to a sense of empowerment over ourselves and our own ability to live fully and serenely.

We understand the importance of giving to others what was given to us, and it is in this giving, this service, that we continue to receive. It is said, "We cannot keep it unless we give it away." And it is this giving it away, passing it on, that is the essence of Step Twelve. This Program is a gift, a gift to be shared with others. We reach out to offer the miracle of this Twelve Step Program, which has turned our lives around and helped us find the peace and serenity we were seeking.

Reflections

When I am sharing the truths of the Program with another person, I often feel as if the message is not coming from me, but through me.

I do service for the Program with an open heart. To me Step Twelve means to participate in every way that I can. I show up on time, make phone calls, comment from my experience, participate in conferences, attend Unity, ... anything that I can do so that the Program will continue to be there. Imagine if nobody was there when I first walked into the room.

I show an interest in my fellow Gam-Anons because I really care. They are me. My life has become so wonderful, and only because of the Program. I feel that it is my duty to pass it on, and nothing makes me feel better than sharing this gift that I have received.

My early mentors in Gam-Anon are now quite aged or deceased. I owe them my very life. They filled me with hope, courage, and strength. I vowed that I would repay them by serving Gam-Anon for the rest of my life.

I did not find a connection to all Twelve Steps in sequence. I first loved the Steps that focused on finding out what was wrong with me, and working to change all that. (Four, Five, Six). I also found purpose in Steps One through Three relative to the program being my Higher Power. In the last few years it is the spirituality of Steps Seven and Eleven that calls to me. For now, my wants are clearly for Serenity and Spirituality. And so the whole package now fills me. For this profound gift, I am grateful.

I wonder sometimes what is the message I deliver to the new face at the meeting that inspires that person to want to come back.

In the early days of Gam-Anon, the chair of the meeting held a gavel in hand, ready to tap on the table if the speaker were to talk of the gambler, not herself. Early on, I learned that the focus was to be on me.... Now, decades later, I am grateful that I was forced by the gavel to use my Program for my own recovery.

It was blind faith that kept me coming back week after week, month after month, year after year. I had such faith that this Program would work in spite of the harsh condition I was in when I first came. It had to work! There was nothing left to try instead. Early on, I heard and believed that the Program works 100% for those who work it 100%. What a message!

I had no idea what to expect at my first Gam-Anon meeting so many years ago. What I found surprised me and to this day fills me with joy and gratitude. Everyone in that room told their story for me. They showed a deep interest in sharing their gift of recovery. At that meeting, I began the journey that has changed my life forever. I am so thankful to be able to offer the same to new members today.

I never miss an opportunity to share my story for new members or speak at an open or anniversary meeting if invited to do so. My goal is to open the door of recovery to those who are in need.

"HAVING MADE AN EFFORT TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS" is such an important part of this Step for me. It took some time in Program before I appreciated all the ways recovery behaviors assisted in every aspect of my life. Today I refer to our Steps as my roadmap. I would not want to navigate life's challenges without them.

When I tell my story, I am always sure to include all the good things that I enjoy today. Some of the things I talk about are the healthy relationships I have with my husband and my extended family, the freedom to live my life free of mental and emotional anguish, and the enjoyment of financial rewards. I want my message to be one of hope, attainable to all who are willing to join the many happy, healthy members of Gam-Anon.

How gratifying it is to watch another Gam-Anon member grow and to recognize how I've been a part of it. Through our conversations, I have been forced to re-evaluate my own application of the Twelve Steps in everyday life. The insights of

others have left me deep in thought about my own choices and character. As I witness their spiritual growth, I am motivated to deepen my relationship with God as well.

A number of years ago I had a friend that I met at work. She was often a guest in our home. One day while visiting with us she said to me, "There is always such a peaceful feeling in your home." I shared with her what I knew to be true: the origin of the peaceful atmosphere came from our practice of the Gam-anon And Gamblers Anonymous Programs. A short time later, my husband brought her to her first Twelve Step Program meeting for her drug problem. Sometimes we tell our story by just being.

Working Step Twelve

What does it mean to work Step Twelve? We work Step Twelve when we come to understand the significance of Step Twelve as the twelfth stepping stone to reaching Serenity. Step Twelve is about

Sharing

1. Making the effort to practice the principles of these Steps in all our affairs
2. Carrying the message to others
3. Doing service for Gam-Anon

Focusing ourselves on the words of Step Twelve and its commentary, we offer the following questions to deepen your understanding.

Making the effort to practice the principles of these steps in all our affairs

Before you can work Step Twelve, you need to have worked on the first eleven Steps. As a review:

1. a) Do you accept that you are neither the cause nor the cure for the compulsive gambling?
b) Have you found a power outside of yourself that you can turn to?
c) Do you understand what your role was in the gambling problem?
d) Have you discovered your strengths and weaknesses,... working to cultivate the strengths and diminishing the weaknesses?
e) In what ways has your progress seemed to be "two steps forward and one step back"?

- f) How do you take responsibility for your own life?
- g) How do you continue to examine your behavior and share these insights?
- h) Are you vigilant about amending your wrongs promptly?
- i) How has forgiveness entered your life?
- j) Have you developed an attitude of gratitude?
- k) How would you define your spiritual journey through the Program and the Steps?
 - l) Do you feel that you have been guided by your Higher Power? How?

