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## Trustee Line for March 20, 2007

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### From The Trustees

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2/28/07 - 1:25 PM

I would appreciate advice from trustees who may have experienced a problem with a GA meeting. I am a novice trustee in my first year of my term. I've been visiting meetings in my area on a rotating basis, and discovered one meeting that seems to be focusing on active gambling. Sometimes the leaders have slipped and chair the meeting with less than 90 days clean time. Articles on gambling are read into the active meeting. Members are not introduced in our traditional way at the beginning of a meeting. In one recent meeting I realized as the meeting went on, that one member was new to GA and had not been welcomed or introduced until later in the sharing portion of the meeting. In that meeting control was given up and three or four sessions of two or three people were chatting among themselves on their own agenda.

Now some of these activities may occur in any meeting sometimes. My view is this goes on regularly. When I tried to point out some of these difficulties, I was almost shouted down with this is an "open" meeting and we decide how to run it. OK. I've asked members from other GA groups to attend this one meeting to get another opinion. The consensus suggests there is a problem.

What is the correct way to approach this group? Your suggestion and comments are welcome.

Bob C. - Area 2A  
Northern Alberta

3/16/07 - 11:20 PM

My name is Ed K. and I am the newest Trustee in Area 1.

Recently we had an issue with a member talking about gambling (in the present tense) in meetings but stated "he had a desire to stop gambling". We'll call this member Member A. However, another member (Member B) noted that he "did not believe that Member A had a desire to stop gambling" and felt that since Member A admitted to gambling (albeit with another persons money, not his), Member A was not allowed to share in meetings. Member A also stated that he did not feel that gambling with another person's money was "gambling". Member B's reasoning for not allowing Member A to share was that Member A was upsetting the meeting and cited at least one example of a third member getting up and leaving during Member A's sharing. Further, Member B felt that anyone actively gambling did not have the right to share (especially in light of the other issues).

I have heard that in other 12 Step programs, there have been members who have been "banned".

Has anyone in G.A. ever banned a member? How did come about (the process, I mean)? Was it effective? Did the banned member ever come back? What were the results?

My thoughts are as follows:

1. If a member says he has a desire to stop gambling, we have no right to stop him/her from sharing.
2. We have no right to impose our beliefs on whether a member does or does not have the "desire" to stop gambling.
3. We have no right to define what is gambling for another member.
4. We DO have the right to ask someone to not share is they are verbally or physically abusive to another member (even banning if necessary).

With all that said I believe I understand the intent of Unity Step 3 and group unity as a whole. But, shouldn't we be sensitive to the needs of member who may not be making the kind of recovery we have (or that we think they should have)?

What is the role as a Trustee in these matters? I believe it is to attempt to bring unity to the meetings (and G.A. as a whole).

Many of us Trustees in this area have talked about this (and will continue to do so, I'm sure) but your thoughts are also VERY welcome. I hope to learn form your experience.

With Serenity,  
Ed K. - Area 1

3/18/07 - 9:08 AM  
Dear Fellow Trustees,

Only about 8 weeks until the Chicago Conference. I'm already eager with anticipation!

As a member of the executive board, I find it a bit frustrating when one of us at the front table has to rule on an item that is really something that should never have been put on the agenda in the first place. Item #18 requests a change from the word "insolvable" to "unsolvable". I checked a few different dictionaries, and they all say that the two words can be used interchangeably. There is absolutely no difference.

By doing a little homework in the future, we can eliminate time spent on agenda items which are unnecessary and make no difference at all to our literature. We have more important stuff to work on.

I hope that by now everyone has made their reservations for Chicago (although history tells us otherwise). I look forward to seeing all of you.

Sincerely,  
Chuck R. - 2nd Co-Chair, BOT  
Area 15

3/18/07 - 4:47 PM  
Greetings to all Trustees and past trustees.

My name is Lanny R. and I am a compulsive gambler. I am a past member of the BOT and am a present member of the BOR. I like staying involved with GA at the national or international or local levels. I am also running for re-election for the BOR. I am also a member of the international committee and enjoy giving hope to people in other areas that have no GA meetings.

