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## Trustee Line for April 2011

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## Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

**The subjects listed below are just a listing of 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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### Cherry Hill Trustee Dinner

4/1/11 – 4:39 AM  
Hi all,

Since most of you will be arriving by Wed May 4th, I just wanted to send out a reminder about the Trustee Dinner taking place that same night. We are looking to get a final head count on all attending by 05-01-11. Therefore, it is important to either send in your payment, or let the committee know you are coming.

Looking forward to seeing all of you next month in Cherry Hill.

Thank you and have a peaceful gamble-free day!

Andy D. - Area 13B, South Jersey

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### Cherry Hill Conference - Hotel Update

4/2/11 – 9:27 AM

When planning a conference, it is the responsibility of the Conference Committee to make sure that their guarantees to the hotel are met. Any financial shortcomings fall on the hosting inter- group.

We are pleased to announce that all of our obligations with the hotel have been met with 33 days still remaining before the start of the trustee meetings.

Our block of 595 room nights have been filled, therefore we needed to go back to the hotel and ask them to release more rooms for us. The Crowne Plaza is working with us and they have done just that.

We have been informed by the hotel that they will only guarantee the discounted room rate until April 15th. If you or anybody you know is planning on coming to the conference and has not yet booked their rooms, please do so immediately, after the deadline of April 15th you may not receive the discounted rate nor are you guaranteed a room in the hotel.

As a side note, please take a look at the link Cherry Hill Conference Info on the home page. There you will find helpful information and all the fliers associated with the conference.

Looking forward to seeing everybody!!!!

Andy R. - Trustee, Area 13B, South Jersey  
Cherry Hill Conference Committee Chair

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### **Unity Step 2 and the "Right of Decision"**

4/12/11 – 11:40 AM

After the Tampa Conference, I read the Trustee Line submissions concerning the vote on whether to admit several new areas that were represented by their members who travelled from South America to attend the conference. The people attending from South America did not submit the information required by our Guidance Code prior to the conference and was ruled out of order by the chairperson. The chairperson was challenged, there was some heated discussion and the Board of Trustees voted in favor of the challenge and allowed the vote to admit the new areas despite not meeting the requirements of the Guidance Code. The new areas were accepted by the vote of the Board of Trustees. Although it was uncomfortable at the time, I believe what happened is exactly what was supposed to happen. Some fear that we violated the Guidance Code and anarchy is sure to follow; but I feel we were following the intent of Unity Step 2. I had to go find some of my literature on the history of the Unity Steps to help me with this submission to the Trustee Line.

In its original form, Unity Step 2 states: "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." To be effective, the group conscience must be an "informed" group conscience; it must have all the facts. That was what I witnessed at Tampa: the Guidance Code was read, someone felt moved to challenge the chairperson, and once all had shared their thoughts on the subject, a vote was taken that I believe was the will of our Higher Power. Our fellowship is something greater than just enforcing adherence to the Guidance Code at all times; we have to be flexible when the situation calls for an informed decision that may take exception to the code. I can't believe for a minute that the majority of the 120+ Trustees got it wrong.

How would the program of Gamblers Anonymous have benefitted from telling a group of people who travelled many miles, dealt with international travel hassles and the expense to attend our conference that they did not meet the requirements of a code that we do not even have in their native language? And I also must take some responsibility for not properly reviewing each agenda item prior to the conference to make sure it was "in order" with our Guidance Code. I could have provided them timely feedback to help them understand and meet the requirements of our code. I was able to rectify my error by exercising my right of decision on that agenda item.

The world service manual of the fellowship that originally penned the Unity Steps, talks about the "right of decision". As Trustee, I am representing the wishes of my Area at the Board of Trustees meeting. I feel it is my obligation to solicit input from the GA members in my Area on the agenda items and vote their wishes on all agenda items. Once I decide how I am voting for my Area, I could hear something at the Board of Trustees meeting that affects my vote. At that time, I have the right to change my decision based on the new information

and report that decision to my Area after the conference. I believe this is how our Higher Power works through each of us on decisions the Board of Trustees, Intergroup, and even at my home group in GA. Otherwise, we could save a lot of money and just send out ballots twice a year to each Area and skip all the passionate, informative and educational discourse that we have at each Board of Trustee meeting.