2. How do you practice the principles of the Program in your life on a daily basis? What is your new pattern for thinking and living?

3. What does *acceptance* mean to you? What does hope mean to you? How does *faith* work in your life? How important is *honesty* to you? What role does *courage* play in your life? What does *willingness* mean to you? How has *sincerity* been important to you? Of what importance is *action* to you? How has being *vigilant* served you? How would you define your personal sense of *spirituality*? What does *sharing* mean to you in your Gam-Anon participation?

Carrying the message to others

1. What is the message you try to carry? How and when do you deliver it?
2. Describe your new sense of freedom, dignity, and self-respect. How do you help others by speaking of it?
3. Describe the most important little miracles or spiritual awakening of your life. How do others benefit by hearing this testimony?
4. It is said, "We cannot keep it unless we give it away." How does this apply to you?
5. What are the gifts you have received from the Program? How can you share them?

Doing service for Gam-Anon

1. Some refer to Twelfth Step work as *service*. How do you serve your Program on the meeting level? Unity/Intergroup Level? ISO level?
2. How is *working* the program and improving your own life a *service* to Gam-Anon?

Sharing

1. How do you share your experience, strength, and hope with newcomers?
2. Sharing with others
Here's a list of things that come to mind. You may think of others!
 - Regularly attend meetings.
 - Sponsor someone.
 - Make phone calls to newcomers.
 - Volunteer to be a trusted servant in your meeting.
 - Chair meetings.
 - Have a Pressure Relief Meeting so you can encourage others by your example.
 - Volunteer to help at conferences.
 - Encourage others with comments at meetings.
 - Become involved in Inter-Group/Unity activities - support fundraisers.
 - Encourage the reading and enforcement of our Gam-Anon Unity Steps.
 - Purchase approved literature to gift to a member.
 - Submit writings for conference booklets or *Gam-Anews*.
 - Invite family members and friends to open Gam-Anon meetings.
 - Start a new meeting where needed in your Area.
 - Share information about the help found in GA and Gam-Anon with your professional or religious community – public outreach.
 - Speak at an Open Meeting.
 - Follow approved Publicity Guidelines and offer an interview or provide information for a local newspaper, TV or radio show.
3. Have you spoken about your recovery to family members and friends who are not in Program? If so, what was their reaction? Do you think your positive experience in Gam-Anon can help others through your example?

THE TWELVE STEPS OF UNITY WORKBOOK

Introduction to the Twelve Steps of Unity

The purpose of the Twelve Steps of Unity is to maintain the health of, and, indeed, ensure the continued existence of the Gam-Anon Program. They are designed to keep our meetings, our Unities/Intergroups, and committees functioning optimally. When we follow the Unity Steps, we enable our fellowship to continue to bring its message of recovery to those affected by someone who has a gambling problem.

Most of us take for granted that the Gam-Anon Program will just always be there for us when we need it. We want and need the assurance that no matter where we go to find recovery in this fellowship, Gam-Anon meetings and its members will deliver the same essential program. To bring unity to our fellowship at meetings all over the world, we follow these 12 Steps of Unity.

Each of the Unity Steps is followed by a series of questions to help you and your meetings further understand this component of our Gam-Anon program. Whenever there is a concern - it may well be that the solution is found within these steps. Referring to the Unity Steps will prevent or resolve most issues that arise. These Steps are the resource for keeping Gam-Anon functioning at all levels.

Should you or your meeting wish further insight, you should contact your Area's Delegate or the ISO office for assistance.

Unity Step 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal serenity depends upon Gam-Anon Unity.

Without unity, Gam-Anon would cease to be. We make references to the groups as a whole because, although the meetings are many and scattered all over the world, we have our common welfare at heart.

How do we as individuals place the common welfare of the group first? In our program we need to remember that we are each a part of the whole. Each individual must consider the others. Inasmuch as we each need Gam-Anon, Gam-Anon must survive in order for the individual to survive. No one person's needs are more important than the group's needs. After all, where would we be without our Gam-Anon program?

Through the use of Gam-Anon literature, we learn how to best work together as groups. Gam-Anon literature is referenced, read and discussed at meetings everywhere, thus to a great extent, our thinking is in accord. Our literature provides us with guidelines for our meetings, our recovery, our principles, and our procedures. Our literature is a vehicle for sharing experience, strength, and hope. Our literature is our common link. Along with the ISO Gam-Anews, our newsletter, and our website, we are each connected to all members around the world. Gam-Anon meetings within a geographic area are linked together by forming a *Unity* or *Intergroup*. We should support and attend the Gam-Anon conferences, functions, and fund-raisers, and participate in Unity or Intergroup sponsored events that bring us together with other groups from our fellowship.

Occasionally an entire group may suffer from one member's self-indulgence. For example, a meeting may be disrupted by an unthinking member who wants to run the group regardless of how others feel, or by an inconsiderate member who talks all the time airing private feelings and grievances. At these times we need to apply Step 1 of the Unity program.

Mindful of our "four deadly enemies", we do not engage in the discussion of any religious denomination, we do not engage in gossip, and we do not have self-appointed leaders or dominating authorities; our leaders are trusted servants. PRINCIPLES OF THE PROGRAM MUST COME BEFORE PERSONALITIES.