My concern to all of my brothers and sisters is that we have to remember what our primary purpose is. TO CARRY THE MESSAGE OF HOPE TO OTHER PEOPLE WITH A GAMBLING OR COMPULSIVE GAMBLING PROBLEM. It is so easy to forget this and get blinded by the politics' of the fellowship. I am amazed at how other people get so involved in the politics' and forget what our primary purpose is. I often think that when in first came into this fellowship and how happy I was to have hope that things would get better if I continued to come to meetings and did not make a bet.

I am also on the convention committee for the 50th anniversary convention this October in LA. And hope that everyone has or will make there reservation soon. Looking forward in seeing everyone in Chicago,

Lanny R. - Area 1

3/18/07 - 9:04 PM  
Hello Everyone,

I hope all of you are doing well and looking forward to our meeting in Chicago in May.

As Chairman of the International Relations Committee I receive many of the International emails that come to the ISO daily. That together with the work I am doing on the 50th GA Anniversary Booklet for the Conference in October has really given me a perspective about where GA is worldwide. Witnessing the growing pains and coming across the differences in each geographical area in the way they work the fellowship.

I have placed two items on the agenda for Chicago. The first is to discuss the possibility of convening an International "Summit" of represenattives from various GA areas to discuss problem issues that are keeping us from true "UNITY" in this fellowship. Specifically but not entirely limited to the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and others in how they work GA in their areas. It hurts me to uncover all this history and see division in the fellowship. Is the focus where it should be, on helping the compulsive gambler who still suffers?

Literature that is not GA approved keeping us from listing over 150 meetings in the UK on our ISO website. I use this only as an example. I hear but do not have knowledge that at least some of Germany's eighty plus meetings use only ten steps, that keeps them from not having meetings listed on the ISO website. Clearly Guidance Code issues exist, that can't be denied. I for one am tired of hearing that's just the way it is. That to me is not UNITY. I would like to pursue a meeting where representatives from these and other areas who may not be familiar with all these Guidelines can discuss differences and work towards True Unity in our fellowship. I am sure that there are those who think that quickly this is simply not doable between certain areas. I don't share that opinion, I would like to think that given an opportunity to express different opinions openly that we as a fellowship can work through issues together rather than become somewhat isolated as we are presently. From that I mean "you do your thing and I'll do mine" syndrome.

My program teaches me to be "Honest, Openminded and Willing" those are not words I take lightly anymore. Openminded used to be very tough for me as well as willing to do something rather than just talk about it.

This International GA world is just busting out all over now and we need to embrace our fellow members all over this world. That's my vision and I hope it's yours as Trustees also.

It is sad that this will be only the fifth submission to this Trustee Line this month. Maybe some of us need to rethink what being a Trustee is all about. We accepted our areas confidence to serve to some that means more than just attending conferences. Service has kept me on the right path in recovery for twenty years so far and it is working if I work it.

Please let me know your views on this matter, no matter if you agree or disagree. My email is raiderryo@sbcglobal.net .

See you all in Chicago.  
Steve R. - Area 2B

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3/19/07 - 7:59 AM

As I write this the deadline for adding agenda item for the Chicago meeting has come and gone. Once again we have our hands full. Please take some time to visit the website and get a jump on reviewing the items before the official agenda is released. I think you will see there are some very interesting items up for discussion.

Over the past few issues of the Trustee Line there have been several submissions regarding conference workshops and the benefit of having "professions" as guest speakers and or presenters. I could not disagree more.

As a recovering compulsive gambler I am always interested in what is happening in the field of addiction and treatment. As a Gamblers Anonymous member I have no interest at all. Simply said, I would hope that everything GA is about recovery, however, everything recovery is not GA. Gamblers Anonymous, as a fellowship, has no business disseminating information about councils, rehabs, retreats, self-help books, counseling or treatment for addiction. As a program we have no opinion on these subjects and should not endorse them or help them spread their message.

We are and should be about sharing our own experience, strength and hope. We are about self- help, without the aid or influence of the outside world, regardless of how noble.

Gamblers Anonymous was never intended to cure all ills nor is it our mission to be all things to all people. We are blessed to have tremendous resources within our ranks that go untapped. I hope, over time, we will return to doing what we do best (helping ourselves).

