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Trustee Line for February 2012

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 2/29/12.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them, or start an entirely new subject

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Unity Step 2

2/5/12 - 8:14 AM

Unity Step 2

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

Many times at my Intergroup Meeting and the Board of Trustees (BOT) Meeting, I wish GA would have kept the original wording of this Unity Step. Both the Recovery and Unity steps were adopted from another 12-step fellowship and there was a lot of work, thought and painful experience that led to their creation. The original wording of this Unity Step was "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

That first sentence is the foundation of all my service work in GA. I am but a small part of a greater whole. Every member of the BOT is a part of that group conscience to me and they all deserve my attention and respect. I try not to leave the meeting, talk during someone else's time at the microphone or mutter my criticisms under my breath. I am human and I have not been perfect at that last statement, but I feel I am not serving my group and GA as a whole every time I slip into one of those behaviors.

The first sentence also takes my ego out of my service work. It is not MY agenda item, it is my contribution to the agenda and the group conscience will decide if it has merit. While serving as a Public Relations chair in another fellowship, I was asked for my committee's support and I stated we did not think it was a good idea. Someone got up and asked me if it was my committee's opinion or my personal opinion. I had to acknowledge it was my personal opinion, inform my committee of the request, take a vote, and accept my committee's group conscience to provide the support that was requested. It was humbling and frustrating at the time, but it turned out to be the correct decision.

A couple of other thoughts on group conscience I picked up over the years are the concept of "informed" group conscience and "voting with their pocketbooks". Someone gave me a set of workshops on CD where the speaker was talking about this Unity Step and he stressed it should be an "informed" group conscience making decisions. We need all the facts, we need to hear both sides of the issue to make an informed decision. I have seen an entire room shift its vote based on one speaker's words. That is why I try very hard to listen to every speaker at the BOT Meeting; what each of you say on the issue helps me make my decision. And I take the agenda to my Intergroup and solicit their thoughts and guidance for my vote. I strongly encourage every Trustee to go to the microphone if the agenda item moves you to speak; don't worry if you are not a public speaker or you are nervous - your words are a part of that "informed" group conscience and they are important to me.

The concept of members voting with their pocketbooks was demonstrated to

me during my tenure as a treasurer in another fellowship. The chairperson of our Answering Service Committee used to get donations sent directly to them for the service. It finally came to our attention that the chair was stealing money. After we got all the records and negotiated with the company, we were left with a \$1000 debt and no money. At our next Intergroup meeting, we presented the situation and asked the groups to see if they could send a little extra over the next few months to cover the bill. When I went to the PO box that month, the donations received were within a few dollars of the amount we needed to pay off the debt.

My experience over the years has shown me that any committee, group, event or national office that is properly servicing its members will always have just enough money to pay its bills. If donations drop or a group is not getting enough from its members to pay rent or buy coffee, it needs to take inventory to find out what it is doing wrong and correct it or accept the group conscience decision that it is no longer needed. Most times the inventory identifies what needs to be fixed and the group survives and grows from the experience. And sometimes members need to be asked to reach a little deeper into their pockets to protect the fellowship that is saving their life.

Back to that Answering Service chair who stole the money. Many members wanted to prosecute the chair for larceny and I made many calls to past delegates (trustees) and the national office about this issue and they made a very lasting point with me that reminded me I am a servant and not a governor. They all stressed that we should never do something that drives a member from our rooms. We all have a progressive and potentially fatal disease waiting for us out there and I would not want someone denying me the opportunity to recover, regardless of the mistakes I make. I should never do that to someone else, because a part of their recovery and progress through the Recovery Steps will recommend they make amends and pay their debts. If a member chooses not to follow the steps, remains dishonest, and continues to hurt people, their disease will take them back to a bet and make their life a living hell we all know so well. Punitive action seems trivial to that and I would not want make them too hurt, angry, or afraid to come back to GA when they really want help.