Since we advocate *appropriate* discussion, and our time is limited during our meetings, it is suggested that we save our sharing of things unrelated either to the gambling problem or our recovery for after the meeting. We are cautioned that a discussion of personal affairs other than those concerning ourselves will eventually eliminate the group. This is a concern because the irrelevance of a member's personal affairs may discourage others from attending Gam-Anon. It is our common problem and our goal of recovery that draws members to our meetings. We're most productive when we keep on track. We are here to help ourselves and others by sharing experience, strength, and hope. Our meetings should be a safe place to share honestly.

All Gam-Anon groups share the same purposes: to welcome and give assistance and comfort to those affected by someone else's gambling problem; to communicate Gam-Anon's understanding of compulsive gambling and its impact on our lives; to share experience, strength, and hope in coping with the gambling problem; to use the Steps and Tools of the Gam-Anon program which nurture our spiritual and emotional growth and recovery. For the group to survive we are encouraged to come to meetings on time, not to form cliques, to be open and available to all members, to welcome newcomers, to phone members including those who miss meetings, and to courteously listen to one another.

Gam-Anon members care about one another and support each other's efforts. Through our fellowship, and with cooperation, much can be accomplished.

Working Unity Step 1

1. *Why* is each of the Four Deadly Enemies *necessary* to preserve Gam-Anon, maintain retention?
2. Do members of your meeting refrain from the discussion of any religious denomination? Do members of your meeting refrain from gossip? Do members of your meeting refrain from the discussion of personal affairs that are not related to personal growth in the Gam-Anon program? Does your meeting have leaders that dominate or do they function as trusted servants?

3. *How* does your meeting demonstrate its understanding of the Purposes with all its members - new and old? Does your meeting concentrate on spiritual and emotional growth for its members through living by the 12 Steps of Gam-Anon? Does your meeting share at meetings an understanding of the gambling addiction and its impact on our lives? Does your meeting convey giving encouragement and understanding to the compulsive gambler? Does your meeting welcome and give assistance to those affected by the compulsive gambling?

4. How does your meeting address members who are disruptive to the meeting?

5. Has your meeting developed a format that is conducive to recovery by emphasizing the Tools and Twelve Steps of Recovery? Does your meeting welcome newcomers and give them appropriate attention?

6. Have cliques formed in your meeting? Notwithstanding friendships that may develop among members, is your meeting inclusive, and do members refrain from discussion of personal affairs?

UNITY STEP 2

Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Since Gam-Anon is a suggested program, it gives us perfect freedom to work it in any way best suited for each individual's recovery. We have no one to tell us what we must or must not do. Experience has shown that we need no heavy hand to govern us.

Sometimes, when a newcomer attends his or her first meeting he or she asks who is in charge. The newcomer might think that the chairperson of that particular meeting is, but soon discovers that no one is a permanent leader. No one person is the boss, not even the most experienced member who, perhaps, started that group.

It is natural that a group will most likely begin with the format that its founder brings to it. This might be a "step meeting" or "topic meeting." At first, the founder's opinions and decisions will predominate. But, as the group grows it is important that the opinions of others, even the newest member, are heard and considered, the group decides. Although the more "seasoned" member shares his or her experience, that member does not set the rules. Formats are reviewed and revised, reflecting the needs of all members of the group, the purposes of Gam-Anon, and the Board of Delegates decisions.

Regular elections are held so that the service positions rotate. Everyone should participate in his/her group and thus be given a sense of belonging. Responsibilities are shared. Service positions such as chairing a meeting, handling the treasury, and sponsorship are shared. Any responsibility given, no matter how small, is a way for the group to say, "We need you." Any responsibility taken is a way for a member to say, "Thank you" to the group. Whether it is by setting up the room, making coffee, chairing a meeting, or founding a meeting, whether it is being a representative to the local *Intergroup* or *Unity* or as Delegate to the ISO, it is truly a great privilege to have the opportunity to serve in Gam-Anon.

We encourage everyone to take an active role in our fellowship as well as in individual meetings. Some members may complain that there is no local Gam-A-Teen or a meeting with a babysitter. Some members complain that there is not enough Gam-Anon literature, saying, "Why don't they write more books?" But there is no *they*. There is only *we*. If we want something in our program, we must participate in getting it done.

Though we appreciate the work done by our elected officers, we must also hold them accountable to the ideals of the Unity program and our stated purposes. It is essential that they remember their status as *trusted servants*. When we do what we can to join in and involve ourselves, we do so in the spirit of serving a wonderful group of people who need our help, as we need theirs.

Working Unity Step 2

1. How do you and your meeting stay abreast of developments in the Gam-Anon community?
2. How do you and your meeting receive and distribute Gam-Anews, Unity/Intergroup News and correspondence from ISO?
3. How often do you rotate the trusted servants? Do you avoid having one person "in charge?" Does your meeting have *regularly* scheduled elections and business meetings to discuss format, meeting finances, and any issues that may arise that have an impact on the meeting and its members?
4. What is each member's responsibility to the *meeting*? Is every member at your meeting given a feeling of belonging and an opportunity to do service?
5. Do members of your meeting take an active role in the Fellowship as well as in the individual meeting? Does your meeting have a representative to your Unity/Intergroup and a contact person for ISO?