Brother Denis - Chairman, BOT  
Area 12

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3/19/07 - 2:50 PM

Hello to all my Brothers and Sisters,

I am going to try and address the 'spirit of the fellowship' and add my opinion on where do we go from here, because I think we are at a turning point in the fellowship.

As we come to a close on the first 50 years of Gamblers Anonymous. I think our fathers and forefathers (prior trustees and founders) have done a very good job of setting the foundation of this wonderful fellowship.

We have in place our:  
12 steps of recovery

12 steps of unity  
guidance code  
combo book  
past trustee decisions  
and various literature

As we continue to try and improve on these items. I am of the opinion that we are here to adhere and uphold these items whether we agree with them or not. They are in place for a reason and if we feel the need to change any of them we can then do that collectively.

But until they ARE changed I believe it is our responsibility to adhere and uphold them no matter how unpopular it might be. Let me give you 2 examples of what I am talking about:

First when it comes to the 39 meetings a year to celebrate an anniversary or a pinning.

The guidance code spells it out clearly, but there are times when certain GA rooms out there make excuses for not following the code. They say we are self governing, or say the member was sick or ill and could't attend, or they will say "hey he's got 30 years" who are you to tell us what to do. This is when we need to keep the foundation strong and explain the Guidance code is what it is, I did not write it, wiser people than I did that but it is my duty and responsibility to point out that those members or rooms or inter groups are in violation of the Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code.

The same can be said when Non-GA literature is brought into a room or inter-group . I've heard the excuses 'this is good stuff' or 'who is it hurting?' Well the answer is , GA as a whole. And we must explain why the rule is in place. When we do not do these things and look the other way, we are chipping away at that solid foundation that has been set up before us. But always remember that if anyone in this wonderful program wants to change any of the items they have that right and a forum to try and change it. That is in my opinion the beauty of the program.

So please treat these items with the same integrity they were written with. And please do not allow any one room or member or inter group to chip away at our foundation.

And also remember that looking the other way is just as detrimental to the fellowship!

When we have ALL done that (adhere to and uphold the principles of the program). Then we will all know that the next 50 years will be solid and strong, as our foundation has been kept intact. thanks for listening.

Your brother,  
Richie S. - Area 6

3/20/07 - 3:30 AM

In Unity Step 9, all members of our service boards or committees have the responsibility to carefully consider ALL viewpoints in their decision-making process - - this concept is the essence of group conscience. It serves as a reminder about the importance of considering <>all viewpoints when making a decision.

To this end, I'm reminded of how I must consider all viewpoints when reviewing the Chicago Rolling Agenda in the Trustee Web site. This is the most vigorous and robust agenda I've seen since being directly involved with Board of Trustee matters. Of the 66 new business items, 19 relate to Guidance Code changes. This indicates the recognition by members about the significance of matters that affect other groups or Gamblers Anonymous as a whole. It's encouraging to note that Guidance Code items outnumber the 10 proposed changes to the Combo Book by almost 2 to 1!

Too often in service, whether at the Board of Trustees, Intergroup or individual group level, the same voices speak on most of the issues discussed. Usually these are members with some 'clean time'. The loudest and boldest often take the lead. Then there are those who are eloquent speakers and can quote our literature as a frame of reference. They are involved in service and occasionally have some experience with the issue being discussed. However that does not mean that they are right. At every level of service, I have seen someone who is.

Sometimes new Trustees may vote on an issue based on how some of the more vocal 'old- timers' vote and not based on what they truly feel is right. Those who are new to the Board must remember that just because they may be new, that does not mean that their experiences and beliefs are invalid.

Conversely, those who have been Trustees for some time must also remember that he or she is only one person with only one perspective. I have seen some of the old timers 'listen' to a new Trustee's viewpoint but not really hear what has been said.

They sit with their arms crossed and respond with body language to the new Trustee such as, 'Aren't you finished yet?', as they exit the board room to make a phone call. This situation reminds me that in recovery, I've experienced that my own thinking may not necessarily offer me the best possible guidance. It is often the lone voice offering new information or a unique perspective on matters that saves me from hasty or misinformed decisions. By not taking the time to listen to every viewpoint and making a true evaluation on issues, I would be short-changing myself in my role as Trustee out of the opportunity to truly serve the individual recovering compulsive gambler. In being of service, I know I cannot afford to be closed-minded!

