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Trustee Line for May 2012

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 5/31/12.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

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

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Unity Step 5

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM
Unity Step Five

Gamblers Anonymous has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers.

There is something special that happens when a group of compulsive gamblers get together and help each other stay away from a bet; it's the only thing that has worked for me. I was lucky to walk into a meeting that did not have any internal conflict or outside issue that diverted the group focus from welcoming me and teaching me the tools to help me recover. We need to remember that is what we are good at and keep our focus on 12th step work. We are the best chance a compulsive gambler has to escape their illness.

When I sit in a meeting, I listen to what is being shared and how it will be received by the newcomer. Is it the message of recovery? Is it welcoming and encouraging the person to come back? Will the newcomer be told there are things they "must" do that will keep them from coming back? Is some internal group conflict being aired out in the meeting? Basically, what is the message the newcomer is getting at that first meeting?

"You have to give it away to keep it." This is a byproduct of working this unity step. We cannot be selfish about our recovery; but just about everyone reading this already knows that truth. I know that the first six months in recovery, one of my main motivators was Dave J. He and I came in the same day and I did not

want to go out and let him down by gambling. I later got involved in service and I truly believe the core of my recovery is helping others. I encourage others to get involved as a defense against the first bet. I feel we need to do a better job at getting this message out.

One thing a group can do is a group inventory. It is a time set aside to take inventory on how well it is working Unity Step Five. It is a session where each member has a chance to share what they think the group is doing right or wrong without judgment. From the discussion the group will come up with ways to help keep newcomers coming back and generate ideas on how to reach out into the community for those who still suffer.

I will suggest this to my group and Intergroup in May and report back on the results. What does your Area do to work Unity Step Five?

Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut

Meetings in American Sign Language

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM

In San Diego, we are considering starting a meeting using American Sign Language (ASL) as the main form of communication. The meeting would be started to help the Hard of Hearing compulsive gambler that still suffers and may require paid ASL interpreters for the first few months.

Does GA have any meetings that are 'Hard of Hearing' friendly?

Does anyone have prior experience trying to establish a meeting for the Hearing Impaired?

I am seeking any information that would help San Diego establish such a meeting.

Thanks,
Doug E. - Area 3A, San Diego

Boston Conference

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM

My thanks to the Boston GA Fellowship for putting on a great conference. I enjoyed myself immensely. Tim / Jim and all the others picked us up from the hotel, T, and mall at all hours and always with a smile on their face(s). Thanks for all the extra effort to make our stay more enjoyable. Having these extra "perks" allowed me as a Trustee to spend my time on the agenda items and not worry about other things.

I also wanted to comment that I felt this was the best Trustee meeting I've attended. (I have attended 7 of the last 8 trustee meetings.) I felt a sense that the Trustees were truly trying to make decisions, not only based upon their opinions, but for GA as a whole. The example I show for this was the BOR procedural committee suggested changes that had passed so dramatically in LA. When in Boston, the international community explained how this effected their areas (and we finally understood). The body voted the items down. I personally voted no on these items, not because I felt they were not appropriate, BUT because to vote to remove them from the Guidance Code did effect GA as a whole (at this time). I believe that some day, these changes will be made, but only after we talk with the international community and find a better solution to the problem.

Perhaps too, I have such an affinity for the Boston conference as I had decided to step down as Trustee after two terms. I expect in the future, I will run again and hope to serve. I wish all of the current and future Trustees continued personal recovery, one day at a time. Thank you for sharing your experiences, strengths, and hopes with me.

Cathy K, - Area 8D, Missouri

BOR Procedural Committee

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM

I spoke to a few of the Trustees on the BOR Procedural Committee, but wanted to formally thank all members for all the effort they did. I can only imagine how much work went into reviewing in detail the bylaws and guidance code, as well as the organization needed to create all the needed agenda items.

I hope the members of this committee realize that though many of their items were voted down in Boston, it was in no way a reflection of their work provided. As I said in an earlier posting, the comments from the international community was additional information that the Trustees needed to hear. I had no idea that a) they only translated the guidance code, nor b) that they used the BOR items in the guidance code as a model for their bylaws. Until that issue can be resolved, I believe the body voted correctly as the removal of the items would effect the international community.

Thank you again for all your effort! As well, thanks to all committees for their work the past six months.

Cathy K, - Area 8D, Missouri

Realignment / New Areas

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM

After the realignment section of our agenda, I had a question. Perhaps I should have raised it during the trustee meeting, but will ask here. Perhaps some of you will respond, so I can understand.