UNITY STEP 3

The only requirement for Gam-Anon membership is that your life is affected by someone who has a gambling problem.

We are aware that the Gam-Anon program could apply to anyone whether or not he or she has this type of problem, but the gambling problem is our common problem. Gam-Anon will not turn away or discourage attendance by anyone whose life has been affected by the gambling problem. Once a member always a member. It doesn't matter if you have lived with the problem for many years or if the problem is new to you. It doesn't matter if you are the spouse, parent, child, widow, widower, fiancée, or friend of the gambler. It doesn't matter if the gambler is still gambling or has stopped, is in Gamblers Anonymous or not. It doesn't matter if you have debt or not. If you have been affected by the gambling problem, you are welcome in Gam-Anon.

This step is one of acceptance, for we understand as perhaps few can. It embraces all, regardless of race, religion, social or economic background. The message is, "Come join us.... we hold out our hand in compassion and understanding.... you are not alone."

Our program tells us that we have no creed, charges, obligations, or anything that would tend to hinder us. Our progress can be made in our own time and in our own way. There are no membership requirements based upon achievements or progress.

We need to have the courage to address those who may wish to come, but do not qualify. The fellowship of Gam-Anon is *not* open to persons who are *not* affected by the gambling problem. Gam-Anon is not a fellowship designed for any other problems or addictions. We claim no expertise on anything other than living with the gambling problem. We may have other problems in common, but the one thing we all must have in common is the gambling problem.

When our meetings and members stay focused on the issues we have in common and when all members are encouraged to participate in the meetings and fellowship, then all of us can find hope and strength. Our message is, "We cannot keep what we have unless we give it away. So we need you as much as you need us. Won't you join us?"

Working Unity Step 3

1. How does your meeting embrace all members?
2. How do you address someone who wants to attend but does not qualify?
3. Is your meeting welcoming and attentive to newcomers? Do you share phone numbers and e-mail addresses?
4. Does your meeting stay focused on the issues we have in common?
5. Do you perceive the danger to your meeting when members give the impression that they are experts on anything other than living with the gambling problem?
6. Do members of your meeting make it clear that growth or achievement is not a requirement for continued attendance? Do members reassure new members that progress can be made in their own time and in their own way?

UNITY STEP 4

Each group should be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or Gam-Anon as a whole.

In Gam-Anon we have no iron clad rules to govern us. Each group functions as it chooses using the Unity and Recovery Programs and Board of Delegate decisions as guides. This means, very simply, that each Gam-Anon group can manage its affairs exactly as it pleases except when Gam-Anon as a whole is affected. We have been given the courage to declare each Gam-Anon group as an individual entity, reliant on its own conscience and adherence to Gam-Anon principles as a guide to actions.

We have the expansive freedom to use any format agreeable to the group. Meetings in different areas take on different characteristics. Some groups concentrate on "pressing problems," some work on the Steps, while others use a topic. Each group has its own guidelines for celebrating an anniversary, chairing a meeting, or holding an office. If we visit different meetings, we see these variations, but we also see the thread that binds us, and our similarities. We share the commonality of being affected by the gambling problem, and we find the Gam-Anon spirit throughout.

Each group needs to consider its actions with prudence, since individual group activities often affect other groups either directly or indirectly. Each group will grow through trial and error as long as their mistakes are not made at the expense of other groups or individuals, and as long as Gam-Anon unity is not affected. Each group has the right to be wrong and the obligation to right the wrong when it is realized. If it does make mistakes, it is probably because its members are unfamiliar with the Unity Steps, which exist to prevent such problems.

We, as individual groups, can hurt the Gam-Anon fellowship as a whole if we ally or affiliate with some outside enterprise; if we break a member's anonymity; if we spend our meeting time "coffee klatching" rather than working on recovery; if we spend our money on donations to outside causes; if we pay members for doing service; if we accept outside donations; if we do not allow someone who is affected by a gambling problem to attend; if we take political or religious stands and express them as a group; if we use literature that is not published by Gam-Anon or Gam-Anon approved; if we portray Gam-Anon as anything other than what it so clearly is.

We must, therefore, think about the welfare of Gam-Anon, remembering that our actions as a group reflect upon Gam-Anon as a whole.

Working Unity Step 4

1. Do you understand how a meeting's format, discussion or sharing, sometimes referred to as "therapy" affects Gam-Anon as a whole? Do you *really* understand how adherence to these Unity Steps (or not) affects Gam-Anon as a whole?
2. Has your meeting discussed and developed a consistent purposeful format? Have you ever asked yourself "Why would anyone want to come back to *this* meeting? What do we offer at *each* meeting that delivers the Gam-Anon program?" What is your responsibility to your meeting if your meeting does not adhere to these Unity Steps, or deliver the Gam-Anon message?
3. Does your meeting operate with the knowledge that it reflects upon the Gam-Anon Program as a whole? Do you know that the Board of Delegates, elected internationally by Gam-Anon members, approves all Gam-Anon literature and sets policy for Gam-Anon as a whole?
4. Do members of your meeting refrain from offering advice, personal opinion, instead of sharing suggestions from Gam-Anon experience?
5. Does your meeting maintain members' anonymity?
6. Since it would violate our Unity program for your meeting to donate to any outside causes, take political, social, or religious stands, use non-approved (by Gam-Anon) literature, would your meeting willingly take corrective action? What action would you take to help your meeting make the appropriate changes? Has your group recognized an error it has made by not following the Unity Steps and taken action to correct the mistake?