For the 9th Unity Step concept to work effectively in our Board of Trustees service level, every Trustee should have the opportunity to voice his or her opinion. When this doesn't happen, our unity is often threatened. For me, I need the new Trustees to feel comfortable speaking up, just as I need the newcomer in the rooms to remind me what it is like 'out there'. If I stop listening to the newcomer, I may lose my perspective and the passion to carry the message.

Similarly, new Trustees should respect the experience, strength and hope of the 'old-timers' so they can avoid some of the painful mistakes they will invariably encounter. They must listen to the message and not just the messenger; and principles must be placed before personalities. This concept rests on the spiritual principles of kindness, generosity, honesty and humility. Our literature says it best: "Honesty, open-mindedness and willingness are the key words in our recovery."

Ed E. - Area 2

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3/20/07 - 8:43 AM

Hi Fellow Trustees

I hope all is well with you and I am looking forward to seeing you all in Chicago.

In the last Trustee Line Tom S. - Area 7A - recommended that we have mental health professionals lead us in some workshops. I am in complete agreement with him and feel we should explore this further.

In December I submitted an item in the T.L. to address the matter of "Credit Card Debt". I asked for feedback and in the Jan T.L. I got ONE response. What is wrong with this picture? I have placed this subject on the Chicago Agenda and hope that many of you would support accomplishing some form of literature. Please give some serious thought to this subject.

Lastly, I would like to address another agenda item that I placed for Chicago. The year 2010 will be the 50th Anniversary of G.A. in New York City. I would like to explore the feasibility of NYC having the Spring 2010 International Conference.

My proposal at the BOT meeting in Chicago is to get a vote to approve a conference for AREA 15. Between May and October of this year I would explore a venue in NYC and come back to the LA Conference & get a firm approval for 2010 Spring Conference in NYC.

I know that the Guidance Code forbids an area to ask this early for something like this, but I think it is important to recognize how special this date is for NYC. Los Angeles bid quite early and it seems to have worked out very well so far. So I would like to hear from you before we go to Chicago. Please have an open mind.

Once again----See you all in Chicago.

Mike R. - Area 15

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3/20/07 - 2:28 PM

Hi All,

I would like to use the Trustee Line this month to comment on some of the items that are placed on the agenda for Chicago. There are some excellent suggestions and very important topics being proposed for us to consider and discuss and ultimately decide.

Mail meetings could be an excellent tool for reducing the size of the trustee agendas. There are many items presented on the agenda that can be discussed and decided by email or snail mail leaving only the most important impact items for the twice annual meetings. Also this type of meeting should be used when an important decision must be made that cannot wait for the next trustee meeting.

There are a few agenda items that will try to clarify what is appropriate literature and what can and cannot be used and displayed during any G.A. meeting and this must be clearly understood by all members.

I completely agree with the definition of approved literature and I feel that the

trustees, who are the protecters of our literature must point out to a meeting if they are violating this item, after it is placed in the guidance code.

I again wish to express the importance of all trustees using the Trustee Line to participate in the whole process of what trustees do for the 2 years they are elected for. Committee members are anxiously waiting for input from the fellowship and fellow trustees can help all the committees do their required work.