Finally, the topic of leadership. Back when I was young(er) and I owned a Mustang, I always wanted to squeal the tires leaving a meeting to impress my friends and the girls at the meeting, but I was told I may be the only advertisement a person may see for our fellowship and what do I want to show them. Last thing I want to do is cause a group to lose meeting space because I want to lay a little rubber to impress my friends. As a trustee, members look to me for guidance and I try to be respectful and level headed and lead an honest, open life. I do not ask more of anyone else than I do of myself and I try not to find fault without also looking for a solution and have the willingness to do the work to fix the fault. When I visit a room, I ask if there is anything I can do for them and I make suggestions, I do not tell them what to do or not to do.

My own inventory on this step is that I still can be selfish with my time and I don't always give my service work the attention I should. I still have not visited all the groups in my area. My tolerance and patience sometimes falters at the BOT Meeting at times, but I am inspired by some of the examples you all show me on how to be graceful under pressure. I do my best to listen and make an informed decision for the groups who elected me. I take great comfort that I am a small part of a much greater whole and I pray that I give as much to my service work as I get out of it.

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, Connecticut

2/7/12 - 2:00 PM

I for one am glad that we did not just copy the 12 Steps of Recovery & Unity from AA or any other group, but that we wrote our own. Just as Bill Wilson did when he wrote the Steps for AA, he got some of his wisdom from the principles of the Oxford Group. Below are the six principles from that group:

We admitted we were licked.
We got honest with ourselves.
We talked it over with another person.
We made amends to those we had harmed.
We tried to carry this message to others with no thought of reward.
We prayed to whatever God we thought there was .

The founders of GA rewrote the Steps to fit what they believed would work best for compulsive gamblers.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

2/14/12 - 5:06 PM
A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code states in Article IV, Declaration "We are dedicated to the proposition that a structurally sound Fellowship based and granted in democratic and spiritual principles will not only strengthen us, but will win the confidence, respect and help of people everywhere, as we extend a stronger hand to compulsive gamblers in every part of the world." That is part of a profound statement for the consideration of all Gamblers Anonymous members.

Gamblers Anonymous literature introduces the spiritual principles for our consideration as Kindness, Generosity, Honesty, and Humility. There are other spiritual principles we can discover as we proceed in our recoveries, such as compassion, faith, gentleness, goodness, honor, joy, love, patience, peace, openmindedness, self-control, tolerance, and willingness to grow as sane, responsible, productive non-gambling human beings.

The foundation for all our continued recoveries will always be adherence to, and acceptance of, The Gamblers Anonymous First Step of Recovery. In practicing the Gamblers Anonymous First Step of Recovery, we admit to our powerlessness over gambling and that our lives had become unmanageable. In time, we will come to admit and accept our powerlessness over gambling as an undeniable truth. We will come to believe that the resulting unmanageability of our lives was also an undeniable truth! This is the firm foundation Recovery is constructed upon.

To make the foundation strong and resilient, to never let the foundation weaken, we accept without any reservations all the implications of Recovery Step One. We then practice on a daily basis to the best of our abilities Recovery Steps Two through Twelve.

Recovery Steps Two, Three, Seven, and Eleven are the Spiritual Steps. In Recovery Step Two, we ask that our Higher Power, God as we understand Him, restore our lives to a normal way of thinking and living. In Recovery Step Three, we ask to be guided as we surrender our will and lives over to the care of our Higher Power. In Recovery Step Seven, we ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. In Recovery Step Eleven, we seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, seeking only to know His will for our lives and the power to carry that out.

This spiritual awakening I speak of for myself, along with other members who are also coming out of the darkness, has inspired me to share what I have come to believe are the gifts freely granted by our Higher Power, God as we understand Him, as we continue on our journey of recovery. The concept of living life, "One Day At A Time" can help us calmly consider the value of the following gifts and concepts.