When we created a new area in New York and then again in California, I wonder why we also gave another trustee, instead of reallocating one from the old area. For example, if the old area had 4 trustees and we are making a new area and giving them 1 trustee, why doesn't the old area now have 3?

I look forward to understanding. Thanks

Cathy K. - Area 8D, Missouri

Trustee Term Limits

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM

I want to say that I think this BOT meeting was the best one that I have been to yet. It seemed that people came more prepared this time and it led to some good discussions on several items. Agenda item 19, however, was the most disappointing for me. Not because it failed, but because of the reasons that it failed. So that it doesn't have to be looked up, it was about a trustee serving only 2 terms...Not only does my area feel that this is a good practice, I believe it is as well. Being a trustee has been an awesome experience for me personally and I feel that it has helped me grow tremendously in my own program of recovery. I heard several trustees say that there was not anyone else in their area QUALIFIED to be trustee. Most of the ones that I heard say that said that they felt no one else could do this job. I even had one person tell me, (not even a trustee) that areas should not fund their trustees to come to the meetings. "If you can't afford to be a trustee, then you shouldn't be one." I was floored by these statements! If I ever feel that there is no one in my area who could do a better job at being a trustee than I can, I hope that my fellow brothers and sisters in my area call me out on this! To me, that statement is arrogance at its finest. Rotation is so important in our recovery, not only for us but for our brothers and sisters as well. I can't wait to share this experience with someone else so that they too can grow in their recovery as I have been allowed to do. As far as being able to AFFORD being a trustee??? Whatever happened to "DUE TO THE NATURE OF OUR ILLNESS"? We are sent to these meetings to represent OUR AREA, not ourselves. There are some very qualified people out there who would make outstanding trustees, who would represent all of our needs, who may still be paying off the debt they accrued during the height of this illness. Should they be excluded because of that? Or should they bring their own EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE, to the fellowship as a whole? Just some things to think about.

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

5/10/12 - 5:06 PM

I read Karen's post on this agenda item, and I'm glad that the item did not pass. As I said at the Trustee meeting on this item, if we passed it as written it would take away what the groups in an Area would like to do. We can't take away responsibility from the Areas that know their areas far better than the Trustees do. We can not limit what the groups in their areas can do. As it is now, they can select who they feel will be able to represent their areas best, and this does not affect other Groups or GA as a whole.

Its just like Steve's F, Area I, post to the Trustee Poll, again taking away what the Area and it Intergroup can and can not do. We don't need to change what

and how other areas and their Intergroup run things. If the groups or their Intergroup don't affect GA as a whole, leave them alone

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

New and Realigned Geographical Areas

5/1/12 - 12:01 AM

It is still very early in the forming of the San Diego BOT agenda. There are now two items submitted to address this topic.

The first addresses the passing at the Boston BOT under agenda item #48 of the realignment of Area 2B. This action split Area 2B and forms an Area 2M for the 6 Redding/Anderson meetings within Area 2B.

This item was presented by a former trustee of Area 2B who resides in the Redding area. Unfortunately, however the representation of the 6 Redding/Anderson meetings was not authorized by these meetings nor was it authorized or discussed by Area 2B Intergroup. It was discussed with Area 2B Intergroup on 4/15/12 just four days prior to the Boston BOT as well as at a Redding/Anderson business meeting on 4/2/12. It was a consensus at both of those meetings that the Redding/Anderson meetings were not ready for a realignment of Area 2B to result in their getting an area for themselves. The former Area 2B trustee was present at both of these meetings.

The area 2B Intergroup meeting held on 4/15/12, just four days before the Boston BOT addressed a new business item from this former trustee to have Area 2B request a third trustee so the Redding/Anderson meetings could have their own trustee. This item was defeated in 2011 at another Area 2B Intergroup meeting. There was a well mannered discussion on this issue. It was pointed out that even if Area 2B requested a third trustee that there would be no guarantee in at large trustee election that the Redding/Anderson area would get a trustee elected. The Area 2B Intergroup Chairman then explained that the only way Redding/Anderson could guarantee a trustee would be if Area 2B was realigned forming them with a new geographical area. The Area 2B Treasurer then noted that Redding/Anderson area did not have the membership nor the financial means at this time to support a new area and trustee. It was also pointed out that their meeting averages reflected a number of members who attended multiple meetings. That being said the former Area 2B Trustee agreed that the Redding/Anderson meetings were not ready to break away from Area 2B and promptly motioned that Area 2B request a third trustee. The motion seconded and was once again overwhelmingly defeated because of finances. The subject of trustee representation was further addressed and an agreement due to the mileage involved that when a trustee visited that the other meeting rep's would make every effort to attend that meeting and address any issues.