Herb B. - Area 5

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3/20/07 - 6:18 PM

Fellow Trustees - As you are aware it is only 56 days until the start of the Trustee meeting in Chicago. While overall planning for the 2007 Spring National Conference is going well, as of this date we have less than 60% of the GA Trustees currently registered for the conference and less than 40% of our sister and brother Trustees of Gamanon. Planning an event of this magnitude is always difficult but it is made more so when it is not clear how many of our brothers and sisters are planning to attend. As both a Trustee of Area 8 and a Co-chair of the conference, I am writing to request that if you are planning to attend, please do so at your earliest convenience. Information on the conference can be found on the Chicagoland website which is **(unable to be displayed due to website guidelines)**. In order to make things as easy as possible, you can contact the hotel directly for your room reservations ( please ask for the 2007 Spring Conference) , and you should do so if you are planning to use a credit card. Otherwise, the conference committee can make your hotel reservation for you. If you choose to reserve directly with the hotel, please indicate that is what you have done and the number of nights you are staying when you submit your registration form. A link to the hotel can be found on the Trustee website under Upcoming Conferences. Availability of the room rate is only guaranteed until April 15th. On the Chicagoland website noted above, you can also find information on the golf outing scheduled for Thursday morning, May 17th, and on a National Choir which will perform Saturday evening. Also, as part of that evenings festivities, our brothers and sisters from Kansas City will be putting on something special; to be followed by an outstanding band. Friday night will have a DJ after dinner. Of course, there will be a walk-a-thon Saturday morning. A list of the 33 workshops currently planned and a list of activities in downtown Chicago, including arrangements for getting there from the hotel on Thursday and Friday morning, for spouses, significant others, and friends has just been added to the Trustee website. If there are any questions, there is a link on the Trustee website to the Chicago Conference Committee or you can contact me at **(unable to be displayed due to website guidelines)**. The entire Chicago Conference Committee and the Area 8 Trustees are looking forward to seeing you in Chicago.

Your brother in recovery,  
Steve S. - Co-chair, Chicago Conference Committee  
Area 8

**2 parts of the submission from Steve S. could not be displayed due to the guidelines that were put into place for this website and the adherence to Guidance Code and all decisions rendered by the Board of Trustees. Any further information can be derived from the actual flyer for the Chicago Conference. We apologize for any inconvenience.**

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3/20/07 - 6:22 PM

I disagree with the idea of one physical meeting/yr. We have a tough time handling the agenda that we have twice/yr. Many items are tabled, not discussed or simply given little attention if they happen to fall at the end of the meeting. It is true that we probably could make better use of the mail meetings but those items would be an up or down vote with no discussion. Many Trustees would like to have Good & Welfare but there usually is no time for 80 or so Trustees to speak.

Bill B. - Area 15

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3/20/07 - 11:52 PM

Here is a brief update on the conferences. Everything is on track with Portland and the communication is good. Chicago is on track and everyone on the committee is very busy. Chicago has been very cooperative in getting me the financial information requested. There is an unofficial list of workshops posted on the trustee website and some information on activities and available transportation that I would encourage everyone to look at. If you would like further information about the conference, you can go to the Chicago GA website or contact Steve S. via his contact information listed in the Confidential Trustee Listing.

If there is enough interest from the Trustees, the Chicago committee is going to be able to provide a lunch at an approximate cost of \$10.00 per person for the Trustees on Friday. If you are interested in participating in this lunch, please contact

Steve S. so that the committee can determine whether this will be feasible. The lunch will be Chicago deep dish pizza, salad, cookies and a beverage available at the hotel on Friday. Payment will be collected at the conference during registration.

The Chicago committee is working with other Midwest areas and the conference promises to be very exciting, informative and fun. Most of all, it will aid in our recovery. There are A LOT of Trustees (over 40%) that have not yet registered. PLEASE register early if you can. It is very helpful to the conference and the conference will be here before we know it!

Now a comment on an issue that has come up in some of the recent submissions—having workshops at conferences presented by professionals such as therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists etc. . . . There is certainly a lot of outside literature and any number of professionals that may be helpful to members in their recovery and that many members should quite possibly be seeking out. These include counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, financial planners, religious organizations, political groups, coalitions, charities, scientific studies, books on all these topics and more. I certainly encourage all members to seek out all the help available to them and to read widely about recovery outside the meetings. There are many conferences available focusing on problem gambling and compulsive gambling put on by professionals that members can certainly attend if they choose.

It is vitally important, however, to remember that these are GA and GAMANON conferences. These are conferences to strengthen recovery in the program; to learn about the 12 Steps of Recovery and the Unity Steps. I think the program only gets stronger by focusing on the Program. I come to meetings and to conferences to learn about GA. Much of the outside literature and many outside professionals certainly support GA, but many are in disagreement with GA concepts and support ideas and concepts that are contrary to those found helpful to recovering compulsive gamblers. I think it is natural to want to include some of these ideas and incorporate outside speakers into conferences, but I really believe it ultimately leads to controversy. Which speakers do we allow? On what topics? Are they really in line with GA? Can they bring in their books, statistics and other literature? Who makes this decision? Having outside speakers is not in line with Unity Steps 6 and 10. It seems to me it is a slippery slope that ultimately takes us away from our true focus—Recovery in Gamblers Anonymous through the 12 Steps and carrying the message to those who still suffer. Why not keep it simple and focus on GA and Gamanon speakers and messages in GA/Gamanon conferences.

