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Trustee Line for July 2011

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 7/31/11.

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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How We Do Room Collections

7/1/11 - 12:01 AM

I suppose most of you who read the Trustee Line on a regular basis probably say to yourselves, "What is David going to complain about now?" Let me answer that by saying that there are a lot of things that are really great about our Fellowship and the Program, much that is good, some not so good and some that really is problematic. My feeling has been that if you want to speak about all the good things we experience in this Fellowship, then put it in the ISO Bulletin. It's one of the responsibilities of being a Trustee, but as we all know, few of the Trustees actually submit anything to Karen.

For me the Trustee Line is a platform for awareness of things that need to be looked at and possibly changed. That is the job of the Trustees. Yes, I complain about a lot of things, but I don't believe that the issues I bring up are frivolous. I speak my mind and don't play the politics game that seems to be spreading throughout the Board of Trustees. If it's on my mind – it's on my mouth, as the saying goes. All of it is meant to evoke a dialogue with everyone else, and even that doesn't really catch a foothold. What's even more intriguing is that many of the things that aren't so good or really wrong, have been going on for more years than anyone has thought. Bringing these problems up often times makes people sit back and say, 'I can't believe we have been doing this for so long, maybe it is time for a change.'

So here is my item for this month's Trustee Line. It has to do with how some rooms collect money at the end of the meeting. The variance of what is said in the rooms when the can, basket or whatever, is passed around the room is very wide. Here are some of the statements I have heard over the years:

- Give whatever you can
- When you give, try and remember what this program has done for you
- You can either put in a dollar or take out a dollar, if you need it
- Donating is optional
- Don't be bashful, the room really needs the money
- New members don't have to contribute
- Members under 90 days don't have to contribute
- You can put in from 1 to 3 dollars
- Etc, etc, etc.

Each room has to figure out what is the appropriate statement to make to the members, but contributions are essential to each room's support and ability to help carry the message. Irrespective of what is said about the room collection, the issue of importance is HOW we collect the money from each member.

In virtually all the rooms I attend, a can or basket is passed around the room.

The members put in whatever they feel they can and nobody is watching what each member contributes. The can returns to the front table and the money is counted by a trusted servant. Privacy and respect are maintained.

This brings me to a situation that happened to me. I was in a room that is not my home room and the chair of the meeting asked a member to go around to the members and take up the weekly collection. When the person came up to me, I was just starting to go into my pocket to take out my money for the contributions. The member stopped and waited for my contribution. As it happened, I did not have any small bills and what was showing was a \$50 bill. I said that I needed to get some change, and the member doing the collecting blurted out in front of the entire room, 'You don't need change, we'll take the \$50.' That was supposed to be a joke. It was at that point that I became offended. Nobody needs to know how much money I or anyone else is carrying or what is contributed by each member. Nobody has to know if someone who can't afford to contribute actually doesn't contribute. Nobody should feel guilty about having others looking over their shoulder putting implied pressure on them to contribute when they can't or contribute more.

I don't care what others say, but the amount of contributions by members in the room always seems to come up in conversations between members. Pressure relief meetings are not publicized to the entire room and the details of each meeting are kept within the pressure relief committee of that room. If someone is struggling with 3 jobs to make ends meet, they should not have to feel guilty about their ability to contribute, and certainly, nobody should know what is contributed or not.

I put item #12 on the Trustee Poll, asking for every Trustee's opinion about this subject. I would like to point to the Poll when I next go to this room and say, although it is not an official decision of the Board of Trustee, that the BOT has voiced its approval that the collection can should be passed around, not carried around by a member.

If you are a Trustee and have not voted on the Trustee Poll, please do so. Trustee responses have been very light.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

7/1/11 - 12:01 AM

Hi David,

I was just reading your post on the Trustee Poll. I am disappointed I can't vote in the trustee poll because I am a past trustee, but I also feel very uncomfortable when the collection basket is not passed around the room and a member would actually walk around holding the basket. It is nobody's business what I drop in the basket. I am happy to say the basket is passed around at all the meetings I attend. And I can't stand the reasoning " we have always done it this way"....