That same world service manual has the best description of leadership that I have ever read (I read it numerous times a year) and I will have some copies at the Cherry Hill conference if you want to look me up and read it. It states that one should lead by example, not by mandate. It talks about the ability to compromise and that progress is nearly always characterized by a series of "improving" compromises. Leadership will face heavy and long-continued criticism and we should always evaluate what we hear and be willing to modify or change our opinion when required. A good leader listens carefully to their harshest critic and takes whatever truth they find and acts justly upon it. I witnessed some incredible examples of Grace under pressure in Tampa that I will try to incorporate into my own life. I believe we are all doing our best to serve and protect the fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous; that our differences in opinion and the willingness to speak out when we are moved to do so, will keep the fellowship alive and ready to help those who haven't found us yet.

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, Connecticut

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4/15/11 - 4:16 PM

While in principle I agree with Paul's premise, the overriding issue at stake is the Guidance Code. What I read is tantamount to "following your heart". While this is a good theory, in practice it can have adverse consequences. What the Guidance Code provides, along with both the Unity and Recovery Steps, is structure that was missing in my life when I first entered Gamblers Anonymous. I can't speak for everyone, or anyone, on this, but I doubt I'm the only one in the Fellowship who lacked the structure that the Guidance Code, Recovery Program, and Unity Program provide.

While it would have been unfortunate for the delegation from South America to be told about they didn't follow the proper procedure, at the time the Chair made the correct decision. The delegation was in contact with a Trustee from that area and should have been informed as to what was necessary. When we start putting ourselves, or our opinions above the Guidance Code saying that it is in fact our Higher Power speaking through us, I can't help but be concerned. In any decision we are taught to listen to our Higher Power. I do not disagree with that. But, who is to say that in the future any decision made by a Trusted Servant under the guise of being guided by our Higher Power is absolute?

Many people feel the Guidance Code is a series of "suggestions". I have adamantly defended this document and will continue to do so. While it would make things easier to just say, "I don't have to follow what the Guidance Code says", our jobs as Trusted Servants is to uphold our sacred texts, regardless if it is difficult. If we allow one exception, then why not allow others? For example, if I'm a Trustee and I gamble, why am I automatically removed from being a Trustee? If the rules in the Guidance Code are merely a suggestion, then I don't feel I should be removed because of the purchasing of a lottery ticket. The reason is simple: structure and balance. That is what the Steps and the Guidance Code provide. To say that we should only follow them when it feels right puts our own individual opinions before that of the Fellowship. If someone doesn't like what the Steps or the Guidance Code says, there are ways to change them. Submit an agenda item. See what 120 plus Trustees think of it. Then, you have the will of Gamblers Anonymous as a whole and not merely a minority opinion.

Pete K. - Area 13B, Past Trustee

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4/17/11 - 10:46 AM

In my time in the program, the one thing that always seems to get abused is 'the process'. I have witnessed too many situations unravel due strictly to a breakdown in the process. Who is at the center of such things? The obvious answer is us, the compulsive gamblers. What we vote on through group conscience doesn't always get followed and we then have a breach of process.

In the aftermath of people ignoring the process, we then are left trying to 'jury-rig' a setup that is convenient for some and then if they are good sales people, they convince the rest that running a race with a fractured hip is okay.

I am by no means suggesting that group conscience shouldn't be held with high esteem. There have been many items that have passed the BOT that I was against for many reasons. The issue for me was to accept it and move on, or to try and bring a bit more sanity and understanding to the BOT at some later point, in an attempt to modify the decision for the good of the Fellowship. If they see the issues clearly and unemotionally, only then does that BOT act for the benefit of the Fellowship as a whole.

What we all witnessed in Tampa regarding this procedure to accept the 3 new areas in South America, was a prime example of Trustees 'taking their will back' in contradiction to Recovery Step 3. I was highly suspicious in Tampa that the person who was responsible for putting those items on the agenda actually sent the information required by the Guidance Code to the ISO. To me, it looked like it was a last ditch attempt to push the responsibility for the Chair not having that information IN ADVANCE, onto what appeared to be the incompetence of the people who work in ISO. That was done to give the appearance that the same person did his job, but others hadn't, and thereby, diverting attention away from the author of those items not having done the necessary work to conform with the requirements in the Guidance Code. As it turns out, my first suspicions were right because to this day, no one has been able to produce any such documentation sent to the ISO in support of those malicious accusations. In plain English, a statement was made that was untrue. If anyone wishes to characterize that with a bit more 'clarity and color', be my guest. I don't want to take the liberty to do so, because I would clearly violate the guidelines for the Trustee Line.