Yours in recovery,  
Michelle J. - 1st Co-Chair, BOT  
Area 8B

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3/20/07 - 11:55 PM

Fellow Trustees - In order to facilitate the Trustee meetings, both GA and Gamanon, at the 2007 Spring Conference in Chicago, the Conference Committee is willing to make a Chicago style lunch available on Friday afternoon if there is sufficient interest; at least 50 people. Lunch will be Chicago deep dish pizza, ceasar salad, cookies, and beverage for \$10 per person. Trustees, spouses, significant others, and guests are all welcome. If interested contact me by using my e- mail address in the Confidential Trustee listing, use the link to the Chicago Conference Committee on the Trustee website, include a note on your registration form, or send a note to the PO box noted on the registration form including your name and the number of lunches you want. Checks should be made out to the 2007 Spring Conference or you can pay when you register at the conference. Steve S. - Co-chair Spring Conference  
Area8

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And the last word to close this March issue of the Trustee Line ...

3/20/07 - 11:59 PM

I am pleased that the agenda for Chicago is turning out to be one of the most pivotal ones in the last 7 years. We have some strong definitions that are going to be tested and hopefully approved, which will create less 'wobble room' for those in the fellowship that would rather use the rulings of the BOT as a road map to around enforcing those decisions than make the only choices of upholding and trying to implement them, as our literature says. Having said that, I hope everyone in Chicago takes the time to listen to each discussion and think about the future of the GA fellowship and how it is being abused by those that say, 'Who is it really hurting?' and arbitrary decisions about non-approved literature where people say, 'If it helps one person, then it's worth it.'

Although I would not try to minimize the efforts and intentions of others who submit other items that may be deemed to be less prominent in the eyes of some Trustees, if the BOT is willing to buckle down and do some serious work, we can button up a lot of the holes that exist with the fellowship. Many of Trustees have voiced their opinions about the minutia that surrounds items of formatting changes to the Combo

Book, but the important aspect of the agenda and all its items is that everyone has the right to post any agenda item and we should allow every one to be heard. Maybe some might not even get a discussion or a motion. We as Trustees have that power, but we have to use it prudently.

I want to take a few minutes to address the issues that seem to have been brought to light because of a problem with male sponsors taking sexual advantages of female members. We have a few items on the agenda that deal with this and I am taking a leap of faith that something drastic has happened to warrant such a flurry of items on this subject.

For me, this is a simple issue of disgust, not to mention my primal instinct of wanting to pummel the guys that do this. We are brothers and sisters in a fellowship that requires H.O.W. and when such a situation happens, we have not taken the first step in trashing those 3 concepts, but we have obliterated them. A GA member must without exception feel safe in any GA room and should not fear being HONEST about what has happened to them as a result of compulsive gambling, he/she must OPENMINDED to the point of allowing other members to help him/her change how life is handled on a daily basis without having to worry about some members who may manipulate things with the newer members for their own personal agenda, and WILLING to listen and follow the experience, strength and hope of the more senior members.

There is no question that men are 'wired' differently than women. This is a fellowship that is predominantly men and women are many times either embarrassed out of a room by how things are said or made to feel uncomfortable being there when the men speak poorly about their current or past spouses. This is a gender-neutral illness, although men may react differently to many of the same situations that also face women. What is worse is society's history for twisting the truth about cases of rape and how women are characterized as the parties that caused the situation. It's all about the fragile male ego.

Where do we put the situations of inappropriate words that come out that offend the women in the rooms? What about the inappropriate and clearly sexual touching of others in the program as if the men have a license to do this? Where do men get the right to play with women's minds in periods of vulnerability that make women falsely believe that a sexual relationship is going to make things better or is at all appropriate, not to mention the violation of trust that occurs when a sponsor is involved? Character defects abound with us all. We are compulsive gamblers and need to work on the emotional baggage we carry with us as a result. That does not include asking a female in the program to go to another meeting and then have the male expose himself as they are driving to a meeting, or any such uninvited and inappropriate behavior.