Speaking for the claims made by this former trustee that the Redding/Anderson meetings have not been represented in as many as seven years are unfounded. They do not represent how the Redding/Anderson meetings feel, nor is this accurate. I can attest for all of that period except for this last year when I was not in office. They always received the BOT agenda, were encouraged to submit agenda items, made aware of Area 2B happenings and visited as per the Trustee guidelines.

On Friday 4/20/12 during the BOT meeting I was called by a member present at the meeting and informed me of the Area 2B realignment. It pained me to hear how my fellow trustees stood up and passed judgement on Area 2B. This was done under the convenient timing when neither Area 2B trustee could attend the meeting. Sadly, it was allowed without even questioning or verifying if the presenter was authorized to speak for these meetings or Area 2B Intergroup.

I was asked to submit an agenda item for the Redding/Anderson meetings to rescind the awarding of a realigned Area 2B making them Area 2M. That item is now on the agenda for the San Diego BOT. The item will be presented by one of their trusted servants in person.

I have also placed a second agenda item to replace Guidance Code Article XVII Section 2A to also address area realignment of an "existing" geographical area. This will include a requirement that documentation be received by the Chairperson of the BOT and that the request is approved by the effected area and their Intergroups (if any).

In closing I am very much looking forward to attending the San Diego BOT/Conference as I have been elected once again to represent Area 2B. As I look at this "long" submission I can only vision my fellow trustees going directly

to the end to see if it is from my friend David M. (lol). I don't know how he does it my hands are aching.

My best to all of you and I will see you in San Diego.

Steve R. - Area 2B, Trustee elect, Sacramento Area
IRC member.

5/11/12 - 3:36 PM

Steve, not only did I vote YES to the new area, I did so with a heated, passionate speech at the microphone. My recovery has taken me many places I thought were not possible. One of these places resides in my heart. Recovery has given me the ability to trust without question. This has proved to be what I'll refer to as a "recovery character defect". The person who made this request emphatically stated that the area in question had only been visited a couple of times by a Trustee in the last seven years. Forget about the fact that you said you can attest to this statement being false, I was flabbergasted to learn that the person making this statement was in fact the Trustee for the area for some of those years. Talk about being blindsided..... Had I have known that, my turn at the microphone would have been completely different!!!! To all my fellow Trustees and to everyone in area 2B, please forgive my ignorance and my yes vote. Believing in term limits, I did not run for Trustee in my area again, therefore, I will not have a vote on this item.... But I do have a voice!!!! Looking forward to seeing you all in San Diego. Thanks for breaking it all down for us Steve!

Yours in recovery,
Andy R. - Trustee, Area 13B, South Jersey

Unity Step 3 Wording

5/5/12 - 10:11 AM

Unity Step 3 - The only requirement for Gamblers Anonymous membership is a desire to stop gambling.

I enjoy reading the monthly submissions posted by Paul S. from Area 17 on the Unity Steps. However, I couldn't quite find the message from his March postin I was looking for when this issue cropped up for me. We recently had a member of AA come into our GA meeting after it had started. He was quite disoriented and had apparently been drinking prior to coming in, based on the heavy smell of alcohol on his breath. I rose to meet this person as he walked into our meeting to take him in the hallway and confirm that he was here for the GA meeting. I asked his name and if this was his first meeting, to which he replied no. He came into the room and when it was his turn to speak, he just said his name and started therapy. Another member interrupted him to ask if he was a compulsive gambler. The gentleman said no. The next question was, do you have a desire to stop gambling, to which he also said no.

Our meeting is a closed meeting with exceptions. It most often applies to new members who bring someone with them for support. The room votes on whether or not to allow the person in the room for that one time. It also applies to reporters, students and other situations on a case- by-case situation. The members of our room and virtually all the rooms in my area start their therapies with their GA name, the fact that they are a compulsive gambler and the date of their last bet.

Getting back to the situation, I began to think about the process that I also see in other rooms from members around for a while. A person begins therapy and says, my name is and then begins therapy. Someone will invariably interrupt and ask if the person is a compulsive gambler, as if this is a requirement. That made me think about the situation with the AA member and the impact of Unity Step 3. The Red Book stresses the desire rather than the abstinence, as the only requirement. That is not clear for me and hopefully others either already feel that way or wil, after this submission.