What becomes yet another process problem, is those who voted in support of the challenge to the Chair, who decided that the item was out of order, seized hold of the emotional part of the moment. I heard numerous comments from the floor to the effect of 'How could we NOT approve these areas, especially when Jeysa traveled so far to ask that Venezuela be accepted as a new area?' Nobody was there from Colombia. Nobody was there from Paraguay, but we all got drunk on the frilly part of the International component – let's all rush to approve the rest of the world and be one big happy Fellowship – irrespective of whether or not these countries and their meetings follow the Guidance Code. Everyone was so hot to get these areas approved. It was a BOT tidal wave of impatience. We couldn't get them approved fast enough. Now, 6 months later...Paraguay has a Trustee. Colombia doesn't, nor does Venezuela. What's wrong with this picture?

Now let's get to the meat of the process breakdown and how the group conscience was previously in place and got thrown into the shredder when the challenge to the Chair surfaced. It was and has always been the group conscience that has voted on all the procedures and provisions in the Guidance Code. To get in this document take a two-thirds vote. The BOT does not have the right to override the Guidance Code, and doing so in a challenge format is 'lynch mob mentality'. We have a process and we have the structure of the Guidance Code. The people that didn't like the fact that the items were truly out of order in Tampa, should have sat down and shut up. If they didn't like it, then someone should have submitted a change to the item in question into the Cherry Hill agenda. Many of the people in the room were angered over how the BOT handled this process. I wonder how the BOT would actually handle an agenda item that states something to the effect of: The Guidance Code cannot be overridden or changed, other than by the process outlined for changes.

Group conscience is good for items that are not already memorialized in print. Group conscience can change anything, providing due process is followed. Following what has already been voted on through group conscience is maintaining order and structure. Paul, you may not believe that 120+ Trustees got it wrong, but it only took a simple majority to turn 'the process' into a joke. Here we invite areas to join us that we may give them the experience, strength and hope they so very much want and need. All we did in Tampa with these 3 items was to show those new areas that we don't have to follow the group conscience for decisions already voted on. We instead showed them that we

can do whatever we want, as long as you have a majority. The funny thing is that you don't even need a logical reason to do it. All you need to be is louder than your opposition, or willing to step away from the principles and import our own facts and emotions into the situation.

Paul, I don't wish to dispute your viewpoints or feelings on what you wrote, but for me, and many others on this situation of adding the 3 new areas, it was and should always be about the process. In Tampa, we abandoned sensibility and structure and yielded to emotions. If we continue to do such things, we will erode the very foundation of what makes us tick. There is no spirituality when 'the mob' takes over, for those who feel that's the purpose of the Guidance Code. The Guidance Code is a statement of the aims, purpose and service structure of the Fellowship. It did not come about like a new piece of literature. It has been evolving for the past 44 years since the first Board of Trustees meeting in 1967. This evolution has always been underscored by a very diligent process of honing group conscience. We cannot repeat the behavior that erupted in Tampa to override the Guidance Code on the spur of the moment, for any reason, including rushing to get a new area approved.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

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4/21/11 - 12:05 PM

Paul, thank you for your clarity. As I have stated in previous writings, there are two parts of the guidance: first-the recovery and unity program and second-the rules and procedures that guide our fellowship. The question settled at Tampa Bay is what happens when the programs and the procedures are in conflict. I will always vote to uphold the programs, I am proud the the board did the same. Yes, the combo book states that we have an emotional disease; therefore, recovery demands emotional maturity and not blind obedience to some rules.

Paul N. - Trustee Area 2, Northern California

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#### **Trustee Poll Item #1**

4/13/11 – 10:29 AM

I just completed the "poll" and thought it was very interesting-not only the questions but the vote split up as well.I would like to comment on # 1-\$ to the host group -- If conf loses \$ the host would make \$ If you want to "pay" a group for hosting why not cut them in as a % of the profits ?

Bill B. - Area 15, New York

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#### **My Thoughts On Unity Step 6**

4/13/11 – 10:29 AM

The 2011 Board of Trustees meeting is almost here and I have come to believe that many trustees have formed opinions about agenda items without hearing the reasoning behind them.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain my thinking in putting forth agenda Item 91 to change Unity Step 6 from:

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

to:

With the sole exception of endorsing Gam-Anon, Gamblers Anonymous ought never endorse, finance, or lend the Gamblers Anonymous name to an related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

My only reason for putting this forth is for the betterment of Gamblers Anonymous.