UNITY STEP 5

Gam-Anon has but one primary purpose; to carry its message to those affected by someone who has a gambling problem.

Our main obligation is to help those affected by the gambling problem and the survival of the Gam-Anon fellowship depends on adherence to this principle. There was no hope for people like us until Gam-Anon. Gam-Anon's message is formulated in our Purposes:

1. To welcome and give assistance and comfort to those affected by someone else's gambling problem.
2. To communicate Gam-Anon's understanding of compulsive gambling and its impact on our lives.
3. To share our experience, strength, and hope in coping with the gambling problem.
4. To use the Steps and Tools of the Gam-Anon program which nurture our spiritual and emotional growth and recovery.

In what ways do we carry the message? We do this locally through our Hot Lines, our publicity efforts, our meetings, and in the larger sphere, through our International Service Office, our literature, our website, and our speakers.

On the meeting level, it is very important that attention be paid to the newcomer and that our meetings are pertinent to the recovery program, the Twelve Steps, and the Gam-Anon literature. We should be sensitive to the concerns that a new member brings. It is the experience, strength, and hope of those who came before that is so valuable to the newcomer. At the same time, we also need to meet the needs of the more experienced member. It is suggested that members who miss a meeting be called, as well as members in need.

We also carry the message through the practice of sponsorship. Sponsorship is a commitment to a personal one-to-one sharing. It offers the Gam-Anon member a technique of communicating which enables both parties to grow. The Board of Delegates has approved sponsorship guidelines.

In Gam-Anon, individual meetings should support their area's Unity or Intergroup and ISO, because these service bodies can carry the message in ways the individual meetings cannot. These include providing speakers, maintaining the website, printing and distributing literature and meeting lists, and helping to start meetings all over the world.

We have another reason for our singleness of purpose. We know that we can rarely keep our precious gift of serenity unless we give it away. If we help those who need us, we will maintain all we have gained in our search for a good life.

Working Unity Step 5

1. How does your meeting demonstrate its fulfillment of the Purposes? Does your meeting support spiritual growth, the understanding of the impact of the gambling problem on members' lives, promote encouragement and understanding of the compulsive gambler, and welcome and give assistance to those who attend?
2. How does your meeting carry the Gam-Anon message to those suffering from the gambling problem? Is your meeting time used to discuss issues pertinent to the Twelve Steps of Recovery and the Tools of the program?
3. Does your meeting deliver the Gam-Anon message by reading and quoting its literature as its source?
4. Does your meeting embrace sponsorship as a tool to carry the message?
5. Does your meeting have literature available for members to purchase and have information available for new members?
6. Does your meeting encourage members to use the GA Pressure Relief and Gam-Anon Budget Relief materials?

UNITY STEP 6

Gam-Anon should never endorse, finance, or lend the Gam-Anon name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

While Unity Step Five states our purpose, Unity Step Six reminds us that we need to concentrate on our purpose, no matter how worthy other causes may be. It is important that we not finance any other organization or enterprise, lest we deviate from our primary purpose of carrying our message of hope to those affected by the gambling problem.

Gam-Anon and Gamblers Anonymous are not related facilities or outside enterprises, but this step applies to our financial relationship. We are cooperating organizations that are fully self-supporting. Neither fellowship should financially support the other. When we engage in joint fundraising projects, the money raised is to be shared. Gam-Anon ISO and G.A. ISO, through their Boards of Delegates and Trustees, have set guidelines for the sharing of responsibilities, costs, and profits that emerge from jointly sponsored conferences. It is important that Gam-Anon Unities and Intergroups follow these guidelines.

It is the responsibility of the group's treasurer to handle the meeting's funds. A group's treasury is used to cover the expenses of rent for the meeting place, refreshments for the meeting, purchasing Gam-Anon approved literature to sell to the members, sharing financial support for the Area Delegate or Alternate to the BOD, and donating to Unity or Intergroup and ISO. We have learned that it is best not to donate Gam-Anon funds to individual members, however worthy their cause or great their need.

Though we refrain from diverting money to any other cause, regardless of how worthy, Gam-Anon must be proactive in raising money for its own support. Whether it is through contributions at the meeting level or contributions at open meetings, fund-raisers, mini-conferences, and other Gam-Anon sponsored events, Gam-Anon members must support Gam-Anon and not seek contributions from non-members.

This step also tells us that we should not use or sell non-approved literature. Although there are many self-help books in the marketplace, they are not *our* books.

They do not give the Gam-Anon message, and some may conflict with the Gam-Anon message and suggestions. The use or sale of outside literature at our meetings implies that we are endorsing whatever is written in that book or article.

In addition, in our personal lives, we may attend retreats, or other events, but if they are not Gam-Anon sponsored events, we do not bring information about them or endorse them at our meetings. To do so would be a violation of Unity Step Six.