Talk to you soon,

Ara H. - Area 1, Los Angeles

7/1/11 - 5:10 PM

First and foremost: Happy 4th of July to all GA members

There seem to be a few issues here -

1. To Ara - I agree with you that it can sometimes be frustrating as a former Trustee not to be able to respond to a poll, especially when one has a strong opinion and can't voice that opinion via the vote.
2. To Ara and David - This subject comes up from time to time, and I strongly agree that any individual's contribution to whatever - the group collection, the ISO, a picnic event, or whatever should be confidential - their own business; not anyone else's. We have laws in most states - if not a federal law - that guarantee our right to privacy - especially our financial privacy. GA should be no different - it is my personal opinion that we should honor each person's privacy, their ability to donate or not donate - their choice. After all, we don't know what may be going on in their life at that moment.

Yes, I agree that the basket should be passed - not walked around.

With love, faith, hope and respect for our fellowship, Linda S. - Area 7B,
Oklahoma
Former Trustee, Area 3A, San Diego

7/9/11 - 12:53 PM

Hi David.

I also wish that I could still vote in the Trustee poll questions because I enjoyed this part of the web site. As a former Trustee, I just wanted to share that I agree that the basket and I.S.O. can should be passed from member to member without someone walking them around the room. No one needs to know how much I choose to contribute to the group or to I.S.O.

The other thing that bothers me is that too many groups in my area pass the can and basket around while members are still giving therapy. I think this is outrageous and am very offended when members have to give therapy with change clanging in the can. This is very distracting and should not go on in any G.A. room. I will stop the collection process when the basket and can come to me despite members objections.

I would like to know how other current and former Trustees feel about this issue. I was very sick and had to step down as a Trustee, but am feeling much better now and hope to get involved as a former Trustee.

Thanks, Mary-Lou L. - former Trustee area 11, New England

7/19/11 - 5:34

My home room doesn't pass the can. We have it sitting next to the sign in sheet. That allows a member to make their donation when they sign in. We do announce at the end of the meeting that we are self-supporting through our own contributions, but leave it up to the member to put money in the can if they wish. This decision came from a group conscious meeting.

Cathy K. - Area 8D, St. Louis, MO

My Take on the Sports Team Apparel Issue

7/1/11 - 12:01 AM

I know this post comes quite awhile after the original discussion, but I have not been on the trustee line in a while, and I have just recently read the post regarding the wearing of sports team apparel at BOT meetings, Intergroup meetings and GA meetings.

First off, let me say that I think any discussion of any item that is an issue with any member is a healthy discussion. With one qualifier: That we all be civil to each other. Civility seems to go by the wayside on some of the more emotional issues that come up, and quite frankly I would expect more respect and decorum from my fellow Trustee's. I am not citing any specific examples, but those that read these posts are well aware of what I am relating too.

Now, to the meat of this post.

As I was reading this thread about sports apparel, I found myself agreeing with some of the things said, but strongly disagreeing with others. I do believe that Trustee's are and should be held to a bit of a higher standard. Yes, of course I know that no one is more important than the group, which is part of the definition of anonymity. However, Trustee's are elected by the individual members of their areas, based on their experience and knowledge of the program and their ability to represent those areas. Like it or not, Trustees are perceived as leaders, and I believe the members expect us to act like leaders when it comes to the serious issues we deal with at the BOT meetings. I was deeply humbled and honored to be elected a Trustee, and understand that I must hold myself to a higher standard, and I believe this is what the author of that particular statement meant. Perhaps I am mistaken, and I'm sure I will be made aware of my mistake if so.

As for the issue of sports team apparel, WOW, I really never saw that coming. I say this because I have attended over 1700 GA meetings and perhaps 50 or so Intergroup meetings (I am not stating this to brag, just to make a point), and not once, not one single time, has someone brought up the issue of someone wearing sports team apparel. Never. I happen to live in an area that has a strong fan base for the local college and professional sports teams. Members consistently wear hats and shirts (even ear rings) with the logos and names of these teams. I wear them frequently. We talk about the teams before and after the meetings. We have had outings in which members attended baseball, football and basketball games together involving these teams. We have had several Superbowl parties in which several members attended. Many of these members were heavy sports bettors, including myself. None of this has ever made me want to make a bet. But, just to be sure I wasn't missing something, I brought this up at all of the meetings I attended in a week's period. The most common reaction was Huh? Really? Why would just seeing someone wear a Dodgers hat, or a Yankees shirt make me want to make a bet? Ridiculous!

(Those are all actual quotes). At a recent intergroup meeting, I noticed roughly 25% of the members wearing the local professional sports teams hats or shirts.

Maybe this is a regional issue, as I see most of those that have problems with this are in the same geographic area. If this is the case, then of course Unity Step 4 would apply. I certainly don't see this being something that should be a BOT agenda item, but of course it is the right of any Trustee to add it if they wish. In fact, I will check the Trustee Poll and see if this has been added to that valuable tool. If not, I will do so.