How frustrating it is to witness the low rate of retention in Gamblers Anonymous today. In my experience in program I have found that people who

have come into GA with a partner in Gam-Anon are more likely to stay than those who don't. I believe this change in Unity Step 6 could increase retention. I know this is pure conjecture - we don't have figures to be certain either way, but I've spoken about this issue with many people in program who believe that entering program with a Gam-Anon partner enhances retention, even if minimally.

I have a telephone list from 1967 from the meeting I attended. There were 62 members in the GA room and 47 members in the Gam-Anon room, and I know the vast majority of those GA members attained significant abstinence.

True - times have changed and the average age of new members is far younger today. True - society has changed and socioeconomic conditions have changed, and I believe it is more difficult to retain members today. But, no matter how slight the increase in retention it is worth changing this step if it will encourage the gambler to share the program with his/her partner and therefore increase the possibility of retention and recovery. If every GA member were to read this new version of the Unity Step 6 at every meeting, he or she would be more aware of Gam-Anon.

This change will also give the hot line volunteers more reason to mention Gam-Anon when speaking with a caller. In my experience as a hot line volunteer about 2/3 of the hot line calls I have received in the past 15 years come from the non-gambler. By changing Step 6 it will be more acceptable to mention Gam-Anon during the call. For the past couple of years, for whatever reason, there seems to be a focus on Step 6 to justify changing many things in our program that never used to be at issue.

Examples:

1) the motion to take the Gam-Anon link off the GA website  
(the reason ... "It is a violation of Step 6.")

2) to do away with mixed or combined meetings with Gam-Anon  
(the reason ... "It is a violation of Step 6.")

3) to eliminate all references to Gam-Anon in all our literature  
(the reason ... "It is a violation of Step 6.")

Presently about 7 pieces of GA literature reference Gam-Anon in beneficial ways.

Examples: a) PRGM Pamphlet - a Gam-Anon member should participate in Pressure Relief Group Meeting.

b) Hosting an International Conference - a Gam-Anon member should be a signatory on checking accounts of International Conferences.

4) to rescind the 1992 resolution of the BOT  
(the reason ... "It is a violation of Step 6.")

That resolution is as follows:

Resolved, Whereas, GA Intergroup meetings commonly reserve a portion of time in which Gam-Anon members are invited to discuss matter of interest to both groups,

Whereas, GA Step Meetings are often open meetings in which Gam-Anon Members are welcome to attend and participate,

Whereas, GA social functions and conferences are commonly co-hosted With Gam-Anon members,

Whereas, GA has a responsibility to make new members aware of the Existence of Gam-Anon and does so through our literature,

Therefore, the Board of Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous does not perceive any of the above to violate any Step of the GA Unity Program.

Reasons I have heard to not change Unity Step 6 are:

1) the Unity Steps should never be changed - they are sacred - but if a change can better Gambler Anonymous, why not. The United States Constitution has been amended 27 times; certainly our Unity Steps should not be unalterable.

2) Alcoholics Anonymous hasn't changed their Unity Step 6. but AA does reference Al-Anon in their website and literature and the strong connection between these 2 separate fellowships is unquestionable.

Obviously, AA does not consider their cooperation in conflict with Unity Step 6.

Please understand that in no way do I believe that someone in GA who comes

with a Gam-Anon partner finds greater recovery than the GA member attending alone, but I am quite sure that the retention of new members will improve with this Unity Step change.

The Webster Dictionary defines endorsing "to express approval." When we read the stated printed Purposes of Gam-Anon how can we not express approval?

Gam-Anon's 4 purposes are:

- A. To grow spiritually through living by the twelve steps of Gam-Anon
- B. To learn to understand the gambling problem and its impact on our lives
- C. To give encouragement and understanding to the compulsive gambler
- D. To welcome and give assistance and comfort to those affected by the gambling problem.

Hopefully when this agenda item comes up, we can have a meaningful, kind, courteous discussion with the express purpose of benefiting Gamblers Anonymous.