I just submitted a Trustee Poll item on this subject for everyone to vote on. Here is my issue. For any Trustee or GA member who is abstinent, why would they say they have a desire to STOP gambling if they ARE NOT gambling? I came into GA in 1988 with the absolute thought of stopping gambling because I had allowed it to ruin my life. But I stopped gambling and haven't gambled since coming into GA. Over the years I have countless times said that I do have a desire to stop gambling, without really thinking it through. The reality is that I have no desire to stop gambling, because I don't gamble. I do have urges to gamble and my admission of a desire to stop gambling over these years is not accurate. In essence, I actually have a desire NOT to gamble.

A new person comes in to a room and is usually devastated from the effects of gambling. Does that person have a desire to stop gambling, most probably yes. Great, so that person now fits the only requirement for being a member of Gamblers Anonymous – a desire to stop gambling.

Think about all the arguments you have heard over the years about all the rules in GA. Why is it that nobody complains about this REQUIREMENT, which is not suggested through a guideline, but is an absolute? I suppose that's an entirely different discussion. But where does it say what membership actually means? You have a desire to stop, so now you are a member for life? Are you only allowed to come into meetings and participate in GA functions? The fact is we have no rules regarding this, but I'm not looking for those answers now. The point is that anyone who is abstinent is not being honest if they answer the question of having a desire to stop gambling, because they are not gambling.

Ask that question of others in your area and when they say yes, ask them how it is possible to have a desire to stop something that they are not doing. What will follow will be a series of explanations and qualifiers about that person's interpretation of that question. Interpretations are grey areas in the Fellowship. Grey areas lead to controversy, which in turn leads to disruption of Group Unity.

If this Step were changed to: The only requirement for Gamblers Anonymous membership is a desire not to gamble, there would be no questions, no rationalization, no justifications and zero interpretations. If someone would say NO to this new version, then they should also be asked why they bother coming to meetings, because it looks like they have found the elusive magic cure for compulsive gambling.

New members and returnees are the only ones who should be answering yes to the current version of having a desire to stop. The new version applies to everyone who walks through the GA doors anywhere in the world. In reality, if I don't have a desire to stop gambling, solely because I don't gamble. If that is so then I don't meet the current and singular requirement for membership. And neither does everyone else. The ultimate answer to this question to try and stop such a discussion and invalidate it by those who don't want to deal with it, is that nobody has ever gone back to the bet because it says a desire to stop rather than a desire not to gamble. Please don't reduce it to that answer.

Some of you will say this is just word games; however, I hope that you will re-read this and be objective about the message in this posting. Please don't just default to 'we all know what it's supposed to mean'. Maybe so, but why do we have to make excuses for something that can clearly be improved and then becomes more inclusive, rather than exclusive?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

5/9/12 - 10:08 AM

Excellent suggestion submitted by David M. regarding Step Three. The new wording is clear, concise, and accurate. It addresses the Step's meaning and spirit for the beginner and long-standing members alike.

Respectfully,

Vincent B. - Area 12, New Jersey

5/11/12 - 3:03 PM

I think that David M.'s suggestion makes a lot of sense. When newcomers come to a meeting sometimes they are so confused that admitting to a desire to stop gambling may be more than they can handle. However, saying that they have a desire not to gamble (even if in their minds just for now) maybe easier for them to say. It is up to us with more time to show them a better way of life by stopping gambling altogether. As David mentions changing the wording to read "The only requirement is a desire not to gamble", all of us new and those with time can relate.

John C. - BOR Chairman
Area 1A, Orange County, CA

5/13/12 - 8:39 PM

David,

Thank you for that AH HA moment! You are absolutely correct, I don't have a desire to STOP gambling. I did that a little over six years ago when I first walked in the door of my first GA meeting. I DO have a desire NOT to gamble. In all the times that I have read the Combo Book, I have never noticed that before. I am just like most people, I know what it is supposed to mean. How often do people play that game with the combo book? " I can do this because it

doesn't say I can't." Area 8A is normally against changing the combo book and for the most part, I agree with them. The main reason we are against it is because the one word here and there WOULD change the entire meaning of the statement. The best example I can think of is when someone wanted to change a phrase in the pressure relief statement, "A pressure relief meeting MAY help..." To "A pressure relief meeting WILL help..." That changed the entire statement to a guarantee. As you said, the only thing that is a must in our program is the REQUIREMENT that we have a DESIRE to stop gambling. So, I don't qualify to go to meetings anymore because my desire is not to stop gambling. My desire is NOT to gamble. That one phrase changes the entire meaning to include us all! I can say that this is one change to the combo book that I will advocate for in our area! It makes sense! Thanks David!