- * Freedom from a gambling addiction by abstinence, change, personal growth.
- * Sanity (soundness of mind) restored by abstinence from gambling.
- * P.M.S. (Pain, Misery, and Suffering) can be reversed by H.O.W.
- * God can help me do what I have been unable to do for myself.
- * Program, Purpose, Principles, Perseverance, will solve our problems.
- * Recovery efforts are aided by kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility
- * Desire to stop gambling and making meetings are essential to all recoveries.
- * Peace of mind, serenity, and sanity are the priceless gifts of recovery.
- * Our lives, hearts, our families, are restored as we grow stronger in recovery.
- * No matter how far I had fallen, GOD helped me rise again.
- * God loves us and provided Gamblers Anonymous to arrest our addiction.
- * God did not abandon me, even if I may have abandoned God.
- * Recovery for all members--Unity for the Fellowship becomes the highest priority.
- * Unity is the principle that binds us all together in common purpose.

My gift to God will be faithfully working and practicing Recovery Step Twelve. The joy of touching the life of another human being by helping--him or her--to help themselves desire recovery and a new way of life is a wonderful experience and special part of a Spiritual Awakening.

The promise of peace of mind and serenity was very strong when I first entered the Program. The members in those early days of Gamblers Anonymous told me that peace of mind and serenity were possible to achieve and worth striving for. As for me, those promises remain as worthy today as they were then..... and "God ain't through with me yet!"

In closing this message to The Gamblers Anonymous Board of Trustees, or for that matter to any member of Gamblers Anonymous, I Thank God, My Higher

Power, and The Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous for the gift of Recovery and for the thousands upon thousands of members who share their experience, strength, and hope with fellow members every day.

George W. - Area 16, Watertown, NY

New International Conference Guidelines
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2/16/12 - 2:21 PM

I've been reading the proposed "Gamblers Anonymous G**A**n Joint International Conference Guidelines". Personally, I think it is a well thought-out and written piece of literature. Unfortunately, I believe it is totally out of order for discussion in a BOT meeting, since it blatantly refers to G**A**n many times. As we all know, G**A**n comes under the heading of a "related facility or outside enterprise", and by even discussing it we may be, and probably are violating our own Unity Step #6.

It's a dilemma. What are we to do?

Simple solution: Stop being hypocritical and change the step. Gam-Anon is referred to in more than a couple of pieces of our literature; we even have a link to their web site on ours'. All of these are technically violations of Unity Step 6, yet we, who are specifically charged with guarding our Recovery and Unity steps from corruption, have been allowing this to go on. I remember a motion to remove the link to Gam-Anon from the GA web site. After being warned by the Chairman that the link gave the impression that we approved of and endorsed Gam-Anon (an 'outside enterprise') we (me, too) still voted to leave the link there.

At our 2010 Spring Conference in Louisville, Larry B proposed that we add "With the sole exception of endorsing Gam-Anon" to the beginning of Unity Step 6. Seven words that can eliminate heated discussions at our BOT meetings, and finally recognize Gam-Anon as a fellowship which contributes to the recovery of many of our brothers and sisters, and is dedicated to helping our loved-ones. I have benefited directly from the love that Gam-Anon shares. I believe that all GA members (GA as a whole) do.

We should do this.

Marilyn (G**A**n) and I look forward to seeing you all in Boston.

Your friend in recovery,
John B. - Area 13 Trustee, Philadelphia

2/18/12 - 10:17 AM

I agree with John on his posting. Most interesting is that John is a GamAnon supporter, but only for the good they do in their own Fellowship and the spillover effect on GA. He's obviously very clear about the separation of the 2 Fellowships. But he is in the minority. Most supporters of GamAnon can only see that it must be integrated into the GA Fellowship. That is dealing with this issue with blinders on. To those who feel that way, I say support it – yes, but know where the boundaries are. That's the problem that plagues our Fellowship, those who would justify their support in direct violation of Unity Step 6 and accompany that support with rationalization and justification of reasons that frontally attack Unity Step 6.

This Joint Conference booklet is completely out of order, and hopefully will be squashed in Boston before the first person is allowed to speak on this item. The infiltration of GamAnon into our fellowship continues to grow like weeds taking over a lawn. Little by little over the years, a piece of literature gets an insert regarding GamAnon. Then that is followed by another, and so on. Before we know it, the arguments come out by the GamAnon devotees that GamAnon is already in our literature, so how could we possibly say it is an outside entity?