Larry B. - Area 15, Past trustee, New York

If you would like to discuss, please call: (Larry supplied a phone number, but publishing that would violate the Trustee Website Guidelines and was omitted. If anyone is interested in speaking with Larry, please contact a Trustee from Area 15 for his number.)

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4/20/11 - 2:26 PM

Larry,

I've been looking for a subject with some teeth in it all month. I got a chance with my response to what Paul S. had written, but your submission is right in the 'sweet spot' for me. And as difficult as it may be for you or others to believe, I am not against GamAnon, again it cuts directly to 'the process'.

I found your submission to be 'interesting', at the very least, but unfortunately, littered with assumptions that really don't make your case for a change in Unity Step 6 for 'the betterment of Gamblers Anonymous'.

Let me start with your assertion that many Trustees have formed their opinions about agenda items without hearing the reasoning behind them. Excuse me for being so bold, but whatever one's time in the program is, people will have an opinion about issues in program. You may not find them to your liking, but opinions are just that, until the items are discussed and then voted on at the BOT. I suppose you wouldn't be as irate as you usually are on this entire subject of what I would characterize as the parasitic relationship that exists between GA and GamAnon, if everyone were in favor of your way of thinking. The reality is that your position regarding further integration of GamAnon in GA is becoming an increasingly minority view. Your agenda item will need a 2/3 margin of approval, and based on what has happened since Louisville, I suspect it will be difficult to get even a 1/3 margin of approval. But then again, I am in GA because I am a terrible handicapper.

What I do see is that this is a new and very aware group of Trustees, a group that is more conservative with its thinking about the Guidance Code and our Recovery and Unity Steps. I only have to point out the actions of this group of Trustees, as it relates to the Trustee Poll and the preliminary thinking of those who voted on both the old and new systems. It is clear that the involvement of GamAnon in GA has become a source for increasing levels of discomfort for many of the Trustees. Let me cite 2 of the items and their results.

Poll Item 11 - When GA and Gam-Anon get together to share their experience, strength and hope with each other, it will not be recognized as an official GA meeting. Such situations should be done at a time that does not interfere with each respective Fellowship's regular meetings.

With 53 votes on the old poll, 16 were negative, 1 was neutral, and 36 were positive

The percentage breakdowns are 30.19%, 1.89%, and 67.92%

With 21 votes on the new poll, 6 were negative and 15 were positive  
28.57% and 71.43%

67.92% of the old poll voters and 71.43% of the new poll voters do not want

combined meetings to be recognized as GA meetings. This is a good and sobering look into group conscience with the Trustees.

Poll Item 12 - How many Trustees would like to change Unity Step 6, to accept Gam-Anon?

With 51 votes on the old poll, 41 were negative and 10 were positive  
80.39% and 19.61

With 23 votes on the new poll, 19 were negative, 1 was neutral, and 3 were positive  
82.62%, 4.34% and 13.04%

This item couldn't be sending out a clearer signal to the GA members who are in favor or continuing to more aggressively violate our Unity Step 6 with our 'involvement' with Gam-Anon. 80.39% and 82.62% do not want to change Unity Step 6 to accept Gam-Anon.

The purpose of the Trustee Poll is not to seal a vote before an item hits the floor, but to help the authors of any IDEAS to get the unofficial pulse of the current Trustees, BEFORE the possibility of any idea turning into an agenda item. The framing of the choices for voting on the Trustee Poll are also reflective of being open-minded. The voting choices are not just YES or NO, there are 5 choices:

Yes - In Favor

Probably In Favor, But Need To Hear More

No Opinion One Way Or The Other

Probably Not in Favor, But Need To Hear More

No - Not In Favor

The Trustee poll is unofficial, non-binding, anonymous and permits current Trustees to even change their votes as many times as they wish, or to delete a previously cast vote. The Trustee Poll is about exercising everyone's right to an opinion with the understanding that it does not have the benefit of those who wish to voice their reasoning for or against any item. More important than that, is that an author can gauge whether or not an agenda item, if one is posted to the poll, will face a stiff headwind when it hits the floor. If the item looks that way, then why wouldn't the author do a little soul searching as to whether the item is really for the 'betterment of Gamblers Anonymous'?