Working Unity Step 6

1. No matter how worthy it may be, within Gam-Anon meetings and settings, do you refrain from all outside endorsements - of places (retreats, places of worship, rehabs, counseling centers) - of people (therapists, psychiatrists, authors) - of things (using, referencing, reading all outside literature or non-Gam-Anon approved spiritual writings, media recommendations.) Do you understand that to make such endorsements would divert us from our primary purpose of carrying the Gam-Anon message?

2. Are flyers and any information about non-Gam-Anon functions such as retreats, conferences, seminars, or professional assistance given out at meetings in violation of this step? Do all members of the meeting understand the damage that doing this would do to Gam-Anon as a whole?

3. Is your meeting able to support itself through member contributions? If not, what course of action is taken? Does all money from collections go to support Gam-Anon endeavors? (rent, Unity/Intergroup, ISO, Delegate, literature purchases)

4. In what ways does your meeting support the fundraising efforts of its Unity/Intergroup and ISO?

UNITY STEP 7

Every Gam-Anon group should be self-supporting declining outside contributions.

If we are to be a responsible group of people and our cause is worthwhile, then we should be willing to support it. It is necessary that each group uphold this idea.

It takes not only time and effort, but also a certain amount of money to propagate our fellowship. However, this money must come from Gam-Anon members and not the solicitation of public funds. Supporting ourselves and not accepting outside contributions allows us to be free of outside influence. If we were to accept gifts from outsiders, we may become obligated to them. They may expect a voice in our decisions. Only with the financial support of our members can we publish our literature, pay salaries for our ISO office personnel, pay the overhead expenses for our ISO office, disseminate information through our Gam-Anews and internet site, and help new meetings get started. Carrying the message takes financial support. To this end, we encourage meetings not to hoard their collections. After considering a room's expenses such as rent, the collections should be used to support Unity (Intergroup) and ISO so they in turn can carry the Gam-Anon message forward. As each room supports its Unity and ISO, so do Unity and ISO support each room with the work they do.

Lest we measure support only in financial terms, it is important to understand that we are self-supporting of our fellowship through *service* as well. Supporting our fellowship through service is also a way of working the Twelfth Step of Recovery. Service may be as simple as arranging transportation for a member in need, chairing a meeting, keeping our meeting places clean and orderly, or even just showing up on time. Service can be writing for the area newsletter or calendar, Gam-Anews, literature, or conference books. Service can be speaking at an open meeting, or representing your group at the Unity or Intergroup meetings. Service can be attending and participating in conferences, open meetings, and fund raising events. On the international level, service is representing your area as a delegate on the Board, or participating on a committee such as the Literature or Publicity committees.

The survival of our fellowship requires that we *all* do service. Consider the consequences when this kind of support is not forthcoming. When one person or the same few people do all the work, there are resentments. The "workers" feel overworked, under-appreciated, and taken advantage of. They can resent the unwillingness of others to come forward and participate by doing their fair share. Conversely, the "non-workers" may come to resent the seeming dominance of this small group of volunteers. In addition, when only the same small group of people does all the work, after time things tend to become stale. New "blood" brings new ideas and life to the process.

It is both a privilege and an obligation to serve at the room, Unity, and ISO level. The sharing of the responsibility of service affords all a chance to vest in the fellowship. Service is giving, and in return, receiving.

Working Unity Step 7

1. Do you attend Area and meeting fundraising events? Do you volunteer your time to help plan these events?
2. Are you a member of SAL (Save-A -Life)? Do you personally subscribe to and read Gam-A-News? Do you read your Unity/Intergroup and ISO financial reports?
3. Do you contribute to your meeting every week in an amount that relates to the financial needs of the meeting and your financial ability?
4. What does your meeting and members do when there is not enough funds to meet meeting expenses?
5. If your meeting meets at the same time and place as a GA meeting, is there a rent sharing agreement? If your meeting and the GA meeting sponsor an Open Meeting or other event, is there an agreement to share the responsibilities and profit?

UNITY STEP 8

Gam-Anon should remain forever non-professional but our service centers may employ special workers.

The premise of Gam-Anon is to get help by giving it, and if professional people are brought in for this purpose, the value of the group is lost. We freely share our experience strength, and hope. We have members who may be therapists, psychologists, or attorneys in their private lives, but they do not speak as professionals at our meetings. They are not our leaders. At our meetings, we are all just members here for our own recovery, and no one is above another. We are never paid for our service within the fellowship, nor do we actively solicit business from fellow members. Our reward is what we do for ourselves in our own recovery.

This does not mean, however, that we reject professionalism altogether. Sometimes we need people with special skills and it is appropriate for them to be paid. Volunteerism can only go so far. In years past, when we were a young fellowship, our ISO office was run by volunteers. As we have grown, so have the responsibilities of that office. Volunteers can no longer be counted upon on a regular basis. We find the need to employ special workers and to pay them respectable salaries.

The work of the employees for the ISO office, which includes filling literature orders, responding to publicity requests and inquiries, publishing literature and Gam-Anews, managing our website, keeping financial and meeting records, helping new meetings and answering the questions of members, serves all of Gam-Anon. The ISO does our Twelve Step work at a scale that is not possible on the group level. The work of the ISO enables us to do our Twelve Step work on the local level. Together we are able to carry our message of hope to those affected by the gambling problem.