I'm not one to be paranoid, but our dishonest relationship with GamAnon has been advancing in a very calculated manner by a select group of GamAnon supporters and GamAnon itself. Evidence this booklet. This is not a committee-originated document, it is the result of GamAnon providing the committee with their version of how they see conferences proceeding. Another form of it existed prior to the committee officially being formed. Remember the theme in Cherry Hill from the GamAnon supporters? Why rust to change the percentages, let's wait to hear from GamAnon. It was already in the works. The GA committee never pu together a new document of their own, they merely worked around the GamAnon document. I have seen numerous documents from GamAnon over the years, and this is clearly one of them, in style, structure, verbiage and content.

It's important for people to understand how Unity Step 6 is being shredded even more with this booklet than the actions of GA have already done. It's time for everyone to read past the headline of the step itself and understand the body of the step. Check the Red Book and see if you can still turn your eyes away from this spreading problem that continues to erode the core foundation of our Fellowship.

"Most fundamental at this point is the constant awareness that Gamblers Anonymous is so willing to cooperate but not "Affiliate" with any outside enterprise. Any other course presents the possibility of controversy clouded behind the motives and direction of any well-meaning group or individual, creating a diversion from the primary purpose of Gamblers Anonymous. If we were to apply our energies toward any "related facilities" would we then set aside time and attention required to share with the suffering compulsive gambler? And would we then suffer from internal strife as we argue over money, rules, requirements; frightening? Yes. So we preserve the tradition of not lending the Gamblers Anonymous name.

Gamblers Anonymous works in large part because the program is kept pure of outside interests. Energy, time and money would be wasted by supporting any outside cause or organization. Such support would also be detrimental to the public acceptance of individual groups or the Fellowship as a whole. Endorsement of anything outside of the Fellowship would lead to internal disagreement. For these reasons, Gamblers Anonymous also takes no part in political causes or public issues."

I hope all the Trustees read this joint committee booklet **BEFORE** Boston and take the time to be objective about how GA is drowning in its own dishonesty regarding how we treat GamAnon. All those who as GamAnon supporters could not get the necessary votes to change any of the Unity Steps, when we had numerous chances to do so in Cherry Hill, well guess what...it didn't go your way and now it's time to abide by the group conscience. GamAnon is not GA, contrary to one member who got up to the microphone and said that they are the same program to him.

We can cooperate with any entity, this includes the Council on Compulsive Gambling, a normally taboo entity in the Trustee meetings. Read the guts of Unity 6 again and ask yourself when did we cross the line from cooperation to affiliation? This booklet takes us way past affiliation. I'm not sure of the correct word, but it is something that is derived from someone or something else having control over another.

More to follow next month with a line-by-line listing of why passing this item will change us into an 11 Step program. We might as well remove Step 6, from the Program, because we aren't using or following it.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

2/18/12 - 11:00 PM

I don't write very often to the Trustee Line, but this subject and item on the agenda is extremely important. I hope to hear from other trustees around the world, and hear their thoughts as well.

As a trustee for my area, I always feel it's important to review each agenda item thoroughly, and make sure I understand any new literature that might be proposed, changed, moved, etc, so I can let my area know what we are discussing. As I was reviewing the Boston rolling agenda, I noticed the New International Conference Guidelines, and began to read through them. Having just hosted an International Conference, I feel that our existing literature, "Hosting an International Conference", is outdated and needs to be re-vamped, and so I was looking forward to reviewing this item.

I found many things that needed to be modified or changed, parts of the item which I did not understand, parts that really took away the power of choice as a member or a current or past trustee, parts which gave way too much authority to our steering committees and our Conference Oversight Committee, and of course there is always the issue of this item violating our Unity Steps, as it has been noted above in the the other posts. We have an item on the agenda which is for Committee Recommendations for Areas with regards to conferences, which some of the information differs from the Joint GA GamAnon Guidelines. Shouldn't they be in alignment when referring to specific numbers? I would think it's confusing to have appropriate literature tell you one thing and approved literature telling you something different.