There is a list longer than my arm about particulars of our unhealthy involvement with GamAnon. No doubt with the number of items on this coming agenda that deal with changes to further incorporate GamAnon into GA under the veiled description of 'cooperation', we will hear about all of them. I submit to everyone who reads this, that those who will speak in favor of further involvement with GamAnon will have to resort to raw emotional pleas for support to their positions. This will only cause further support for why changes must be made, not just to prevent changes to Unity Step 6, but for a clear separation of the 2 Fellowships from one another. The facts of how far GA has crossed the line will become self-evident as more and more Trustees speak their minds and deal with the principles instead of guilt-driven attempts to bully and intimidate the Trustees into feeling sympathy for this outside entity.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

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4/20/11 - 8:40 PM

First, let me be clear that I am not anti Gam-Anon. However, I do not believe Unity Step 6 should be changed to incorporate Gam-Anon into the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous. Each person can ask whoever they want in Gamblers Anonymous and conduct an unofficial poll, with varying results. I did this in meetings I attend concerning the relationship between the two fellowships. I was expecting to find that married members or those whose significant others were in Gam-Anon to be supportive of any change to Unity Step 6. It didn't happen. What I found was there should be a separation of the two fellowships.

Which brings me to item 17 on the agenda up for a second vote. If I had a vote, and I do not as I am a former Trustee, I would vote against this item. I spoke in favor of it in Tampa, and will do so again in Cherry Hill. After the Trustees Meeting in Tampa I was told that I must be anti Gam-Anon because passage of this item will kill Gam-Anon. Therein lies the problem. If we distribute conference profits the way we currently are, aren't we just subsidizing



distribute conference profits the way we currently are, aren't we just subsidizing an outside organization? It seems to me that we are. I don't see how subsidizing an outside fellowship will allow us to better GA as a whole.

I'm not saying Gam-Anon doesn't have a place. I just don't believe that place is within the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous. It's beneficial to many people. I won't take that away from anyone. However, I hold "principles before personalities" closely. And this integration of Gam-Anon, in my opinion, is putting the principles of our fellowship on hold. Again, that's just my opinion.

Pete K. - Area 13B, Past Trustee, Southern New Jersey

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4/21/11 - 3:41 PM

Seriously Larry? Seriously?

You suggest that "for the betterment of Gamblers Anonymous" we amend our Guidance Code to improve retention. If our only hope is to look for help from the outside to retain our members I fear our problems are even more serious than I thought.

Retention is like the weather, everybody talks about it but nobody does anything about. Maybe, like the weather, there is nothing we can do about it. Maybe we don't have a retention problem at all. Maybe, not everyone who comes to us for help is like me. Maybe those who need us do stay, and those that don't leave. I don't believe, as a GA member, I can judge those who choose not to stay and as a trustee I am obliged to serve those that do. My first step in helping those of us that stay is to honor the principles on which we were founded.

For decades we have treated our relationship with Gam-Anon with a wink and a nod. We don't endorse, finance or lend our name to Gam-Anon, we only hold joint meetings, joint conferences, share profits and cooperate with them. Are you kidding me? Any one of my fifth grade students could see through the hypocrisy of that argument.

I could go on forever explaining why this relationship undermines Gamblers Anonymous, and Gam-Anon for that matter, but let's stick to the retention debate. Perhaps, if we do have a retention problem, it is caused by the spiritual dishonesty by which we operate. We say this is an honesty program. We are told to surrender our will and to live by a new set of principles. We tell this to new members and from the very first day we show them that we, as a fellowship, choose not to practice what we preach. We show by example that it is ok to compromise our principles as long as it is for the greater good. We show by example that we know better than the documents that we say guide us. We twist words and bend the truth and rationalize and justify just the same way I did when I was gambling. All because we know better!

We top this all off, in a classic compulsive gambler way, but saying we are doing nothing wrong because we say we are doing nothing wrong. Despite our actions we don't endorse Gam-Anon because we say we don't (wink wink). Despite the mountains of evidence to the contrary we don't finance Gam-Anon or lend our name to Gam-Anon because we say we don't (wink wink). Seriously?????

Dina P. - Trustee, Area 6B, Tampa, Florida

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4/23/11 - 1:00 PM

Well, the BOT meeting is fast approaching, and I am looking forward to seeing all of my friends I met at my first BOT meeting in Tampa.