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

Wearing Sports Clothing in a Meeting

5/11/12 - 2:58 PM
Hello everyone,

I hope this message finds all of you well.

Having the privilege of being a Trustee for the last five years has given me the opportunity to hear many discussion topics both in and out of a trustee meeting. Regardless of my personal feelings towards a subject, it is always good to hear the opinions of my brothers and sisters.

The subject of wearing football, baseball, etc. jersey's in a meeting is one of those subjects that has been brought up many times. My take on the subject may be a little different and I want to hear the opinion of anyone willing to give one.

Hearing both sides of this debate, it is easy to see that many of us are clearly divided as to what is and what is not proper.

Some of the arguments I hear about in regards to wearing a jersey to a meeting is that a meeting place is supposed to be a safe zone, a new member just walking in after losing his/her shirt on a game shouldn't have to look at a jersey. I've heard the argument from "old timers" that it's no different than wearing a picture of your favorite horse crossing the finish line or from others stating it's no different than wearing a Las Vegas hat with dice on it to a meeting.

After doing some research, I learned that 1 of the top 12 sports that are wagered on both legally and illegally is GOLF. That's not to mention all the other betting that goes on on the course or in the club. Not only do we wear golf shirts and "championship" course hats to a meeting, we actually endorse the game!!! We hold a Golf Outing 2 times a year. Think for a moment about that brother or sister whose last bet was on the golf course when he/she told their bookie or broker to put it all on..... I think you get the picture.

I could not watch a boxing match for several years after coming into program. In the article I read, it coupled golf and boxing together being "equally" wagered on. I can't even imagine if my game of choice was golf. Not so much because of the attire being worn at meetings, rather the total and complete acceptance of it in our program. I believe that sense of belonging that I feel would not be nearly as great. Those old feelings of being alone and not being understood would be hard to overcome given those circumstances.

I started to think about this when I mentioned to someone that maybe we should have a night out at the ballpark or something similar as a GA event. I was asked "Do we really want to put a flier out at our meetings for a game?". My reply was "Why not, we have golf outing fliers on our tables. Is it any different?".

Your input would be greatly appreciated!!!

Yours in recovery,
Andy R. - Trustee, Area 13B, South Jersey

5/12/12 - 3:24 AM

I read this submission and it brought back a very negative memory of a BOT meeting that had an agenda item addressing this very topic. The author of the item when the resulting vote deemed it appropriate to wear sports clothing at a meeting, pulled out a bag and donned a Chicago Cubs Jersey right on the spot. That moment in time displayed absolutely zero recovery for that member in my mind. To act in an immature, arrogant manner anywhere much less the floor of

the Gamblers Anonymous Board of Trustees meeting is pitiful.

I'm an avid sports fan in all sports and I have been guilty of wearing a hat or shirt occasionally to a meeting not really thinking about it effecting someone else's recovery. To be honest I'm not on a side here either way. I believe there has to be a point where someone has to draw a line. I have been to baseball games that were organized as a social function for members and their families. That to me has to be a personal decision on the members part to either participate or not. However the meeting in most cases is not a social function.

In the case of the golf outings at the Conferences that to is a personal decision on the members part. I can certainly see the argument on the other side about the promotion of the outing etc.

Strong issues either way and a topic that could make a BOT meeting go into the next week. There should be no shortage of opinions here and I look forward to finally seeing something to read in this Trustee Line. Andy has struck a nerve with the golf angle and it being a fixture of each conference for quite some time now.

See you in San Diego
Steve R. - Area 2B, Sacramento California

5/12/12 - 9:49 AM

The subject of wearing sports-related clothing is unfortunately still very polarizing and really one of the more tiring subjects, because it just doesn't ever seem to go away. It distills down to people whose egos only allow them to think about their own needs and wants, without any consideration for those compulsive gamblers who still suffer. The Red Book is very clear about this under Unity Step 5. "It should be noted that the suffering compulsive gambler can be sitting next to you at your meeting, as well as those who have never heard of Gamblers Anonymous."

Is it that important to wear such clothing for 1.5 to 2 hours during a meeting, when it may be making even one member uncomfortable? Are we to be told that a person is a fan of the sport, as a justification of being insensitive to others? New members who are sports bettors are told not to watch sporting events. I supposed it's okay for AA members to wear hats with brands of liquor and logos, when they go to AA meetings.