My first concern is directed to our current Rules and Procedures which govern the BOT meetings, which states that, "New proposed literature produced by a

BOT committee will only undergo editing changes involving spelling and grammar, providing the item passes the first of two votes., " I supposed the way to bypass this would be to make an agenda item which deletes this, and says that any new literature brought to the BOT, whether through a committee or not, needs to go through a merit vote first, and then 2 votes. As our Rules and Procedures state, once passed, they immediately take affect. But I don't necessarily believe that this is the primary issue here. As this item sits right now, as I mentioned above, there are a lot of things that need to be addressed, and really should be done so before this gets approved as GA literature. Someone told me, "lets get it approved and then we can tweak it". I thought, hey maybe that's a good idea, but then I had to think about that statement again. I don't think that's the answer. That statement possibly tells me that perhaps there is something not right with this item that should be addressed, and the urgency to push it through knowingly, is probably not the right thing to do.

I would like to make it clear that although, it does violate our Unity Step, personally, I believe this document is extremely important in some form or another, in order for us to move forward with our International Conferences. There is a lot of good information that is addressed, but as the document sits now, it states that in order to change any parts of it, we, as a group, or simply as individual members, lose our "right" to place anything on the rolling agenda without prior approval from not only our own BOT Conference Oversight Committee, but also that of GamAnon's. This item has a statement in it which says, "With the exception of any changes in AREAS (Appendix B) and contact information (Appendix A), any changes to these Joint Guidelines must be presented to the Conference Oversight Committees of GA and Gam-Anon for their discussion and approval before being put on the BOT and BOD agendas. Any changes to these guidelines must be approved by both Boards."

I've contacted members on the Joint GA/GamAnon Conference Committee with my questions, and I've received some answers. Some I understood, others, I felt they were sidestepping things that de-valued some of our past decisions on the BOT. Again, regardless of whether or not it may be ruled out of order, or violates our Unity program, it's an essential document to help with future conferences. That being said, my number one priority as a trustee is to uphold the guidance code of Gamblers Anonymous. How do you vote in favor of an item which you know violates the Guidance Code. I've worked extremely hard to work a program of honesty, how do you go against that, right or wrong?

There is a place for an item such as these guidelines, but I'm not 100% sure that this is the way to bring them forth, especially as GA approved literature. I believe it is important enough to take the time to do the right thing. What that right thing is, I'm really not sure. But, I do know this, that as we continue to violate our Unity Step #6, there will always be friction with anything which "affiliates" us with GamAnon as a whole. I think that we definitely ought to take a serious look again at changing our Unity Step #6. Times do change, but they have they have not changed as of yet.

Lastly, what I can't seem to understand is the urgency of pushing this item forward so fast without the possibility of any input from the Board of Trustees, or our membership as a whole. It is my understanding that these guidelines will not take effect until 2015, so what is the rush. I've read this item three times, and as it sits now, I don't see how I can support it. I want to support it, because it's needed, but again, it violates the Guidance Code of Gamblers Anonymous. Even if we changed our Unity Step to endorse GamAnon, I'm still not sure I agree with all of the information which is included, not to mention, that I don't have the right to bring something forward to the floor of the BOT, and suggest a change. If this item passes two votes, we basically leave these guidelines in the hands of a number of members of GA and GamAnon, who I'm sure are very experienced with past conferences, who then hold the right whether or not to make changes or not. So, the BOT has the power to approve this, along with the BOD of GamAnon, however, we immediately lose our right to make any changes. That doesn't sit well for me, not just as a current trustee of the BOT, but as a member of Gamblers Anonymous.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Boston!

Steve F. - Trustee Area I, Los Angeles

2/19/12 - 11:06 PM

I've changed my mind. After re-reading this document, then re-reading it again from a strictly Trustee point of view, I still think it is a well thought-out and written piece of literature, but question #1 is: "written by who"? The way I interpret it, the guidelines give a lot of authority regarding the international conferences to Gam-Anon.

