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**Trustee Line for May 2010**

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**From The Trustees**

**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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**A Step Four**

5/2/10 - 10:02 PM

My dedication to this fellowship is a very grateful, compulsive, never ending love. The program, its members, rooms and especially the people that helped me in the beginning know that they literally saved my life. Those members, my mentors, are what had formed my dedication and commitment to help as many people as I can. That is what gave me the drive to create 888-GA-HELPS and also to stand up for what I believe is right.

Sometimes, I over emphasize my opinion or dramatize what I am trying to get others to see. In my heart and soul I would never hurt our fellowship. Over the last 10+ years of going to the BOT conference most members know where I come from and understand my passion.

My last month's dramatized exercise about how some members past entries over the years about the BOR and its members could be misconstrued towards the BOT by members of Intergroup, rooms and members. I know for a fact, that there were past chairman and members on the BOR that were very hurt by some of the strong letters and emails that were posted and sent. My goal was to truly open trustees eyes to look at the other side of the window and hopefully understand what they were doing.

I now have learned that it is NEVER acceptable to hurt anyone by negative comments that MAY cause some to feel any ill feelings. It is a lesson well learned and understandable.

I had discovered this when I had talked to Karen H and she thought at one point that I was criticizing her minutes. I love and respect Karen as a friend and all the hard work, long hours and service she does for this fellowship.

Some others had taken every word I said literally, while some took it as an attack or starting a fire or adding wood to one. None of that is what I had in mind when I wrote it. Reading it many of times, I could see how some could walk away with those impressions without knowing me. Those on the Trustee website committee know me and allowed it to be publish, but I am positive they too did not like it.

How, why or what does not mean anything at this point. It is history and I did hurt some very important people in my life and in my recovery. For that I am humbly sorry and deeply regret my exercise.

My apology to all that I may have offended in any way.

Fellowship First,  
Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

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<b>Agenda Item #61</b>
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5/3/10 - 3:30 PM

Dear Trustees,

Since I will not be able to attend the Trustee's Meeting in Louisville, I would like to explain why I put item 61 on the Agenda. I am looking for your guidance.

I attend a meeting in Orange County weekly. The meeting is an outdoor morning "open" meeting. In California "open" meeting means that guests are to attend regular meeting. However, a member may ask the guest to leave the meeting for their particular share. Most meetings in Southern California are "open" meetings.

Recently, a member started to bring very young children (3 to 6 years old) to the meeting on a regular basis. The children are well-behaved. We have no rules on age requirements for guests. However, some of the regular members spoke to me after the meetings questioning the appropriateness of the children's attendance and their reluctance to share sensitive issues. I also share those views. After a meeting I discussed the appropriateness with the member bringing the children. The member was a good friend of mine, but the member got very upset.

Someone could bring it up as a group conscious, but the meeting tries to avoid such actions as it can affect unity. As a long time trusted servant I agree. I also think it might be bad to make it a hard-fast rule. I think that pinnings and major milestones might be exceptions. I understand members can ask them to leave when they need to share sensitive issues - but it puts the onus on the member rather than the guest. (Our primary purpose is to help the gambler who still suffers).

I would like to request a straw vote. I would greatly appreciate something to bring back to the fellowship on this sensitive issue.

Lastly, speaking of Unity, I'm dismayed when I read the Trustees Line. It is especially evident regarding the BOT v. BOR. Our first Unity Step states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon group unity". If we do not have unity at the top how can we not expect that it will eventually trickle down to the general membership?

With Serenity,  
Marc L. - Area 1C, Orange County, California

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5/3/10 - 5:25 PM

Marc, I read with great interest your item on children at open meetings.

In NJ, open meetings are as the name suggests, open to the public. If a GA member walks into one, he or she doesn't have the right to ask anyone to leave. Most of our meetings are designated as Closed Meetings - with exceptions. That means that the meeting is only open to those people who are new and those that have a desire to stop gambling. Visitors are allowed with the approval of the room attendees. Any member has the right in such a meeting to ask any visitor to step out of the room during one's therapy (therapy is east coast for your 'share').