However, if wearing sports team apparel is really that much of an issue, then how far do you carry this? If you start with clothes, what is next. Is a member not allowed to say they bet on sports during sharing? Does it mean that a member can't share that he or she played golf that day, or wear a golf shirt because of the heavy amount of betting involved in golf? Or Bowling? Or bridge or other card games? Really, once you start legislating wardrobes, where does it stop? And by the way, yes, wearing a shirt promoting a casino or Pokerstars.net is different. We are, or should be adult enough to know the difference. I understand where the author was coming from, but there is a big difference between wearing a Las Vegas casino shirt and wearing a Yankee's jersey. By the way, in the interest of full disclosure, I was one of those that wore sports team apparel to the BOT meetings. I wore a shirt during one session bearing the logo of the San Francisco Giants, the team I grew up loving, and it never crossed my mind that this would be inflammatory. I even announced that I was from Area 2, the home of the defending world champion Giants. I did this in fun, as I was smack dab in the middle of Phillies territory, the team the Giants beat on the way to the World Series. And you know what? People laughed and booed, as I expected. I also struck up several friendships with other sports fans who commented to me on what I had said. I received no negative comments. So if this is such a big issue and problem, why didn't one of the Trustees that have issues with this come and talk to me? I consider all of the Trustees my brothers and sisters, and would have welcomed such a discussion.

We don't live in a vacuum. Gambling is all around us, every day. Every mini-mart has lotto or lottery tickets. Billboards for local casinos dominate the highways. One of our local hospitals has a wing named after a casino. Our AAA baseball team stadium has the name of a local casino. If I want to make a bet, nothing can stop me from doing so, and I can blame anything I wish for making me make the bet. A t-shirt might be the easiest, but as one of our members says, a cold kitchen floor could be reason enough for him to gamble if he really wanted to.

I will close with this. Every new member is "white knuckling" it when they first arrive. This is the nature of our disease. It is incumbent upon us as Trustees, other trusted servants and the general membership to help these members by explaining, working and living the 12 steps of Recovery. If we do this, there will never be a need to worry about outside influences that we can't control. We will be able to be Happy, joyous and free, and live life the way our Higher Power wants us to live it.

As always, I mean no disrespect to anyone. I believe in the exchange of ideas, and the trustee line is a great place to do so. Thank you for reading this rather long post, and please, let me know if you agree or disagree. I welcome the information.

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

7/2/11 - 3:59 PM

Hi Levi,

I am glad you brought up this issue of wearing sports apparel at our meetings.

I was highly offended that Trustees were wearing sports jerseys at a BOT Meeting. Quite frankly, that statement by a fellow Trustee should be enough for people to not wear sports apparel at the next conference or any GA sponsored event. In my opinion, that was terrible program (judging, character defect 101 on my part).

As I have mentioned before, in Area 14 on Long Island we request that members do not wear sports apparel in a meeting. If a new member is wearing sports apparel, we ask them not to wear it next time. This is a local group conscious decision.

I have attended another area in which they state in their suggested intergroup by-laws not to wear sports apparel to a meeting.

We do this out of respect for one another and out of respect of our insidious disease.

My personal opinion is I try to lead by example. Therefore, I do not wear sports apparel in a meeting. There is a time and place for everything and to me, this is not the time or place to wear it. I wouldn't walk into a OA meeting with a Dunkin' Donuts hat or an AA meeting with a Bud Light shirt on and I will not walk into a GA room with a sports jersey on.

Gambling is all around us, it always will be. Some things that I did to not to make a bet today are:

1. I watched Cable news instead of local news so not to see the lottery numbers.
2. I have satellite radio so I dont have to hear gambling commercials.
3. I bought my Iced Tea at a store that does not sell lottery tickets.
4. I didn't read the sports pages or watch any sports channels.
5. I made my GA phone calls and went to a meeting. I spoke to both my sponsors and had lunch with a fellow Trustee.

I am not mentioning the above for a pat on the back, but rather because I take this disease and this program very seriously. This program saved my life. These are some of the many reasons you will never see me wear sports apparel at a GA meeting of any kind.

As Trustees, we are held to a higher standard, whether we like it or not. New people are looking for guidance and I do my best to give them the guidance that was given to me. If I suggest to them to follow page 17 and tell them not to test and tempt themselves, I have to lead by example. In my opinion, wearing a sports jersey or hat of a team that they once bet on is testing and tempting themselves.