Unfortunately, some of our members are resorting to quoting chapter and verse from straw votes at previous Trustee meetings. New Orleans 2004 is the issue on this particular item. "Board consensus is that wearing sports related clothing is appropriate at a GA meeting, Intergroup or a GA conference." Guess what, that was a straw vote. Straw votes are non-binding, and they are also no longer allowed at BOT meetings because they neither affirm or reject anything. However, those who still wish to cling to their own needs and wants, hang their (sports) hats on this item as the explanation of why they continue to wear sports clothing to a meeting.

As to the golf outings, I am strongly opposed to them for the reasons Andy cites, but there is another straw vote that goes back 18 years to give the supporters of these outings some artificial muscle. St. Petersburg 1994, "Golf outings are appropriate fundraisers and/or social events for Gamblers Anonymous." We can't pretend to be able to stop people from staying away from gambling venues where they gambled. Again I'll use an AA reference. Would an AA member be advised to take a job at a bar? I'm not in AA, but it always seems to crystallize the concept when we tie situations to that Fellowship.

We have to stop living in denial about these sponsored sporting events. We can't have a group or Intergroup sponsored baseball game, just to name one kind of event, irrespective of arguments of how it improves group unity – it's the wrong venue. Have a dinner and movie night, or anyone of many dozens of other ideas. If people want to go to ball games or other sporting events, they should do it without the fanfare and just make their own private arrangements. That's not an endorsement, but more of a statement of in being inappropriate for rooms, Intergroups and conferences.

The same goes for the golf outings. NJ Intergroup stopped doing this as an Intergroup sponsored event a number of years ago. International conferences still do this. The money that is made is not a motivation to continue these conference-sponsored events. The group unity platform is not convincing enough, especially when other activities could be used in place of a golf outing.

Golfers are a very obsessive group of people when it comes to golf. Drop a blindfolded golfer with his/her golf bag out of an airplane at night, and they will find where the golf courses are, probably even before they know where they

landed. We award the international conferences very far out in advance. No doubt the golfers will find each other and make their own arrangements for courses in the areas to play during conferences, without any difficulty.

We have such a high number of GA members attending these conferences. Shouldn't we be setting a higher level of how things are in this Fellowship, rather than send out mixed messages of conference-sponsored golf outings to our brothers and sisters who may still be suffering?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

5/14/12 - 8:13 AM

Andy,

This issue when it came up in our area really sparked some interesting conversation. Most people in our area feel that the BOT making it a 'rule' that you can't wear sports apparel to a meeting falls too much under 'governing'. We have had members come into our rooms wearing the 'free' jacket they got from the casino. Since most of us here were casino junkies, you would think this would be offensive to many. The simple fact is, this free jacket is all they have to wear in the winter because they can't afford to buy a coat. I can remember one Monday night when the Vikings were playing, we had several members walk in wearing their jerseys, caps, coats, etc. I don't think anyone in the room minded...they were at the meeting (where they felt they needed to be) and not at home watching the game. Once a year Minnesota Recovery Connection (a recovery community in the Twin Cities) hosts a Recovery Night at a Twins game. We have at least 100 members attend this game and it is an awesome experience! We are with close to 2000 people celebrating their recovery with their friends and families.

I completely understand why this is an issue. I think that what we have to remember, we are all working a program of recovery. I personally don't care what someone wears into a meeting. What I care about is the fact that they are AT the meeting. Our meeting rooms do need to be a safe place for us to come to, however, if we are put into action by the shirt another member may be wearing, then that is a reflection on our own recovery. Every Monday night, members in our group have to watch at least 3 buses go by that are going to the casino. If it triggers someone, they usually end up talking about it. I will not wear sports apparel to any GA event. That is my choice. I would never walk up to someone who is and tell them that they can't. And yes, I do understand that it may be a new member who is triggered. That is why it is so important that we let them know the importance of getting a sponsor, share with them our experience, strength and hope and call them.

Most of the GA conferences that I have been to have an open bar to go along with the events of the evening on Friday and Saturday. We have many recovering alcoholics in our program. Yet we don't worry about how this will affect them, it is a matter of them being responsible for their own AA program. By the way, Area 8A did make it a rule that no alcohol will be allowed in any of our events, especially our conferences, out of respect for our brothers and sisters who also have this addiction. Where is this issue any different?

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

5/21/12 - 1:57 PM

I just read the posts on wearing jerseys of sport teams. I am a huge sport fan, from basketball to soccer. I own many jerseys of present and past players of the Lakers, Dodgers, Kings, Galaxy and other teams....However I would never wear these to any GA meeting. As a respect to fellow members who have been sports betters...which I was not. However I have no problem wearing them to picnics, unity days, outings, intergroup or trustee meeting. I usually don't but I have done so from time to time.