What is worse, is how the rooms try to sweep this conduct under the cover because we don't want to have to be the bad guys and straighten these sexual deviates out and create an embarrassing situation or any form of controversy. Clearly the male member that preys on women like this is the issue, and it should not be a problem where the trusted servants should feel guilty about maintaining the integrity and safety of the room and ALL its members. If a relationship between to GA members like this fails, which is generally the case, we lose the woman and many times also the man. We are not friends in the fellowship because we all see each other every week or many times during the week. We are GA brothers and sisters, which has a higher calling than a friendship. Objectivity is what is needed, not a friendship that will cause people to turn their heads away from a problem like this because they don't want to upset the guy responsible for staging these transgressions.

So clearly you can see that I am against any such behavior. But I am also vehemently opposed to the items that have been submitted to the Chicago the agenda. I spoke against a poorly framed motion in Boston on such a subject. It was agenda item number 48, and covered the ideas of same sex sponsors and accepting phone calls from members of the opposite sex. The motion failed 19 to 62. I spoke against it and said that I already had enough labels on me from being a compulsive gambler. I didn't want another that said I was a sexual predator because I was a man. Guilt by gender; I guess we can throw openmindedness away. Gone are the days of taking a member outside after a meeting and threatening to beat the tar out of him for such acts. But we need to be smart about this concept.

In NJ, we are not blessed with as many female members as appears to be the case with other states and areas. The women that do come to the room have to be sponsored in order to provide the best tools they will need for future success. One simple thing is obvious to help with this sex problem. Many rooms assign 2 sponsors to the new members. It's not mentioned in our literature, but why not utilize the experience, strength and hope of more members as sponsors? If a woman is getting 2 sponsors, she should be told that any sexual conduct or suggestion of any such behavior is highly unacceptable and should not happen irrespective of what anyone says. We read our opening announcements at every meeting and say that if anyone asks you for money or offers you money, do not accept and notify a trusted servant



immediately. Why not incorporate a similar statement about sexual situations? Same sex sponsors are just an impractical statement. This also applies to women getting calls from male members who are genuinely looking to help the female member with her difficulties in dealing with the program.

Same sex sponsors...hmm. Where does that put our gay and lesbian friends in this equation? Maybe we should require people to declare their sexual orientation so we don't make mistakes in that area either, or is this something that we also are going to look the other way? There are many who would say that this is not a matter for the BOT to touch, and to that end, I say that I flatly disagree. The rooms and Intergroups need guidance from the BOT as to what to do. This is not an outside issue if anyone wants to bring up that point. This is about safety in the room. It is also about giving the fellowship the proper tools to go about dealing with the GA members who conduct themselves in a way that threatens Unity Step 1 about our personal recovery. If we ignore this, then where do we go next? We read our Combo book at each meeting saying that GA does not wish to engage in controversy. If we ignore this problem, the day will come that a woman hits her limit of tolerance and files charges of rape against another GA member. Yes, it can happen anywhere and to people outside the program, but when it happens within our walls, that won't be the first thing that comes out of everyone's mouth.

I am in favor of a committee comprised of an equal amount of men and women GA members to devise a written segment for many of our GA approved material that deals with sponsorship to include warning signs of trouble, remedies at the room, Intergroup and Trustee levels on how to handle these matters. This committee has to be 100% committed to doing the work required to get this matter fixed, not just people who raise their hands at Trustee meetings and then fade into oblivion when it comes to doing the work. We have to admit that we have a problem in the rooms before we can fix it. This comes back to my opening statements about the time spent on what some Trustees feel are unnecessary items on the agenda. Here we have a time bomb that needs attention, so let's dig in and figure out how to make our rooms safe for everyone, once again. If we don't act collectively for the good of the fellowship and not our personal sexual needs with our female members who may come into the fellowship in a very vulnerable state, then the fellowship should rewrite our primary objective to be carrying the message to the MALE compulsive gambler who still suffers, because we don't know how to act appropriately with women.

David M. - Area 12

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