Do we really need "Oversight Committees" reviewing and either approving or

disapproving everything an area wanting to host a conference does? We already have a liaison from our Executive Board overseeing the actions of the host Conference Committee. This document adds two committees who apparently have to agree on everything, or nothing gets done. Add to that that one of the committees represents a minority interest, and yet has the power to stall or veto actions requested by the other committee. CONFUSED YET? I am.

By the way, in Steve's post he says someone said "let's get it approved, then we can tweak it". That's easier said than done. If one reads the document, you'll see that to "tweak" it, even to change a single word, has to be approved by both the GA and Gam-Anon Oversight Committees for their discussion and APPROVAL, BEFORE even being put on the agenda. Then, if a change makes it to the agenda, it must be approved by both the BOT and BOD.

What happened? As I recall it, the item that originally caused all the ruckus was an agenda item to change the distribution of the profits from an International Conference to more accurately reflect the actual attendance at the conference. I'd be willing to compromise and accept the proposal of a 65% - 35% split at the Spring Conference, and an 80% - 20% split in the Fall. Where did the other 25 pages come from? To change the split only requires modifying the existing piece of GA literature. This document muddies the waters and will create even more controversy and animosity than already exists. It can't and won't be passed as it stands, and instead, if we even discuss it at our BOT meeting, it will just be a waste of time and oxygen. (Uh,oh; could that possibly be its purpose? Could the authors, whoever they are, really believe this item has a snowball's chance of passing? Or is this item's primary purpose to stall any action at all? "If nothing changes, nothing changes", and the percentages stay as they are for at least another conference, benefiting Gam-Anon.)

Make no mistake. I'm still very much in favor of changing Unity Step 6 to endorse Gam-Anon as a fellowship which supports and benefits our members. I am, however, very much against anything that includes them in our decision making process. I accept their input and advice, but their vote doesn't count.

Your Friend in Recovery,
John B. - Area 13 Trustee, Philadelphia, PA

2/21/12 - 8:58 AM

I have read this thread with great interest. Is Gam-Anon important to our affected others? The answer is a resounding YES! However, the question that we as GA needs to answer is this, is Gam-Anon necessary for GA members and the recovery of said members? The answer to this is simple, no it is not. I agree with what has already been said here, we need to follow our own Unity Step on this issue. "Gamblers Anonymous ought never endorse, finance or lend the Gamblers Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." For most of us, Gam-Anon is a part of our household, as our significant others are members. They belong to a different fellowship than we do. If we do not want them to get involved with how we operate our fellowship, then we must not allow them into any part of our fellowship. I know it sounds like I am not a supporter of Gam-Anon, however, just the opposite is true. In area 8A, we have a very good working relationship with the Gam-Anon fellowship. We have a monthly speaker meeting that includes speakers from both fellowships. Our annual mini-conference is planned by a committee made up of members of both fellowships (which, by the way, this committee is open to any member who wishes to be a part of planning the conference). We have had Public Relation events that had a member of GA and a member of Gam-Anon attend, to take care of both sides. Some meetings have had newcomers looking for Gam-Anon that a GA member has spoken to and given information to in order to offer them some help until they could get to a Gam-Anon meeting.

The downfall of making Gam-Anon an exception to our Unity Step 6...we have a member in our area who is continually telling the other fellowship how it should be ran. (Which fellowship this member belongs to is irrelevant..it goes both ways). Both fellowships have bumped heads with this member on more than one occasion, including the trustees of GA and the delegate for Gam-Anon. The only thing currently that we have to stand on is our Unity Step 6. Take that away from us and there can be numerous problems that can arise from this.

I understand that change is sometimes necessary, however, as far as our Recovery and Unity steps are concerned, they were written the way that they were for a reason. They have worked as they are for a very long time. There is a saying that I grew up with, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Why are we trying to 'fix' this? It is just opening the door for other entities to be 'included' into our fellowship when we don't need ANY other fellowship except our own.

Can't wait for Boston!

Your Sister in Recovery,
Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

2/21/12 - 2:28 PM

I'm kind of glad that the document Joint International Conference Guidelines, is on the agenda for the Boston Trustee meeting. It has proven to me that we cannot allow ourselves to be "Affiliated" with any outside enterprise.