Tom Z. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

7/2/11 - 5:25 PM

It happened once again. A member wrote a response and it just jumped off the page at me. I've heard indirectly from others that they feel I submit too many items to the Trustee Line and I must think it is mine. Well, in a sense, it is mine, as is the case for every current or past Trustee. If you write to it, you reaffirm that it is your platform to reflect how you feel about whatever topic is on there. The big difference is that I choose to express myself more than others who might feel better complaining about me rather than letting us all know how everyone else feels on the subjects submitted.

I've made it very clear on previous Trustee Line issues that I am vehemently opposed to any GA member wearing clothing suggestive of gambling events, places in which gambling takes place, teams or individuals that might be the subject of gambling, while in a GA meeting or function. I'm actually amazed that people could put up any kind of defense regarding this issue and deliberately make a choice to wear such clothing at a GA meeting or function.

Tom spoke very directly to Levi's issue. I want to take a different route to hopefully make those who thumb their nose to this issue into seeing it from a different perspective. Again, I'll reiterate my usual disclaimer about me not being too concerned with stepping on other members' toes.

My response is not about the potential affect it has on compulsive gamblers in our room who might be hanging on by a thread. It is about the mindset of those who insist on wearing the clothing. My concern is, what is being accomplished by the person who wears the clothing and what it may say about that person? I can hear it now...don't take my inventory.

Here are a few reasons I have heard over the years for wearing the clothing:

- 1-I've been a fan of this team since I was a child.
- 2-What's the problem? Gambling is everywhere you go.
- 3-If the person is doing the right thing, it shouldn't bother him(her).
- 4-If the person is at risk of going back to the bet, then my shirt (whatever) won't be the reason he goes back to the bet.
- 5-Why is it okay to talk about sports betting in our therapy but not wear anything sports-related?
- 6-Now the GA police are going to tell us what to wear in a meeting?

For me, this is about the message of hope that we are trying to carry to the compulsive gambler, who may be the person sitting next to you in the room. We share our experience strength and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem. For a few hours once a week (per meeting), we as compulsive gamblers rely on that mantra to gain the strength to not bet for another day. We need experience, strength and hope to do that, along with honesty, openmindedness and willingness.

Talking about gambling events involving sports during therapy does not embellish the situations. They are mentioned in the context of our gambling problems. Any parallels to sports clothing are completely baseless, because the clothing is in the face of the compulsive gambler for the entire meeting, quietly whittling away at his ability to concentrate on what is being said by others. I have had many members tell me that seeing the sports clothing put them in a mental state where all they thought about during the meeting was the bet that they lost X number of dollars with that team because of this or that. Why must we create an environment for struggling members to have to be immersed in that chaos again because of the passive influence of sports related clothing in our meetings? The answer is we don't have to, but it is the arrogance of those who wear it that says they don't care what others think or feel, because it is ONLY about them.

Harsh assessment, wouldn't you say? Absolutely, and that was my intention. So picture this - someone is going to finally get the nerve to tell a person that wearing that sports clothing (jersey, hat, jacket, etc.) makes him uncomfortable and the member is going to say, too f'ing bad, I like the team or that's your problem, not mine? That's disgraceful. But that's what's behind the rejection by that member to even the slightest form of sensitivity to the other member who is affected by this.

How often have we heard it said that if our efforts to carry the message of hope brings just one person into a meeting, then it was all worth it. How do we then explain that we don't care about what might affect just one person who is in the room? Where is Unity Step 1 about our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon group unity?

When I first came into the program, I was told that we had a black and white program, and it was those who constantly insisted in living in the grays areas that were testing and tempting themselves. If there is one person who would be affected by this, why would we have to be so insistent on taking back our will in defiance of Recovery Step 3? Is it too much to ask that for a few hours we don't wear such clothing?

We have to all take responsibility for our actions and words. Yes, gambling is everywhere. Do we as GA members, have to make it more difficult for those who are still suffering in our program? If you want to be a fan of a sports team, go right ahead, but save it for your life outside the room. GA rooms are about safety and recovery, not about providing passive stimuli for those who are on the edge. We tell members not to test or tempt themselves. If you are a sports bettor, don't read the sports pages. Don't watch the games. Using the logic of those who insist on wearing the clothing, why wouldn't we bring a TV into the GA rooms when a game is playing? After all, you've been a fan of the team for a very long time.

Dare I say it – maybe it's time for a serious review of a 4th Step moral inventory.