I have been in the GA program for almost 16 years, and as I am sure most of my fellow brothers and sisters can say, the GA program saved my life. I hold it dear and close to my heart, as I need the love and fellowship the program and its members have given me as much as I need the ability to breathe. The GA program also gave me something else of great import: it gave me structure. I craved structure, as my life was full of chaos. I still crave structure. And, because a benevolent God sent me to GA all those years ago, I was provided with structure. It has come in the form of our (not AA, NA, OA, or any other program, but from GA) 12 Steps of Recovery, 12 Steps of Unity, our Rules and Procedures, By-Laws and Guidance Code. As others have said in previous

procedures, by-laws and Guidance Code. As others have said in previous postings, we (I) came from chaos and insanity. I don't wish to go back there ever again, so I cherish the five areas of structure I have already mentioned.

I have no desire to re-hash, agree with or argue with the previous postings regarding Step 6, the Guidance Code, etc. I do wish to state my feelings on the GA program as a whole and those items in particular. I am a firm believer in the group conscience. It works, it works at the group level, at the intergroup level, and at the BOT level. However, a group conscience is only valid, in my eyes, if we are following the guidelines set forth by previous group consciences, which resulted in our By-Laws and Guidance Code. These written documents did not suddenly appear one day, like the burning bush appeared to Moses. It came from many motions, agenda items, discussions, etc., all voted on by the very members of this wonderful fellowship. A group conscience. And in the process of creating these guides, in the wisdom of those that came before me, a mechanism was installed to change each and every word of each and every document. That process is by group conscience. But there are ways to go about it. We can't just decide to change something on a whim. Follow the procedure. Follow the mechanism that we, and those that have gone before us, installed. If we just begin changing things, regardless of our own procedures, this is going back to the same chaos that I came from. If you don't like something in our steps, guidance code, etc., then have the guts to stand up for your ideals, but do it the right way. The way every other item was added or changed. If we (BOT) just decide we want something to be done, let's do it. That is why we are Trustees and what we are here for. But let's do it with structure, not chaos.

One thing another Trustee told me, which I have never forgotten because it makes so much sense, is that there are reasons behind all previous decisions to add or subtract items from the guidance code and other GA literature. If we forget the initial reason for the change, and we change it, at some point there will be an "oh yeah, that's why we did that" moment. Chaos could easily ensue.

Now, getting on to Unity Step 6. The author of the motion to change the wording of the step to include gam-anon did just what he was supposed to do. Instead of grumbling about the way it was worded, or suddenly said at a BOT meeting "hey, I don't like this, so I wanna change it", he followed the mechanism. He listened (I assume) to his heart and decided to add an agenda item. He decided to let the matter be decided by a group conscience. I applaud him and any other Trustee who listens to his own conscience. Whether the agenda item passes or fails is important to GA as a whole, but not really important to the mechanism. An agenda item is added, a motion will be made, seconded, discussion will follow and a group conscience will be taken and will prevail.

In my opinion, the step should not be changed. In my eyes, Gam-anon is an outside enterprise, plain and simple. I really do not care what any other program has to say about it, what their literature states, what their members think. I belong to Gamblers Anonymous, and this is a Gamblers Anonymous issue. I only care about this program, and including any outside enterprise will weaken it. Gam-anon has its place, but only with individual members, not with GA as a whole.

Now, after saying all that, in Cherry Hill, the process will be carried out. The agenda items, including all the ones regarding changing the steps, will be discussed and voted on by a group conscience. The process will work, providing structure to our meeting, and avoiding chaos. However the group consciences turn out, whether I agree with the decisions or not, as long as the process is carried out as previously decided, I will be satisfied. I will move on and if for some reason I decide I want to change something, I have the mechanism with which to proceed.

As I have said before, and will say again, I take no offense to anything anyone says regarding my opinions, as long as they do not attack me personally. Attack my ideas all you want, if you are stating your true feelings. I hope others feel the same, as I wish to offend no one.

See you in New Jersey,

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

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4/23/11 - 1:15 PM

Dear fellow trustees,

I have to start by saying that I actually do not currently support changing the language in Unity Step 6. With all due respect to Larry B., I believe changing a Unity Step is a bit overreaching and should be unnecessary, although I am willing to listen to others opinions. That being said, I understand and respect Larry's cause, as it seems that a number of trustees have on their agenda to diminish the GA and Gam-Anon connection, the established working relationship (or whatever you may call it), in the name of Unity Step 6.