So much of our current literature has references to Gam-Anon. That in itself is a violation of Unity Step 6. There have been times that I felt that maybe we should change Unity Step 6 and include Gam-Anon, but I always end up voting against items of that nature, as they are a violation of this step. This document sure as hell shows that with the International Conferences, that Gam-Anon wants to control just about everything there is to do with International Conferences.

I now have, as a future guide with this document, why we should not change Unity Step 6, and allow any outside enterprise to get to the point of trying to change our literature, because we don't know what they may request in the future. We need to take care of ourselves and have our attention to other suffering Compulsive Gamblers.

As the Red book states "Gamblers Anonymous works in large part because the program is kept pure of outside interests."

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

2/22/12 - 2:18 PM

To all my GA Brothers and Sisters,

Let me first state, in the interest of full disclosure, that the area in which I live and attend most meetings does not have an active Gam-anon presence, and hasn't for many years. Area 2, the Area that I represent, does have active Gam-anon meetings, just not in my local area.

I have been a member of Gamblers Anonymous for almost 17 years and am serving my first term as a Trustee. Gam-anon issues have been a significant part of the three BOT meetings I have attended so far, with numerous agenda items regarding our relationship with them, and is sure to be a significant part of the Boston BOT meeting. I fully respect all members of the BOT, and have met some wonderful people, some of which I have become friends with even though we disagree on certain items. Some of those members have brought Gam-anon agenda items to the BOT, which of course they have every right to do. But personally, I am flat out tired of discussing our relationship with Gam-anon ad nauseam. I could be mistaken, but I believe that every single agenda item that has spoken to adding Gam-anon to our steps or furthering our relationship with that program has been voted down.

I am a hardcore believer in both of our 12 step programs. The steps in the Recovery Program work in concert with each other. The same is true for the Unity Program. If one accepts that premise, then one accepts that all the steps are related to each other. If they are related to each other, if we violate one, we violate all. I have always been of the opinion that Unity Step 5 is the most important, as it succinctly states the reason we are even coming together: "Gamblers Anonymous has but ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE – to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers". Therefore, all other steps must be followed for Step 5 to work. Allowing Gamblers Anonymous to endorse an outside enterprise diverts us from our PRIMARY PURPOSE. If I may paraphrase Karen E., who posted a very insightful take on this issue, Gam-anon is important, even perhaps vital to some who are affected by a compulsive gambler. But a compulsive gambler does not need Gam-anon to recover.

We, as a body, should be making our recovery, our program the priority. Gam-anon, as a body, can make their program and recovery a priority. Let's leave it to the individual members of Gamblers Anonymous to support their affected family members and friends in Gam-anon, and those individuals in Gam-anon can do the same for the compulsive gambler in their life if they choose. We have principles which are the very foundation of our recovery. Let's stick to them.

Your Brother in Recovery,

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

2/23/12 - 12:01 PM

I am very confused by what some individuals are trying to do in our fellowship.

Since my first meeting in Gamblers Anonymous many years ago, I was told "Family Comes First" I understood this to mean my immediate family. Namely: spouse, children, brothers, sisters, mother, father, etc. In time I learned this could also include friends when they became as relatively close as family. By getting our families involved in Gam Anon they were better enabled in many instances to understand the compulsive gambler, and what they should or should not do when dealing with various situations that may arise. I believe we COOPERATE with Gam Anon when it is beneficial to OUR fellowship, and share things that bring family closer together. What a shame it would be to completely end the cooperation between both groups for the growth and well being of the compulsive gambler. I feel it would be detrimental to our recovery to not allow a spouse to be part of a pressure relief group if they are a Gam Anon member. That may be going to extremes, but where do we end it when it comes to knowing what this relationship has done with so many wonderful things it has done for the benefit of our Gamblers Anonymous fellowship? Our cooperation with Gam Anon in conferences , mini-conferences, workshops, combined meetings, pressure relief, etc. has worked well for many many years. What are we really trying to do here? As Karen E. stated " If it ain't broke, don't fix it." PLEASE leave well enough alone!

Bob W. - Area 12, New Jersey