Working Unity Step 8

1. Do you volunteer to serve at the meeting, Unity, ISO level?
2. Do you read the By-Laws and Office Manual to understand how you can participate in Standing Committees and the Board of Delegates (BOD)?
3. Does your meeting make sure that nobody acts as a professional, seeking compensation for his/her participation at the meeting even if that person is a professional in private life?
4. Do you recognize the need for salaried employees at the ISO level and what the ISO is in relation to Gam-Anon as a whole?

UNITY STEP 9

Gam-Anon as such should never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

It has never been necessary in our fellowship to organize, to discipline members, or to enforce rules. We operate through a spirit of fellowship rather than through organization. We keep our meetings free from business to the greatest extent possible, concentrating our efforts and time on sharing recovery.

Meetings within a geographic area may choose to work together to form a *Unity* or *Intergroup*. The individual meetings elect members to represent them at the Unity/Intergroup meetings. The Unities or Intergroups plan fundraising events such as conferences, dances, and other social functions, which help to support ISO and to pay for the participation of the area's delegates at the Board of Delegates meetings. Unities and Intergroups serve the membership of Gam-Anon.

In order to further our fellowship, we have established an International Service Office. This office serves Gam-Anon through the website, by printing our literature, by responding to phone and written inquires about our program, and through its publication and distribution of our newsletter, *Gam-Anews*.

The ISO functions under the direction of the Board of Delegates, which consists of Gam-Anon members who are elected by their local areas to represent them at board meetings and throughout the year. The Board committees such as the Literature, Publicity and Executive Committees consist of internationally elected Gam-Anon members. Using the Twelve Unity Steps as a guide, the Board makes decisions that affect Gam-Anon as a whole, keeping in mind that the Board, the ISO, and the various committees exist to serve Gam-Anon and its members.

Working Unity Step 9

1. Have you read the explanation of the structure of Gam-Anon (members, meetings, committees, Unity/Intergroup and ISO), in The Gam-Anon Way of Life? Do you understand the Gam-Anon structure?
2. Are you aware of the distinct functions of the Board of Delegates (BOD), Unity/Intergroup, ISO?
3. Do you understand that various committees exist to serve Gam-Anon and its members? Do you understand that committee members either volunteer or are elected from the general membership which includes *you*!
4. Have you ever considered volunteering for any of these positions? Do you know who to contact to accomplish that or get more information?
5. Do you know what Area your meeting is in and who is the Area's elected Delegate to the Board?

UNITY STEP 10

**Gam-Anon has no opinion on outside issues;
hence, the Gam-Anon name should never be drawn into controversy.**

There should never be a heated religious, political, or reform argument among Gam-Anon members. So long as we don't argue these matters privately, it's fairly certain we never shall publicly. Gam-Anon opposes no one. We have no quarrel with gambling as such.

In spite of what our personal opinions and feelings may be, and in spite of any political, social, or religious activities we engage in personally, we must always understand that Gam-Anon takes no stand on these or other outside issues. We recognize that were we to campaign for or against such matters, we would lose our focus on our primary purpose, as stated in Unity Step 5, which is to carry our message of hope and recovery to those affected by the gambling problem. It is important to keep this in mind when speaking for Gam-Anon or when involved with publicity, lest the listener be misled into thinking that Gam-Anon has a political, social, or religious agenda.

Many of us have gone on retreats, been to seminars, participated in other self-help and self-improvement programs or have sought counseling with mental health professionals. Although there are many things that may be helpful to us as individuals, they are not part of Gam-Anon. In keeping with Unity Step Ten, Gam-Anon does not support or endorse these activities, nor does Gam-Anon disapprove of them. Gam-Anon holds no opinion regarding any of them. We do not distribute flyers, booklets, business cards or other information for activities that are not Gam-Anon or GA and Gam-Anon jointly sponsored. To do so would be an endorsement.

In accordance with this Step, at our Gam-Anon meetings, we use only approved Gam-Anon literature. We recognize that there are many books from many sources. Privately, many of us may turn to these for guidance and comfort. By using or selling these items within our fellowship, we would be stating an opinion about them. Since Gam-Anon has no opinion on outside issues, the only literature we use is that which has been approved by the Board of Delegates. This approved literature speaks to the Gam-Anon experience and the Gam-Anon message of recovery.

Working Unity Step 10

1. Are you committed to keeping religious beliefs, business involvements, political beliefs or agendas, or non-approved literature outside of the meeting and seeing to it that others at your meeting comply with this step. Are you willing to explain this step to others and refuse to allow anyone in your meeting to violate this step?

2. Do you ever state YOUR personal opinion as if it were that of GAM-ANON?

3. Do you have social, political or religious discussions at your meeting in violation of this step?

4. Have flyers and other information about events and activities not sponsored by Gam-Anon been distributed at meetings? Has literature or newspaper and magazine articles ever been handed out? What was done about it? What will be done about it in the future?

5. Are you aware that we are cautioned to remember that we do not oppose gambling as such?

6. Are you aware that during any kind of public speaking engagement on behalf of Gam-Anon, we must always decline to give an opinion about everything except the Gam-Anon program?