We can do much better on this subject. Why do we always have to push that envelop and spend so much time in the gray areas? If you have to ask if it's okay to do something in this Fellowship, then maybe instead of trying to rationalize and justify your own position, you should just abandon it, if there is the slightest chance that your actions could have a detrimental affect on any other GA members.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

7/4/11 - 3:13

I can't believe we are being so judgmental. What a member has on their clothes in the meeting has very little importance to me. The important thing is that they are in the meeting. Many members come to our meetings with casino attire because that is all they have. The winter coat came from comps. They have no other. Should you not wear red or black because people bet on the roulette wheel?

I think this subject is being very petty. We want a committee to help with retention but yet we find ways to make being at a meeting tough. Be careful of what you where it might not live up to someone's idea of what is right. Personally, I do prefer they wear clothes but that is the limit of my requirement.

I hope that when you welcome the member to your room you don't give them a checklist of what they can and can't wear. I like to welcome people with a hug, unless that is uncomfortable for them, and let them know I am glad to see them. Let's help each other find ways to deal with the idea that we may see something that triggers a gambling thought. I don't think any of us live in a bubble so we are exposed to things we may find uncomfortable. That is life. My idea of becoming mature is being able to cope with life.

Carol K. - Area 9, Michigan

7/4/11 - 3:23 PM

Hi David,

I hope this 4th of July Holiday finds you and all of my GA Brothers and Sisters well and happy.

I would like to just share a few brief final thoughts on this issue that you, me and Tom Z. seem to keep sparring about. The issue of wearing sports apparel at GA functions.

I have the utmost respect for you and your passion for this program. I believe you bring up important, if not always popular, ideas regarding a myriad of issues affecting compulsive gamblers and the BOT. We are usually like minded, and I tend to agree with you on most issues. However, on this one, we are about as far apart as we can be.

I have read, re-read, and re-read again your first post on this issue and your response to my post on this issue. I have said before in this forum, and will say it again, that a good argument, in which good, solid points are made can sway my opinion on issues, whether small or large. None of your arguments meet that criteria for me. I will not re-hash my feelings on this issue, as anyone who wishes can just read what I wrote previously as it is all spelled out. That being said, I take exception to personal attacks you seem to level at me and others.

You seem to believe that anyone who disagrees with you live a gray area, are disrespectful to other members and to our disease, might need to re-examine our 4th step inventories, thumb our noses at this issue and need to pull or heads out of our butts. Now, I speak only for myself here. I will not assume that others feel the same way, so here goes: I can handle the fact that you or others may disagree with me, but I will never be okay with someone "taking my inventory". Agree, disagree, either way is fine. But don't disrespect me. I have never personally attacked another member in this forum, and I never will. As I said before, I would hope and expect we, meaning all trustees who use this forum, can be civil to each other. My respect for you and your ideas has already been stated, but your abrasive writing style is hurtful, and you "are not concerned with stepping on other members toes" (your words). I don't believe we have to step on each other's toes to get our point across.

Now, with all that being said, I have made this post personal. The very thing I have spoken against. In my defense, it is the only way to get my feelings across to you. As I have stated more than once, I respect you and your passion. I hope we can remain friends, as I really enjoy talking to you. I would hope that everyone reading this will re-examine the way we write on this forum. Lets state our ideas, encourage healthy discussion, and above all, remain to civil to each other. I consider all compulsive gamblers my second family, and my love and respect for every member is real and very strong. I hope others feel the same way about me. If not, fine. Just don't take my inventory and I will extend the same courtesy to you.

With love and respect to all my GA brothers and sisters,

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

7/4/11 - 4:33 PM

Levi,

Thank you for the kind words. But you mistake my efforts as personal attacks. I am not 'going after you' with my responses. I am speaking to the issue that you raised. The fact that we are on different sides is immaterial to me. There are those who make deliberate statements on the Trustee Line that are distortions and misdirections of our literature and especially the Guidance Code. These people make up their own rules as they go along, and do so with members who don't even know what color cover the Guidance Code has, let alone with is said within. Their actions derail the intentions of many of the efforts from the Board of Trustees, and that affects GA as a whole. I choose to not sit idly by and get drawn into a diplomatic style of talking around the issue rather than dealing with it head on. This is not one of those times and you are not one of those people, to the best of my understanding. Evidently, my style is as you said, a bit 'abrasive' for some. But my responses are direct and to the point, with little room for figuring out what I really meant by what I said or wrote. I am dismayed that you took any of this personally, because were I to do it directly with my response to you in that manner, you would not have had to wonder if it was meant for you. Of course, all that would border on inappropriateness of content on the Trustee Line, where I have the slightest thought that what I write steps out of the mainstream, gets run past about 3 people whom I trust to tell me exactly what I have written is either appropriate

people whom I trust to tell me exactly what I have written is either appropriate or not.