I also do understand what Karen was saying about some members might only own a "free" sweater from a casino, I see newer members come in with race track or Indian casino caps and I might mention a word or two to them if they keep doing so...

That has been my experience and hope it helps someone,

Ara H. - Area 1, Los Angeles

No More Changes to the Yellow Combo Book

5/15/12 - 9:43 PM

Once again I am asking that we do not make any changes to the yellow combo book.

I have been in G.A. 45 years and do not see how these new changes have helped the recovery of the compulsive gambler. It is not just the cost but, the time we take to get it passed & put into print. The yellow combo book that we now have is fine. Every year we will have someone that thinks one word or one idea will get our message out in a better way. With all the changes to the book I do not see any improvements in our retention.

Matthew C. - Area 12, New Jersey

5/21/12 - 8:45 PM

Matthew,

Seeing as this upcoming agenda is the one for combo book changes, I want to say THANK YOU for writing this. Area 8A feels very strongly about this and I agree with them. I am not looking forward to seeing the changes that are going to be asked for and I am sure there are going to be a lot. I agree with you, changing a word or a line here and there is NOT going to help the compulsive gambler who still suffers. It is going to give us, once again, another version to float around in our rooms. We are going to spend hours in the BOT meeting hearing why this change and that change is so vital to the combo book and in the end, it isn't really going to change a thing. The arguments we will hear for these changes will be the same we have heard many times before, "A member said they gambled because it wasn't in the combo book" "We have to spell it out exactly so they understand what it means" "We have to change with the times"....

The simple fact of the matter is, when a new person walks into our room, what our combo book says won't change a thing for them. What they hear from our members will. The desire they have to get well will make a difference. We are not stupid people walking in our rooms, we are people who have a need to recover from this illness. Do some look for a way around what constitutes gambling? Of course they do! Changing the combo book won't change that. Those same people will find another loop hole to jump through.

I doubt that anything will change with this. Changes will be put on the agenda, we will spend time debating each one, some will pass and some won't and we will have a new combo book to print out. I just wish that the trustees who put these items on would stop and look at the big picture and ask themselves, will this change really make a difference or will it just make my ego feel better because I thought of this?

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

Use of Non-Approved Literature

5/18/12 - 3:27 PM

In my report to my Intergroup, I again covered the subject of no outside literature in the rooms at closed, open or pinning meetings. Again I received the argument that there are no rules in GA and each room is self governing. Am I incorrect? Can there be outside readings used at pinning celebrations? I have been a trustee for 6 years and I understand that only GA approved literature can be used at any meeting whether the meeting is open or closed, or at a pinning. Here in Chicago we have big celebrations for our GA Birthdays 1, 5, 10, years and all additional 5 years there after. Appropriate literature is the phone list and meeting list. Please give me some feedback on this

Kathy H. - Area 8, Chicago

5/18/12 - 9:48 PM

Kathy,

Have these people move to NJ and we'll 'enlighten' them. Let's quote a little chapter and verse from the Guidance Code, Article VII, Section 1: Whenever two or more persons with a desire to stop gambling meet together on a regular, weekly scheduled basis to discuss their gambling problem, they will be known as a group, only if they commit themselves to follow Gamblers Anonymous' Guidance Code and limit their use, display and distribution to only approved and appropriate Gamblers Anonymous literature. They are also to notify the International Service Office (I.S.O.) of their existence.

If that's not clear enough for them, then hit them with these next to sections from the same Article, Section 7 and 8.

Section 7: Gamblers Anonymous approved literature is any publication or item that has been approved by the Board of Trustees and is sold or distributed by the International Service Office (I.S.O) and/or any Regional Service Office (R.S.O.). Foreign language translations of Gamblers Anonymous approved literature are deemed to be approved if the final product has followed the necessary steps outlined by the Board of Trustees.

Section 8: Gamblers Anonymous appropriate literature is limited to local area member telephone lists, meeting and direction lists, flyers regarding events sponsored by the local rooms(s), Intergroup(s), surrounding area(s) or conference committees. Other appropriate material must be designated as such by the Board of Trustees.

I am really disgusted with people who make unsubstantiated statements about how 'they' think this Fellowship should be run, without any consideration for what's in the Guidance Code or decisions of the Board of Trustees. Do these people also know more about Unity Step 4 other than 'each group is self-governing'? Do they even have a clue that there is another part to it about 'except in matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole'? Unfortunately, there are rules in GA and they come in the form of the Guidance Code. This literature thing affects GA as a whole, so not only are they misquoting the Unity Step 4 to twist it into something that would support their behavior, but they are violating the Guidance Code.