I am writing this posting because I am concerned about the dialogue that is developing regarding this issue. It seems trustees believe that in GA, "the endorsement" of "any related facility or outside enterprise" should or presently does apply to Gam-Anon. Gam-Anon has not and does not fall into the same category of all other "outside entities or organizations". Gam-Anon has been the exception in many respects, whether you presently recognize it OR want to change it. Those that would disagree that Gam-Anon is currently the exception are frankly in denial, because GA cooperates and works with Gam-Anon throughout LI and NY and I am sure many other areas. It is a successful cooperation. Also, as Larry stated, Gam-Anon does help with retention in GA (despite the condescending tone of the previous posting).

I understand the need to have boundaries with respect to Gam-Anon and a need for some "rules of engagement" with regard to certain aspects of Step 6. However, I do not understand how we can deny the precedents that have been set by our 50 plus years of history, as is evident from the Gam-Anon references in previously published GA Literature, certain past trustee decisions (one of which is apparently so threatening, it is on the agenda for rescinding) and the many other co- functional practices. In common law legal systems, a precedent is a legal case establishing a principle or rule that a court or other judicial body may utilize when deciding subsequent cases with similar issues or facts. It seems a number of trustees are willing to deny these precedents and principles of GA and Gam-Anon cooperation and want to go as far as to overturn this established relationship in the name of Step 6.

Yes, I am one of those (and we all know there are many others) that can honestly say that Gam- Anon helped keep me in program in my early days. I started out in a GA room that works well with Gam-Anon and have attended many other such meetings throughout LI and NY. GA and Gam-Anon meetings are mainly held at the same time/location each week. We advertise if there is Gam-Anon meeting on our LI room lists. We always encourage the new member to have a family member/friend attend the Gam-Anon meeting (So Yes, you can say we endorse Gam- Anon). We coordinate open meetings and mini-conferences with Gam-Anon. We co-facilitate workshops with Gam-Anon. We hold sit-downs with GA and Gam-Anon members.

Personally, Gam-Anon helped me foster the recognition that my gambling addiction impacted my family, friends and loved ones, in addition to myself. Gam-Anon assisted me with "facing squarely the facts about this illness". I have met many members that had nobody related in Gam- Anon but have stated they also benefited from hearing "the other side" speak on their experiences with a compulsive gambler.

Let me be clear, the GA program and my GA brothers and sisters, with some vital assistance from Gam-Anon, helped to retain me early on and to bring me to where I am today, 5 years and 8 months later. Gam-Anon is certainly not at all essential for every member, but there is a fair percentage that have significantly benefited in its cooperation with GA. That link has existed and will continue.

As Larry B. also pointed out, "times have changed and the average age of new members is far younger today". Here is where Larry's point that Gam-Anon has proven to be positive for GA retention is even more obviously valid. Our experience on Long Island with younger members is that their parents or partners involvement in Gam-Anon has helped maintained their retention, often despite and after episodes of relapsing. So I fully agree with Larry that Gam-Anon helps with retention of GA members.

My hope is that we can balance the need to secure Step 6 with the fact that there is a special relationship with Gam-Anon that does assist us in our overriding purpose, to help the compulsive gambler. I do not suggest we should further our involvement with Gam-Anon. I agree we should stop the “wink wink” and just be honest; Gam-Anon is and always will be an exception with respect to certain aspects of Unity Step 6. Maybe this can only be put to rest by the change proposed by Larry.

Let's pray that when the Gam-Anon related topics are discussed (as well as for any discussion), we have a kind and courteous exchange, maintaining open-mindedness and humility.

Wishing everyone well in recovery! Looking forward to seeing you in Cherry Hill.

Paul C. - Trustee, Area 14, Long Island NY

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**Submit a response to the [Trustee Line](#) because of something you have read in this or any other issue.**

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**Contact the [Trustee Website Administrator](#)**

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<b>The Loss of One of Our Past Trustees</b>
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4/24/11 – 1:47 AM

Our brother, Roger S., lost his son Eric on Wednesday. Eric had been dealing with cancer for several years. He passed away peacefully and without pain.

Roger is a former Trustee and very active in the Program. Our hearts are breaking for his loss.

Roger has asked that a special thank you goes out to Chuck R., who opened his home and his heart to Roger and Eric several months ago when Eric had appointments at Sloan Kettering.

Please keep Roger, Eric , Roger's son Colin and all of Eric's family and friends close in your thoughts and prayers.

Your Sister in Recovery,

Jeannie B. - Area 8A, Minnesota

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