Thinking back to what I wrote earlier, it was all about getting the word out to others who read this thread. It is still unfathomable to me how anyone can make an argument to push this issue in the room to wear the sports attire. You can disagree with me but unless you, or anyone else can make a logical and coherent explanation for why a contrasting position holds the slightest bit of merit, then I will remain opposed to it, and not in a quiet way. I read your chiding remarks (which by the way didn't upset me) and stand behind my remarks about the blindness of the members who forcibly push this issue when others are sensitive to it. For 22+ years in the program, I have been involved with myriad sitdowns with other members and their spouses, an apparent East Coast event with couples who are at temporary impasses with one another. The couple gets together with a few GA and GamAnon members in the hopes of squelching the apparent larger than life problem for that day. The success rate for these get togethers is quite high, because the concerned parties tend to ratchet down the intensity and begin to deal with the problem and the process. The constant theme is a clash of how the GA member approaches the spouse. It's a style issue and more often than not, something is being done to irritate the other person. It is a black and white issue, not always. But the repetitive tone is to ask... 'Why would you want to continue doing this if you know it pisses him/her off? That's all about the instigator in the issue. The same thing holds true for this issue. Again I say... why would anyone knowingly wear sports attire to a GA room if you knew it bothers some of the members with their primary addiction of compulsive gambling? 'Why' is the question that always centers on character defects. Where do you deal with that... in a 4th step inventory. If we, as compulsive gamblers still in recovery, refuse to look at what we are doing, then we figuratively have our heads up our butts trying to bully our way on others without thoughts of the consequences of our actions. Thumbing our noses to an issue is yet another way of saying the same thing. GA has taught me H.O.W. It is not only about my way. What you don't know is how many times I see something in the Trustee Line or hear it on the floor of the BOT meetings that changes my opinion, because it made program sense.

By the way, I have heard the expression of 'Don't take my inventory' more times than I care to mention over my short time in the Fellowship. I use my experience, strength and hope to work with others, and if I see something afool, I mention it. Instead of thinking about it, I hear that expression when others choose to sit their with their arms folded saying 'Don't confuse me with the facts'. I am not concerned with stepping on other people's toes, because I say the things directly to people that most people say behind their backs. People on your side of this issue feel empowered because you should be able to do what you want. That's taking back your will, and if people can't say that to others when it occurs, then we are all just paying lip service to this program and recovery is a joke. If a sponsor says something like this to the person he sponsors, is that taking their inventory? You can't do the double standard thing. If we were all up front with everyone else instead of playing the usual game of politics, we might actually get more benefit out of Unity Step 1.

Levi, irrespective of how we fall on this subject or any others, I thoroughly enjoy our dialogues, either online, on the phone or in person. I lay down this challenge to you, as a result of this colloquy. Let's you and I set aside some time and bat around some of the more 'sensitive issues' of our time, in this Fellowship, on the phone or in person. I will tell you what I think in the same manner in which I write, because that is who I am and the Fellowship and it's tools have liberated my honesty in how I deal with people, places and things. We should discuss this concept of what you maintain is the taking of one's inventory. I assure you that you will come away from those discussions with a very different healthy perspective.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

7/6/11 - 8:45 AM

I am surprised to see on the Trustee poll that currently 14-6 say it is NOT inappropriate. It is clear there is quite a difference in opinion on this (perhaps a regional difference). Personally, I gambled on everything, except sporting events (main reason is because I never had the misfortune of meeting a bookie). I have watched certain sporting events throughout my recovery and can honestly say that watching a game or seeing sports clothing, etc. does not "tempt or test" me.

However, for many of my dear GA brothers and sisters, sports were the primary (or sole) mode of betting. Many have shared that sport teams and the events were all about the bet and action, nothing more. These members make the difficult choice (often at the admonishment of other members) to NOT watch sporting events in order to preserve their abstinence and not tempt/test themselves. They choose not associate with anything related to the sports they

bet on. I respect this.

As I put myself in the mindset of the sports bettor in recovery, I realize that sports clothing would certainly make me uncomfortable, at the least, if not tempt me to watch a game. That could be dangerous for them.