You need to drop the hammer on these people who seem hell bent on running their own program. If they are not going to follow the Guidance Code after being advised of their violations, your Intergroup should remove them from your meeting list in your area, because they do not meet the definition of a Gamblers Anonymous meeting. They should be removed from your hotline information listing, and ISO should also be notified of the removal.

No doubt you will get a lot of venom from these defiant members, as they fall back on the old favorite line - the GA Police. Funny how that always comes out of peoples' mouths when they get called out for violating the Guidance Code. If everyone would just follow what they are supposed to rather than doing what 'they' feel is right, we wouldn't have to drop the Guidance Code in their lap all the time. No doubt these people have never read the Guidance Code. In fact, I'll go one step further, I'm sure they wouldn't even be able to tell you what the color of the cover is on the Guidance Code.

You guys have 4 Trustees in your area. You should all act together in a show of total unity and commitment to follow the Guidance Code. It will give you more credibility. If you should end up enlightening these people, you might also want to tell them that once you have told them all the Guidance Code provisions, that if they refuse to comply and then end up getting removed, it will have been their decision for that to happen. Then you can give them a going away present by asking them what happened to H.O.W. ?

Most probably my posturing is going to upset some of those who read this. To that, I would submit that Trustees who support such defiance about the Guidance Code help to contribute to the problem that only gets bigger over time.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

BOT and Unity Step 5

5/21/12 - 8:50 PM

To all my GA brothers and sisters:

Well, the trustee line was very quiet for a while, but things sure have picked up lately! I enjoy reading the opinions of my fellow trustees, although I don't always agree with them. I could find several things to respond to this month, as I have very strong feelings about some of the things I have read. Instead, I would like to talk about the BOT.

Since arriving home from Boston, I have been thinking a lot about the BOT and my role as a trusted servant. Maybe we trustee's are the most trusted servants. I don't mean that in a ego fulfilling way, but we are trusted by our areas to do what is best for GA as a whole, GA groups and the individual GA member.

I became a trustee because I thought I have something to give back to the program that has given so much to me. Still feel that way. However, I don't always feel I am fulfilling my duties as a trustee at the BOT meetings. I have always been told, since my very early days in GA, that there is no more important thing than helping another compulsive gambler. Spreading the message of hope and love and understanding and fellowship is, as I understand

the 5th Unity step, our "PRIMARY PURPOSE". Not "sort of our purpose", or "maybe something we should think about", but our "PRIMARY PURPOSE". We have a member who has written every month this year about the Unity steps, and his writing is informative and important. But I feel that we, as trustee's seem to forget our PRIMARY PURPOSE" at the BOT meetings. For anyone who has ever watched "Star Trek", think of it as the "Prime Directive". The Most Important Thing, Above All Else.

I know there is a certain amount of crossing the T's and dotting the I's that need to be done by the BOT. Fine. But my goodness, how much time have we spent these last few meetings doing this instead of trying to find ways to help our fellow gamblers. Maybe it's just me. Maybe I am too altruistic, maybe this is all in my head, I don't know. I just know that as I evolve in the GA program, the PRIMARY PURPOSE seems to be more and more on my mind. There is a member of my home group talks about this at every business meeting. He has taught me to ask the questions "is this action going to help spread the message to the compulsive gambler"? Notice I changed the ending a little bit. I feel that we should not just spread the message to those who still suffer, but to all compulsive gamblers, even those who are in the program with many years of abstinence and great recovery. Because I can always have a little more hope and love spread towards me. Always.

In Boston, there was an agenda item that I thought was a very simple, positive thing to help the compulsive gambler. I spoke for this item, because it felt like that was what we are there for. To do something positive. But my goodness, there were so many negative comments about this simple, positive thing we could have done. We even argued over how the item was to be spelled. For crying out loud, we spent 10 minutes discussing a change that meant absolutely nothing to the agenda item. This simple, positive thing was voted down. Why? I heard various answers from other trustee's, none of which really had merit.

Anyway, I digress. From now on, me, in my GA life and my recovery, I am going to ask the same question my good GA friend asks. "Is this going to relate to Unity Step 5?" Perhaps if all trustee's asked the same question, we would be able to create positive, helpful solutions to our fellow compulsive gamblers, and maybe even finish our business on time.

Thanks for letting to express my thoughts, even if they seem incoherent or simple to some of you.

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California