Most of you who read this know me as a GA hard-liner. The GA meetings are for GA members and all considerations must be made to make the GA members as comfortable as possible. I am completely against bringing children into a meeting, open or otherwise. They are distractions from the tone and temperament of the meeting. Cute is not a criteria for looking the other way when it comes to the comfort of our members. Too often, members feel immobilized in that they don't want to hurt the parent by telling them that they wish that the child was NOT brought to the meeting. Even if the children are well behaved, members are distracted from what is happening in the meeting. I also understand that some times, members cannot park their children with someone while they attend a meeting. This is a problem, but my leaning is in favor of what is best for the room.

In virtually every meeting I attend, there is someone who speaks about some issues that would certainly be construed as 'sensitive' subject matter. Members deserve to feel completely at ease and share such issues with the room. Having kids in a room drastically changes the dynamics of the room and the comfort level of the members.

I also do not agree with your assessment that bringing it up at a group conscience meeting affects Unity. You must make a determination as to what is important here. Are you there to provide childcare services or to help the compulsive gambler who still suffers? We can't be all things to all people. But what we must be is a safe haven for the compulsive gambler who still suffers. Your friend may be upset that you brought this matter up, but if the group decides that this is something that has to be changed, then I would submit that group unity is intact and the personal recovery of the majority of the room is being maintained.

This will be my stance, should I speak on this item in Louisville. However, there are many Trustees who probably have varying opinions on the subject.

Lastly, I'm sorry to say that Straw Votes have been designated as out of order for the last 2 years, so the most you can hope for is a discussion. Calling for a motion to have the BOT decide this would, in my opinion, be called out of order because it would be deemed to be a group issue.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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5/4/10 - 9:17 AM

The issue raised by Marc is an interesting one. More interesting however, and perhaps key to the problem itself, is the idea that bringing this up in group conscious negatively affects unity.

Group conscious is the essence of unity. Obviously, whenever we have a discussion we will have folks on both sides on an issue and some may be personally invested in the issue discussed. However, in order to have group unity we must all, as members of the groups, decide beforehand that the group speaks for us all and that we are all subject to its will.

The fact that someone will be unhappy with the group conscious is no reason to avoid discussing it. What of the members who are unhappy with the underlying issue? If we truly live by the Unity Steps then we must put principles before personalities, which is exactly what a group conscious meeting is intended to do.

Part of my recovery depends on me surrendering my will to the group. I would hope that my group would never think so little of my recovery as to avoid the discussion of an issue because I might dislike the outcome. Further, I would hope that my group would feel free to help me deal with any problem I had understanding how important group unity is to my personal recovery.

While I understand that the sentiment has the best intentions I believe this type of thinking does a disservice to the individuals involved and to the group as a whole.

Denis M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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5/4/10 - 1:34 PM

Dear Trustees,

Thank you David and Denis for responding so quickly. Please let me clarify my position on group conscious.

I am a firm believer in group conscious. When I was a Trustee I even put an item on the Agenda to change Step 2 of our Unity to add a sentence that we are governed by our group conscious to precede the statement, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." It was voted down. I even remember one of the trustees of that Board arguing that the groups weren't ready. It cracked me up for rest of the day. I have often participated and called for a group conscious and I always believe that the group is the ultimate authority unless affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.

However, based on my experience (hopefully as an elder statesman and trusted servant) in the GA fellowship I have found that sometimes a group conscious turns into a personality issue. It shouldn't but it does. This item is one that can turn ugly and can affect unity. I been to groups where personalities create bitter fighting during a group conscious and new members don't come back. And, I believe for the ultimate good of the group we should at least try to work out sensitive issues prior to taking a group conscious. That's why I tried talking to the member outside of the meeting. That's why I'm asking for the BOT's guidance. Maybe your guidance will help to solve this situation. If not, and the situation does not work itself out, and it is still is an issue, I will do my service and bring it up to a group conscious.

PS: I thought you stopped straw votes and I wasn't going to ask for one. But, when I saw the option for a straw vote on the Agenda I asked for one.

With Serenity,  
Marc L. - Area 1, Orange County California

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5/5/10 - 10:58 PM

To my dear friend, advisor and mentor, Marc L -

You have presented what I like to refer to as a 'sticky wicket.' As a sponsor of mine once said, 'Linda, you have to look at both sides of the coin.' In this particular case, I can see two sides of this coin, and perhaps there are others.