So, what is my guide here? My personal need to flash some sleek clothing and show my alliance with a sports franchise OR is there a Principle that should govern?

As noted; Unity Step 1 - "...personal recovery depends on group unity". How am I truly "unified" with these members if I disregard their feelings? How can I in good conscience be at a meeting with a team jersey on and listen to and face the member next to me, while he/she shares how sports betting destroyed their life? What if I trigger them or even just make them uncomfortable. Moreover, what does the new member feel?

Therefore, I do NOT do 2 very simple things at GA meetings/functions:

- 1- I do not wear sports related clothing
- 2- I do not talk about the sporting event that I may have watched or attended (unless necessary to speak about in my therapy/sharing)

This is simple and easy for me. No big sacrifice.

Again, it is the principle of Unity Step 1 that makes me want to ensure that I am "unified" with these GA members. My recovery depends on it.

I ask those members that insist on wearing sports clothing to GA meetings; Why don't you show up to work with your jersey on or team hat? Your employer may have a dress code that prohibits it. Are not your fellow members in GA as important to you?

Wishing all well in recovery.
Paul C. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

7/10/11 - 1:31 AM

My take on this issue is simple. I wouldn't wear any of my sports apparel to a meeting. I have respect for the other members in the program that gambled on sports. I wouldn't want them to be uncomfortable staring at any of my hockey, football or baseball clothing. I wouldn't go to a meeting dressed in full jockey gear on a horse or wearing a hat made out of a roulette wheel. I do notice that members wearing sports apparel in my area have one thing in common. They don't make it.

Mary R. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

7/19/11 - 5:34 PM

I was one of "those" people. I'm sure I've worn my Cardinal t-shirts to Trustee meetings. I honestly never thought that what I wore might be offensive to my brothers and sisters in the program. If nothing else, these comments opened my eyes. I would never intentionally try to hurt someone. Like Paul and Mary mentioned, to help my brothers and sisters and for the unified program, I will choose to wear something else.

Are You a Compulsive Gambler?

7/2/11 - 10:34 AM

We have all been to the meeting when somebody does not declare themselves as a compulsive gambler. Somebody from the group will yell out (usually quite vocally and rudely) "Are you a Compulsive Gambler?".

This happened to me when new in program (I just forgot to declare it) and I responded that I met the only requirement to be here today, I have a desire to not gamble.

I was in a meeting recently when it happened to somebody else and they responded "none of your business".

I was told a story of 3 people walking out of a meeting during a members therapy because they did not declare themselves a compulsive gambler.

I was informed of a meeting a couple of weeks ago when the newcomer answered yes to 18 of the 20 questions. When the room Secretary said "Most compulsive gamblers will answer yes to at least 7 of these questions, you answered yes to 18, but that doesn't mean you are a compulsive gambler." Somebody yelled out, "of course he's a compulsive gambler, he answered yes to

18 questions and we should tell these people that they are compulsive gamblers."

Any thoughts on this?

Thanks.

Tom Z. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

7/5/11 - 1:54 PM

Hi Tom, and hi to all my GA brothers and sisters.

Thank you for bringing up this issue. This has been a sore spot for me for years, and I'm glad to see that I am not the only member out there who has problems with this.

I represent Area 2, which is centralized in the San Francisco Bay Area. Most meetings in the Bay Area seem to be open, however Area 2 covers a very large geographic area, and the part of the state in which I live (the Central Valley) has mostly closed meetings. This brings me to the problem of discerning whether or not an active member or new member is a compulsive gambler. I often hear other members ask a newcomer "do you have a gambling problem", or "are you a compulsive gambler"? I believe these are the wrong questions to ask. The proper question would be "do you have a desire to stop gambling"?, as that is the only requirement for GA membership, as per our Unity Program. You know, after reading that last line, I'm not sure even that question is valid. Many people come to us not knowing if they are compulsive gamblers, or not sure if they even want to stop gambling. Is it okay for us to keep them from a meeting if the answer to "do you have a desire to stop gambling"? is "I don't know"?

Yes, there are some members who are probably not compulsive gamblers who attend meetings. Years ago, a newcomer (I will call this person a she) would not share her story with the group. Eventually, she started sharing about the topic, or the step we were on that week, but would never specifically share her gambling experience or state she was a compulsive gambler. She would just state her name and that she was happy to be there. Finally, after maybe close to a year in the fellowship, she finally shared her story. A very close friend of hers had committed suicide after a gambling binge. She herself had only gambled once or twice, but did not want to get to the same point her at which her friend arrived. Well, several members were up in arms about this saying "I knew it, she doesn't belong here, she's not a compulsive gambler"! (Never to her face, of course). I took the position that she had every right to be there, as she had a desire to never gamble again. We are not judges, and only individual members can decide if they need to be there or not. Unfortunately, some of these judges decided that they would stop attending meetings because they felt closed meetings were a sham. I felt very sorry for them, as they let someone else dictate their recovery. I'm sure there are many stories like this out there in GA land.