UNITY STEP 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, internet, etc.

Although it is understandable that we are all enthusiastic in our efforts to promote growth of Gam-Anon through the medium of press, radio, and television, we should ever be mindful of the fact that we must maintain our anonymity at all times. We do not wish to hurt our program inadvertently in our attempts to promote it.

Through the use of the media we may provide information about our program such as our purposes, our Steps of Recovery, and meeting locations. We can relate our personal experience as long as we do not give our full names nor show our faces publicly. Gam-Anon members appearing in film or on television may never permit their faces to be shown but should sit with their backs to the camera or in some other way conceal their identity. Photos should not accompany newspaper and magazine articles.

We do not wish to hinder our ability to carry the message through the media. However, the principle of anonymity does take precedence over that consideration. If our principle is clearly understood and diplomatically communicated to the media representatives, they will be willing to cooperate. If the media's format makes it impossible to comply with this step, of course we should not participate, but respect for our program has been gained by the member's adherence to our principle of anonymity. Professionals and members of the press attending meetings with permission of the group ought to be informed clearly on our principle of anonymity before the meeting begins.

Gam-Anon Public Relations is concerned with acquainting the public and professionals, agencies and organizations, with the help Gam-Anon provides to persons whose lives have been affected by compulsive gambling. We attract by circulating literature and flyers in such places as libraries, doctor's offices, and houses of worship. We use public service announcements in newspapers and make use of free listings in telephone directories. We do not promote by making promises of success and happiness. With the humility exhibited by our anonymity, we attract others who see value in the Gam-Anon program we represent.

Our program is here for everyone who needs it, but we do not wish to force it on someone who is not ready. Our door is always open and in order to attract new members it is important that we offer much in the way of hope, encouragement, and understanding.

Working Unity Step 11

1. Since we are a program of attraction, there is a need to put Gam-Anon into the public conscience so that those who would benefit from attending know we exist and where we can be found. In what ways do you and your meeting bring to your community awareness of GamAnon? Flyers? Invitations to Open Meetings? Speakers at health forums, schools, senior centers? Information to clergy, justice system, medical community, etc.?
2. How does your meeting attract members? Keep members?
3. Has your meeting/Unity/Intergroup used the Gam-Anon publication **HANDBOOK for PUBLICITY and PUBLIC RELATIONS** as its resource to learn about public relations for Gam-Anon?
4. Why is anonymity so important in the public arena?
5. Does your Area have a hotline? Do you know who manages it, and knowing that your anonymity is protected, would you volunteer to participate in responding to phone calls? What will you do, or not do, if your Area has no hotline?

UNITY STEP 12

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the Gam-Anon program, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

It is vitally important for members of Gam-Anon to respect each other's anonymity. Many of us come into the program feeling fearful for our future and ashamed of our past. Our stories of living with the gambling problem are unhappy ones, often filled with behaviors that were less than admirable on our part as well as that of the gambler. Part of the recovery process is to be able to share our feelings and our histories with others who "have been there" and understand. We need to know that we can speak freely, because gossip has no place in our fellowship. Most of all, we need to know that we have a safe place to unload our heavy burdens. Anonymity assures us of this safety.

In any meeting or discussion between Gam-Anon members, including outside the four walls of our meeting place, members must respect each other's confidences. Whom we see and what we hear in the Gam-Anon room or on the phone, remains a private confidence. It is a violation of anonymity to repeat what has been said between Gam-Anon members to a G.A. member, no matter how well meaning. The respect for anonymity also extends to members of Gamblers Anonymous.

No matter what our intelligence, our economic status, or our background, the disease of compulsive gambling has reduced us to powerlessness. We come here as equals. In spite of ourselves, our lives have become unmanageable. Anonymity, together with equality, teaches us humility.

In addition to the respect for the confidences of each other within the rooms, anonymity means that we do not seek recognition outside of our meetings. Anonymity is always observed at the public level of press, radio, and television, as stated in Unity Step 11. Maintaining anonymity is necessary if Gam-Anon is to give support to its members and attract newcomers to the fellowship.

A cardinal rule for our survival is, "principles must always be placed before personalities." We cannot expect to like every member of the group, but we should be able to get along with everyone. We must always remember that the principles of the program are perfect, even if we, the members, are not. People may disappoint us, but the Gam-Anon program never will.

Working Unity Step 12

1. Do you uphold the principle of anonymity by advising new members of this principle and by never asking any member the following - where they live - where they work - and by not leaving identifying messages on voice-mails, answering machines, etc. When meeting a member in a public place, street, function, do you refrain from identifying how you are known to each other?
2. Do you hold sacred what is said in a meeting or in a phone call or e-mail/text contact - not discussing it or sharing it with others including other Gam-Anon members, GA members, family members? Do you respect others' confidences?
3. Do you understand why Gam-Anon insists on maintaining this principle of anonymity? Can you envision how detrimental it would be to disregard this code?
4. "Can you explain the significance of the policy, "principles over personalities?" How do you adhere to this principle in your commitment to care for all the members of your meeting? What do you think a member's failure to practice this principle would do to that member, other members, and to the meeting itself?

NOTES

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