1. I respect the person who has the child - to keep the child with him/her and not ask someone else to care for the child. However, my question then becomes, couldn't you wait to go to another meeting? Perhaps not. But isn't the parent uncomfortable sharing something of a sensitive nature with their own child in the room? I would be. We think children don't listen or don't understand, but let me tell you there are counselors out there who will tell you that something a child heard and misunderstood can impact them for a lifetime (ergo our Step 4). 2. If the member who resents having a child present persists, I then have to question - why don't you share your sensitive issue at another meeting? or call your sponsor and discuss that sensitive issue with your sponsor? Aren't we supposed to be honest, open-minded and willing? Aren't we supposed to stop being selfish and stop considering ourselves the center of attention and the most important person in the room?

As you have alluded - I think this has to become a group decision - taking as much personality out of it as humanly possible. Some groups would say, "Yes, bring the kiddies, I'll wait for the next meeting, or I'll go to another meeting, or I'll call my sponsor instead of airing my issue with a child present." Some groups would say, "No, absolutely no children under any circumstances." I truly don't believe there is an easy answer to this dilemma.

You are aware, of course, one of our San Diego area meetings particularly chose to offer a children's room for those parents who didn't have a choice but to bring the children to a meeting which is only held once per month to honor those celebrating milestones. This room is 'staffed' by volunteers who rotate every so often so that no one particular volunteer misses an entire meeting. It has worked out very well for that group. They consider that being of service - to the room, to the group, and to the parent who may be suffering - as well as for the welfare of the rest of the members in attendance at that particular meeting. In spite of all of our rhetoric; in spite of all of our valuable literature and suggestions - there are times when just plain old common sense has to prevail.....on both sides of the coin.

With love, faith, trust and respect for our Fellowship,  
Linda S, Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

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5/6/10 - 4:55 PM

You will never know how much your letters, or the tone, in the trustee line

hurt my feelings, also how mad I got. I have been of the impression that our first thought is to the new member who walks in the room.

Being from Las Vegas the gambling is all around us, its not at the track or little poker rooms. You can't go into the grocery store, the car wash or the laundromat without there being Video Poker machines. So being an every day player, as I was, I needed more than 3 meetings a week, if not more. Two of those meetings I didn't have a baby sitter and being a Nana to a six year old, I had to take him with me.

If they had told me I wasn't welcome, then I wouldn't be alive and writing this today. I took my Grandson twice a week and we sat at the back of the room. He knew he wasn't allowed to speak, so he colored and read books. He, after awhile, joined in saying the Serenity Prayer at the end and then he also knew he was allowed to speak. One thing I do know for myself, without the rooms I attended I would not have seen my family grow up. Hurt is a mild word on how I felt Tuesday. Let's not be so hasty to say NO.

Liz N. - Area 3, Las Vegas

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5/7/10 - 7:36 PM

When I joined GA, my sons were two years and nine months. I never even thought about bringing them to a GA meeting, I was blessed that my wife did not leave me and she stayed home with the boys. One drawback is that she never went to gamanon, even when babysitting was available, she did not have a desire to go.

Later on, when I was a secretary at a meeting, one young lady came to a meeting with two very young children. They were not well behaved and were a huge distraction, after two meetings, I asked the same question from some older members who had many years, they told me the meeting must always come first.

At my home meeting, one member who has over one year, just recently started to bring his eleven year old son, he sat in the back of the room and did homework. I felt uncomfortable thinking what if his presence might hinder some members total honesty or alter his sharing. The situation kind of resolved itself since now the boy sits outside in the hall and does his homework there.

Like it has been mentioned earlier by Marc, most of our meetings in LA are open. And guests or students, etc. are allowed to be there but must remain quiet and leave if any one member asks them, for the duration of their therapy only. I have tried to make a couple of the regular meetings I attend closed meetings, and have been voted down. I guess that is how our area wants to run the meetings.

Ara H. - Area 1

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<b>Where does G.A. stand financially?</b>
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5/8/10 - 8:46 AM

Can anyone tell me where the last full accounting for G.A. is. My area would like to know where we truly stand. They have seen in the bulletin where CD's have been redeposited and where some have been cashed, but not a full accounting. I have reviewed the last couple years of the bullentin and could not find it.

Carol K. - Area 9, Michigan

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