We also have the tradition, which seems to be the same everywhere, of introducing ourselves every time we address the fellowship with "my name is _____, and I am a compulsive gambler". I was told many years ago by a long time member that by always stating this prior to speaking, it helps break down any denial we may have regarding our disease. Maybe it does, maybe not. I would tend to agree, but that is a moot point, as I don't see it as being a requirement. We have had members who would refuse to state that they are compulsive gamblers. Or they would say that they are "former compulsive gamblers", or "a recovering compulsive gambler". Does it really matter how they introduce themselves? Yes, I like to hear people say who they are before they speak, mostly because I attend a lot of meetings and don't always know everybody, and because the older I get, the worse my memory gets. But tagging on anything after their name would seem to me to be up to the individual to make that call.

As for deciding who is and who isn't a compulsive gambler, I was appalled at some of the comments you have heard. Who gives any of us the right to decide that for someone else. They can have a "perfect score", as I call it, with 20 yeses. Does that make that person a compulsive gambler. Probably, but I can't decide that for them. I realize that the members who made the comments you shared with us were probably trying to help, and most likely meant no disrespect. But to walk out of a meeting? As Carol K said in a previous post, we have a retention committee (which I serve on) trying to find ways to keep members coming back, yet it seems some of us are making it more difficult for members to stay. I believe that the Unity Program is very clear on this, with no room for any other interpretation valid when it comes to Step 3. A desire to stop gambling is all that is required for me or anyone else to be a member of this great fellowship.

These are my thoughts, and as Tom stated, I too would like to hear any other thoughts on this subject.

Your brother in recovery,
Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

Lord's Prayer or Serenity Prayer?
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Hello all,

First off, I have written a lot lately on the Trustee Line, but I am beginning to realize how great a tool this is. So, if seeing my name again makes your eyes roll back in your head, sorry. As David said, this line does belong to me, as it belongs to all of us. I don't write just to see my words in print. I love this program, as we all do, and I gain valuable insight into what I believe are very important issues that affect us. So, with that being said, here we go.

When I first became a member of GA some 16 years ago, we always closed our meetings with the Lord's Prayer. It was just what we did, and I never really thought much about it. A couple of years ago, a member brought up at a business meeting that he felt the prayer was exclusionary, as it could be found offensive to atheists, those of the Jewish and Muslim faiths, and anyone else who did not subscribe to the Christian doctrine. Well, this turned out to be a hot button issue, which kind of surprised me. In any case, after three months of members sharing their points of view about this, a vote was taken, and by a very slim margin it was decided that we would close our meeting with the Serenity Prayer. This was a very unpopular decision to some members, but the group conscience prevailed, as it should, and life went on. This issue is again being brought up, as some members wish to go back to the Lord's Prayer.

I would like to know any thoughts on this, how other areas close their meetings, and whether or not this has ever been brought up at a BOT meeting for discussion.

Thanks to all, and I look forward to reading your ideas and thoughts on this subject.

Your Brother in Recovery,

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

7/19/11 - 5:34 PM

I believe there was a straw vote some years ago about the Lord's Prayer; but we all know what straw votes get you lol. Most of the meetings in 8D start with the inside cover prayer and end with the Serenity Prayer. We did have one meeting a few years ago, that closed with the Lord's Prayer. A newer member of the group brought up the topic for discussion at a group conscious meeting. It was decided not to end with the Lord's Prayer. If I can remember correctly, the rationale to discontinue was based primarily on the desire not to offend anyone who was not Christian (by having them say a Christian prayer). That said, I am a strong proponent of group consciousness. I suggest all changes to meeting structure, that aren't in opposition to GA rules, be run through the group consciousness meetings.

GA Fundraisers

7/11/11 - 4:45 PM

Hi All,

I was wondering if fellow Trustees can share their ideas on Fundraisers.

We have an annual breakfast in our area for GA members in early February that does very well for us.

I hope to hear some of your ideas and whats working in your area.

Thanks,
Tom Z. - Area 14, Long Island, NY
